

Date and Time: Saturday, May 4, 2024 2:35:00AM EEST

Job Number: 223498727

Documents (65)

1. [Israeli president facing sex crimes, A-G says](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

2. [Apply same standards](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

3. [Tee-off time at Mount Arbel: Golf course development stirs debate about character of Israel](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

4. [Perspective: Recess is a working holiday for all MPs There is a common perception that when Parliament goes into summer recess, so do all our MPs. Here Gisela Stuart, MP for Edgbaston , attempts to debunk the myth](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

5. [Stop the hatred](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

6. [In fear for the future of Britain MIGRATION](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

7. [City remembers A-bomb victims](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

8. [LETTERS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

9. [2006: The Year In Pictures: Part 2](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

10. [34 to watch in 2007 Political figures, entertainers top soon-to-be familiar faces](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

11. [Unwarranted attacks](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

12. [A Greenham Common woman: her part in the Cold War's downfall](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

13. [Ninety Iraqis killed during Shia festival](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

14. [Letter: You say - Terror is the enemy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

15. [LEADERS TAKE A MODERATE VIEW](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

16. [Islam, Terror and the Second Nuclear Age](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

17. [LETTERS FROM READERS](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

18. [LETTERS FROM READERS](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

19. [ISRAEL: Profits Vs. Prophets; Critics fear unique culture is being lost](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

20. [Angela's ashes Unlike Schroeder, who sued a newspaper that wrote that he dyed his hair, Merkel seems oblivious to how she is portrayed.](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to

Apr 15, 2007

21. [*The Hillary machine builds momentum*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

22. [*Disturbed by financing Whose favorite? Make a smart move Follow the rule book Vulnerable citizens Coal for this Scrooge Thanks for prayers*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

26. [Oui, non, peut-etre; Despite the hoopla surrounding the French presidential election, many voters remain undecided](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

27. [The deadly game of power politics in Lebanon in hyregoes in hyregoes in hyregoes](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

28. [Group calls for ceasefire in middle east](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

29. [Game too costly](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

30. [Top of the World](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

31. [*Score of his life*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

32. [*AJCongress Roiled by Wave of Job Cuts Critics Charge Leader With Abandoning Group's Liberal Roots*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

33. [*Why Iran is a war too far*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

34. [*THE LONG WAR*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

35. [*All the wrong moves*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

36. [*The Diary*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

37. [*Muddle headed Mufti*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

38. [*Six faces of subtle dissent*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

39. [*It Took a War, but I Finally Moved In With My Husband*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

40. [*Police in proper mess*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

41. [*The dark side of multiculturalism \(Part two of two\): In the shadow of Sept. 11, it is time to confront the unsettling truth that radical multiculturalism creates tribes that could destroy the society that produced it*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

42. [*No Headline In Original*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

44. [*AN ATTACK ON IRAN WILL TRIGGER WORLD WAR III From one of the world's leading military historians, a chilling prediction...*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

45. [*We can't sit on fence in fight against crime*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

46. [*THE END OF THE Undone by their ignorance*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

47. [THE END OF THE NEO-CONS Undone by their ignorance](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

48. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

49. [Feedback letters@theage.com.au](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

51. [letters to the editor](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

Narrowed by

News

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

52. [*On your bike, Nigel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

53. [*Bloggers of the world, unite THE ESSAY*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

54. [*Attack Iran and spark world war*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

55. [*Stranger than fiction Critical shots, 2006*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to Apr 15, 2007

57. [*This is the Week to come...*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

58. [*'I was scared. Who would believe the Israeli president raped me?'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

59. [*Letters to the Editor*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

60. [*No Headline In Original*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

61. [*WAR OF THE WORLDS*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

63. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

64. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

65. [The Future of the Jihadi Movement: a 5-Year Forecast](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jul 31, 2006 to
Apr 15, 2007

Israeli president facing sex crimes, A-G says

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

January 24, 2007 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A5; World in Brief

Length: 136 words

Byline: CanWest News Service

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM -- The often questionable universe of Israeli politics suffered another heavy blow to its reputation Tuesday when the country's attorney-general announced that he intends to charge President Moshe Katsav with sex crimes including rape. Six separate indictments against Israel's 61-year-old ceremonial head of state are to be handed down as the Israeli government reels from severe domestic criticism over its handling of the war against Hezbollah in Lebanon last summer. Legal authorities also continued to investigate separate corruption allegations against Prime Minister Ehud Olmert involving the sale of his home and helping friends when a bank was privatized. If convicted on all counts he could face more than 20 years in jail. Four women who worked for Katsav have accused him of sexual improprieties.

Load-Date: January 24, 2007

Apply same standards

The Gazette (Montreal)
November 1, 2006 Wednesday
Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL / OP-ED; Pg. A22

Length: 152 words

Byline: The Gazette

Body

Re: "NATO bombings kill Afghan civilians" (Gazette, Oct. 27).

NATO forces in Afghanistan killed by mistake more than 60 civilians, mostly women and children, in what they thought was a Taliban hideout.

Something similar happened this summer in Qana, Lebanon, when Israel targeted Hezbollah terrorists but mistakenly killed 28 civilians instead.

The world rallied behind Lebanon, the UN security council held a special session, Secretary-General Kofi Annan was outraged, human rights groups protested and Gilles Duceppe, Andre Boisclair and Denis Coderre marched in a Montreal pro-Lebanese rally.

Israel was accused of war crimes by the media, political leaders and human rights groups.

Why isn't the Arab and Muslim world protesting against this recent tragedy in Afghanistan, a Muslim country?

The hypocrisy is unbelievable, but nobody cares because Afghans abroad are not politically vote rich.

Abraham Shtevi

Montreal

Load-Date: November 1, 2006

Tee-off time at Mount Arbel: Golf course development stirs debate about character of Israel

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

March 23, 2007 Friday

All But Toronto, Ottawa & Vancouver Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A16

Length: 1353 words

Byline: A. Craig Copetas, Special to the National Post

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM - It's a soft three-iron shot between miracles along the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus of Nazareth walked on water and an American lawyer is spending US\$46- million to build Israel's first 36- hole championship golf course.

"This is God's proving ground and the most exciting deal I've done in my life," says Joseph Bernstein, describing the Galilee Golf Club course atop Mount Arbel.

Construction begins after the holy days of Passover and Easter, with celebrated golf architect Robert Trent Jones Jr. sculpting fairways from the "green pastures" that inspired King David to compose the 23rd Psalm and where the multitudes gathered beneath myrtle trees to hear the Christian saviour deliver his Sermon on the Mount.

"It took 10 years to get the Israeli government to approve the deal," says Mr. Bernstein, 58, whose real estate projects include developments in Manhattan. "The project is unique. It's like building a golf course on Mount Rushmore, and that doesn't get close to the historical significance of Mount Arbel."

For Israel, the significance of a championship course with the cachet to lure marquee players such as Tiger Woods, stage professional tour events and host affluent corporate golf outings flows even deeper.

"Mount Arbel is the symbol for the booming Israeli economy," Mr. Bernstein goes on. "The Galilee Golf Club is a leitmotif for a country that has rid itself of isolation to become part of the global economy."

Although Robert Aumann, a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and winner of the 2005 Nobel Prize in Economics, suggests the God of Abraham might prefer a less secular tour guide for the Jewish state, Mr. Bernstein is right. Last year, international investors pumped a record US\$23-billion into Israel, fueling economic growth by 5.1% and pushing unemployment down to a 10-year low. Foreigners are also snapping up property and consumer spending is on the rise.

"Our economy certainly works best when everybody is looking out for themselves, but there are two big dangers," Prof. Aumann says while playing with his grandson in Jerusalem.

Tee-off time at Mount Arbel: Golf course development stirs debate about character of Israel

"Israel simply being physically wiped out is the first. The second is the lost character of the Jewish state. Idealism created the state, it's what we strive for, what makes us unique in the Western world. Yet the survival of Israel is paramount."

During Israel's 33-day war against Lebanon last summer, Iranian-funded **Hezbollah** terrorists to the north pocked what the Galilee Golf Club prospectus describes as "a cozy citadel in the Promised Land" with 20 Katyusha rockets.

"We'll convert their craters into bunkers," says Moshe Shapira, Mr. Bernstein's partner in the venture and general manager of Israel by the Sea Resort & Club, a sprawling estate of luxury golf villas and spa residences coordinated by Horst Schulze, founder of the Ritz-Carlton hotel chain, and scheduled to open in early 2009 alongside the first 18 holes.

The club will accommodate 1,500 full-time and 100 founding members paying US\$37,500 to US\$150,000 each.

Mr. Shapira says he isn't having trouble finding takers.

"I'm more concerned about what the government intends to do about a peace agreement with the Palestinians and continue Israel's economic growth into the future," he says.

"Israel must be a country that welcomes everybody's business -- Jews, Muslims, Christians -- and I want all of them to come to Mount Arbel for golf before visiting the holy sites in Jerusalem."

As Prof. Aumann, 76, tells it, the word of the Lord doesn't always mix with the principles that govern gross domestic product.

Israel's GDP was to a degree underwritten by "Jews throwing away their religion, throwing away their cultural heritage," he explains. "Jews now don't any longer know why they are here in Israel. What people want is a golf course. They pursue this, and don't want to join the army and be bothered with all the conflicts. This is not a good thing."

Adds Mr. Bernstein, "Nowadays, all young Israelis want to be Bill Gates. They have a mad sense of needing to achieve. It's not about money and the old stereotypes."

Still, the clash between the profits and those waiting for the Messiah has lumbered the Israeli economy with a unique set of truly unseen market forces crying out in the wilderness.

Chief among them, Prof. Aumann says, is the voice of Moses, Israel's chief spiritual officer. He heeded God's word and punished the Israelites for worshiping the golden calf, and in his farewell speech warned them about the downside of venture capital.

"And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage," the Torah quotes Moses as saying.

"Moses made a very good point," Prof. Aumann reasons. "We're beginning to pursue the gold calf, forgetting our ideals, forgetting why we're here."

Outside the headquarters of Jerusalem Venture Partners in the hip quarter of Malha, young men sipping coffee-flavoured soda pop and listening to iPods make their way to work alongside young **women** with babies and Black Berries. Malha is the festive epicentre of Israel's thriving high-tech sector, where Erel Margalit, 49, manages a US\$680- million portfolio of investments in 40 Israeli and foreign technology companies.

Raised on a kibbutz that manufactured irrigation systems and armed with a doctorate in philosophy from Columbia University in New York, he started JVP in 1993 and now compares Israel to a corporation that must reinvent itself to survive.

Tee-off time at Mount Arbel: Golf course development stirs debate about character of Israel

"We're reinterpreting what Israel is all about," says Mr. Margalit, whose 40 employees work in New York, Jerusalem, London and Shanghai.

"Idealism was the engine of Israel's growth, but idealism today is not measured by the same process we used before. We no longer reflect back to Biblical times. Judaism is a culture, not a religion, and I think we've demonstrated how to make a profit and still be idealistic."

Nonetheless, Israel Borovich, chairman of El Al Israel Airlines, harbours doubts about Israel's economic path.

"The path to the Middle East is through Dubai," says the 65- year-old. "They have developed an infrastructure that makes it very difficult for us to attract new visitors."

Adds Avishay Braverman, a 59-year-old former World Bank senior economist and Labor MP, "My fear is Israel becomes a capitalist oligarchy. Listen and listen hard: Economic growth is problematic. Only 7% of the Israeli labour force is in the high-tech sector and it accounts for a mere 10% of our economy. There is no trickle-down."

"Simple materialism destroyed Israel 2,000 years ago," he goes on. "If we neglect the collective, Israel is finished. Privatization was a process we had to allow, but the government is incapable of managing privatization. Oligarchs run the country and we have some of the worst corruption in the world."

At the bar of the American Colony Hotel in Jerusalem the joke goes that Israel has more corrupt politicians than Jews. A recent poll by the Dahaf Institute found that 85% of Israelis considered their political leaders to be corrupt.

Back on Mount Arbel, Chaim Cohen says he is ready to switch on his television to watch Tiger Woods play at the Masters. Standing knee-deep in a field of purple and yellow wildflowers, the 63-year-old manager of Moshav Kfar Hittim (Wheat Village) says he didn't know much about the sport until Mr. Bernstein and Mr. Shapira explained the game and offered the 150 families who manage the highland farm and ranch cooperative a 26% stake in the golf-resort project.

"I never thought we'd be involved in a golf course," Mr. Cohen laughs through his thick white moustache.

Slapping Mr. Cohen on the shoulder, Mr. Shapira says he's eager to include his new partner in a foursome.

"What Chaim and I are doing represents what we as a nation want to achieve and is very much a part of our legacy," he explains.

"Israel is trying to be a normal country," adds Mr. Cohen as evening storm clouds scud from the north and cluster above Mount Arbel. "We must do this."

Graphic

Color Photo : Esteban Alterman, Bloomberg News; Moshe Shapira, a partner in the development, points to an aerial photo of Mount Arbel, indicating where a golf course will be built. ;

Load-Date: March 23, 2007

Perspective: Recess is a working holiday for all MPs; There is a common perception that when Parliament goes into summer recess, so do all our MPs. Here Gisela Stuart, MP for Edgbaston, attempts to debunk the myth

Birmingham Post

August 4, 2006, Friday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 11

Length: 1295 words

Byline: Gisela Stuart

Body

It is the last week of July and Parliament goes into recess. MPs won't return to Westminster until the second week in October. Put like this, I am not surprised that newspaper headlines scream 'MPs off on their eleven week holiday!'

This would be true if being at Westminster was all there was to being an MP, but it's not. Certainly this aspect of an MP's life is busy and stimulating: debates and questions in the Chamber, work in committees scrutinising legislation' and on top of that for six years I have been on the Foreign Affairs Committee at a time when foreign policy issues have been headline news.

But even at Westminster there is hardly a day when the constituency is not the centre of my attention: answering letters, dealing with the local press and TV, school groups visiting Parliament, meeting people and groups whose decisions will affect my patch in Birmingham as well, as trying to ensure that any legislation or action by the Government is sensible.

My job is to represent my constituency, which covers Edgbaston, Quinton, Harborne and Bartley Green, at Westminster, and not the other way round. And back home, one of the great advantages of my regular Friday and Saturday surgeries (one in each ward) is that I can see how policies really impact on constituents and their families: the practice is very often different from the theory. And of course, at these surgeries, constituents bring me their own particular problems.

My constituents come to me with everything from housing enquiries to uncollected rubbish and neglected recycling areas. Much of what I do when I am in Birmingham would look familiar to a good councillor, but the big difference is that I do it with an eye on whether the problem is one of things not being done properly at local level, or whether the policy is wrong and the legal framework needs changing, in which case the problem needs to be taken back to Westminster.

It is an honour to represent my constituency in Parliament, but like a lot of jobs, being an MP probably looks more glamorous from the outside, but it certainly is interesting and varied: and with the help of the Birmingham Post I am hoping to explain a bit better what MPs do when they are not in London.

Perspective: Recess is a working holiday for all MPs There is a common perception that when Parliament goes into summer recess, so do all our MPs. Here Gisela S....

TUE

The last day of Parliament.

WED

Much of the morning was taken up finishing paperwork in the London office.

THURS

A long day. More paperwork in London. After going to the ward meeting in Bartley Green I took part in a discussion programme on Five Live. We debated the 'special relationship' and what the Prime Minister should be saying to George Bush about the Middle East. I leave the Mailbox just after 11pm. After a live radio programme the adrenaline is still running high, and I need a bit of time to settle down. Catching up with the last episode of Dr Who on video is just the job and I head for bed wondering what will happen to Rose Tyler.

FRI

The World Service calls at 7 am. They want an interview at 8.15. I am inclined to say no, as I have a meeting with Cynthia Bowers at the Strategic Health Authority at 8.30. But then I have a soft spot for the World Service. So we settle for 8.25 and I will do it from the Health Authority.

A nice man at reception finds a quiet office with a land line, and I try to explain why I think Hezbollah is a much greater threat than people realise.

The meeting with the Strategic Health Authority ranges from specific constituent's cases (number of x-rays for children in accident and emergency departments and need for routine screening for hip dislocation in babies) to more strategic, West Midlands wide issues. We discuss the idea of dispensing scratch cards with prescriptions, so people know if they have taken their pills. I am assured that Primary Care Trusts' budgets will work out. And I have good news for the QE. Doctors had complained to me some time ago that there is no agreed protocol for giving patients heart drugs when they are picked up by an ambulance. My phone calls and letters have paid off!

Next week I am meeting the new chief executive of the Ambulance Service. I cheer up when Cynthia reminds me that I have met him before. He was in Essex when I was the Minister in charge of Ambulances at the Department of Health. This bodes well. As does the news that the new Chief Executive for the whole of the NHS is someone who has worked in Birmingham before.

I go back to my office. Lesley Bagshaw, who is my office manager and makes sure I turn up in the right place, at the right time with the right bits of papers in my hand, pushes a whole pile of letters for signing in front of me. I do as I am told.

I have a quick chat with John and Lesley to check that we all know what needs to be done, before going to the Community Integration Project in George Road.

Dally Panzer and her team put together programmes for refugee women and their children. The skills needed range from basic language teaching, to learning about our society and laws and how to prepare for work.

CIP had outgrown its cramped offices and they are now moving into a large and spacious house on George Road. I am impressed and grateful to Calthorpe Estate which has been very helpful in finding the premises.

I have a meeting at one with Mark at the Bartley Green Football Club. They have won the Midland Combination Division 2 last year, but they will need floodlights and more seating if they are to be accepted into the Midland Alliance.

Perspective: Recess is a working holiday for all MPs There is a common perception that when Parliament goes into summer recess, so do all our MPs. Here Gisela S....

On the way I stop to take a call from a Guardian journalist. It seems strange to sit in a car park in Harborne arguing about the Islamist threat to western civilisation. I'm clearly not giving the journalist the quotes he is looking for. Too bad, I am not going to say something I don't believe just to get my name into the papers.

The football pitch is glorious, the silver Smedley Crooke Cup won last year is magnificent, but I am most impressed by the volunteers who keep the club running.

It becomes clear that their problems can only be solved at a city-wide level. I will meet with the City Council's leisure department to discuss football facilities across the city area and whether we can tie any of this in with the Olympic bid.

On to the Curdale shopping centre. There are plans to redevelop the shops and rebuild some of the flats' something that should have been done years ago. At long last the money is being put aside. But something has gone wrong with the consultation process. Shopkeepers don't seem to know what has been decided. Few residents had heard about the ward meeting. This won't do. Having talked to shopkeepers and residents we agree to arrange a public meeting the following week.

BBC 24 rings and they want to do a quick television interview. Sorry can't do, I am already running late for a meeting with Brenda in Quinton.

Brenda chairs one of the local forums. It seems there is only one housing officer for the whole of Quinton and there have been cuts to Quinton's street warden programme. The problem is worse than I first thought. We agree that I'll come back the following week when I have a couple of hours. She can show me some of the trouble spots.

I am trying to get to Harborne Post Office before it closes. My car tax needs renewing. Too late' another job for Saturday morning.

The early evening is taken up by going out and knocking on doors with one of our recently selected candidates for the local elections next year.

I have not looked at my e-mails all day. There is one from Ros Altman, a pensions expert. She is replying to some information I sent her. She just can't understand why the Government isn't accepting the Ombudsman's ruling. Neither can I. I need to write a considered letter to the Secretary of State. But tonight is not the night for it.

It's almost midnight before I go to bed and my first meeting on Saturday is at 8.30am.

Graphic

Gisela Stuart looks over part of the new headquarters of the Community Integration Project, a charity for refugees which is just moving to new premises in Edgbaston. Below (from top): In the clubhouse of Bartley Green Football Club inspecting the silverware' Working with office manager Lesley Bagshaw' At the Community Integration Project in Edgbaston' With worried shopkeeper Roy Titterton in Curdale Road, Bartley Green Pictures, JEREMY PARDOE

Load-Date: August 4, 2006

Stop the hatred

Herald Sun (Australia)

April 11, 2007 Wednesday

FIRST Edition

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Byline: Andrew Bolt

Body

The greatest pity is that Sheik Taj el-Din al-Hilaly isn't the only hate-preacher in our mosques. We need to hear from moderates

M AYBE this time, I thought. Maybe this first Australian Islamic Conference would at last show us the moderate Muslim leaders we've searched for.

God, we need them. Look at the latest doings of the hate-preachers we have now.

Take the Mufti of Australia, Sheik Taj el-Din al-Hilaly, who has just given interviews in Iran demanding Muslims stand "in the trenches" with its hostage-taking regime, and is now being investigated for allegedly giving \$12,000 to a Lebanese propagandist linked to terrorists.

Meanwhile, the head of the Lebanese Muslim Association, which pays him to preach at Australia's biggest mosque, has had to seek police protection for suggesting this fool had best shut up.

Yet, even now, the Federation of Islamic Councils, which made Hilaly mufti, refuses to sack him, though he's vilified Jews, praised suicide bombers as "heroes", called the September 11 terrorist attacks "God's work against oppressors", excused convicted pack rapist Bilal Skaf and said raped women should be "jailed for life".

The greatest pity is that Hilaly isn't the only hate-preacher in our mosques.

Other radical sheiks have been accused of telling followers not to pay taxes to this infidel Government.

Worse, the Howard Government sidelined its Muslim Community Reference Group after finding a third of the 14 "moderates" it handpicked actually backed the Iranian-backed Hezbollah extremist group, notorious for its terrorist wing.

So, after all this and more, we desperately need to hear from those moderate Muslim leaders we keep telling each other must surely exist. Must.

Was it so dumb to think Mercy Mission would at last provide them -- Muslim leaders who would demonstrate (in the mission's own words) that they "benefit the communities in which they live"?

Stop the hatred

You may have dared to hope, given this new group's leaders include the highly educated Tawfique Chowdhury, a Bangladeshi-born and Australian-raised IT project manager, and Adel Salman, who so impressed his employers at Cadbury Schweppes that he was selected for the prestigious Asialink leaders program.

It was Salman, so polished, who organised for Mercy Mission its first annual Australian Islamic Conference at Melbourne University over the Easter weekend.

The odd timing was surely just an innocent coincidence, because the conference had a noble aim: to "present a true picture of 'Islam in action' to the wider community" and convince Australians that "Islamic values are universal values".

So who, among all the Muslims in the world, did Mercy Mission choose to fly in to give us this "true picture" of a moderate Islam?

Of the six international speakers it advertised, let me introduce you to two.

The first is Bilal Philips, a Jamaican-born Canadian who was a communist and worker for the Black Panther terrorist group before converting to Islam and becoming a preacher.

His message is uncompromising: "Western culture led by the United States is an enemy of Islam." Which makes him an odd choice as speaker at a conference to reassure us that "Islamic values are universal values".

But the choice of Philips is even odder given the United States named him as an "unindicted co-conspirator" over the 1993 bombing of New York's World Trade Centre, and our own security agencies judged him such a threat he was banned from coming here.

Philips insists he rejects terrorism and considers al-Qaida a "deviate" group. But from his own website and interviews you'd see why some might not take him at his word.

He freely admits he was hired by the Saudi air force during the first Gulf War to preach to American soldiers stationed in Saudi Arabia and convert them to Islam.

He says he succeeded, and "registered the names and addresses of over 3000 male and **female** US soldiers".

Philips didn't just take down their names; he also visited them back in America. "My role was confined to encouraging them to train Muslim-American volunteers and go to Bosnia to help the mujahidin and take part in the war (against Serbia)," he boasted. That worked, too.

Philips says his name was dragged into the investigation of the first World Trade Centre bombing, in which six people were killed, because some African-American soldiers he'd converted were offered by someone else to Sheik Abdel Rahman, spiritual head of the terrorists behind the attack. These ex-soldiers would be great for domestic sabotage, the sheik was told.

But Clement Rodney Hampton-El, an al-Qaida-trained American bombmaker now serving a 35-year sentence for the World Trade Centre bombings, claimed Philips also gave him the names of soldiers who were about to leave the military and who might help the Bosnian jihadists.

To repeat: Philips denies any links to al-Qaida, and swears he is opposed to terrorism, although he does say Muslims are entitled to defend their faith by force.

But given his support for jihadists, his past contacts with jailed terrorists and the allegations against him, why on earth did Mercy Mission choose him to preach here?

To invite one such extremist speaker might seem like bad luck, but to invite two might make you think Mercy Mission wouldn't know a moderate Muslim if he blew up in their face.

Stop the hatred

I say that because also high on Mercy Mission's guest list was another convert, British journalist Yvonne Ridley, with a much nastier line in preaching.

Ridley didn't just marry a colonel in one terror group -- Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organisation -- but has been busy since defending others like it.

Some highlights:

Soon after the September 11 terrorist attacks Ridley actually accused Islamic sheiks of going soft.

"Muslims have lost confidence since September 11," she complained. "Something as simple as suicide bombers being martyrs is being denied by prominent sheiks."

THAT'S one of her mantras. At a Belfast meeting of Islamic students, she insisted there were no innocent Israeli victims in suicide bombings. Not even children.

"There are no innocents in this war," she reportedly raged, because Israeli children could grow up to become Israeli soldiers.

She even hailed as a "martyr" the Chechen terrorist Shamil Basayev, who planned the attack on the Beslan school in which 333 hostages -- many of them children -- were killed. An "admirable struggle", she called his life's work.

Ridley has never called on Muslims to boycott such terrorists, but instead demanded British Muslims "boycott the police and refuse to co-operate with them in any way, shape or form".

And when relatives of al-Qaida's then leader in Iraq, the head-hacker Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, denounced his bomb attacks on three hotels in Jordan, she was livid.

"While the killing of innocent people is to be condemned without question, there is something rather repugnant about some of those who rush to re-

nounce acts of terrorism," she sneered.

True, among the 61 dead were many members of a wedding party, she conceded, but some of them "were part of Jordan's upper echelons of society", and "others had flown in from America".

What's more, the "bars (were) serving alcohol", and the evil Jordanian regime "provides backing, support and intelligence to the American military".

Having proved to her satisfaction the guilt of the dead civilians, she asked: "I wonder if you see that attack on the Jordanian hotels in a different light now?"

And she concluded: "I'd rather put up with a brother like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi any day than have a traitor or a sell-out for a father, son

or grandfather."

What, in Ridley's foul incantations of hatred and her defence of child-killers and wedding bombers, makes her the kind of Muslim who would "benefit the communities in which they live"?

What does it say about Mercy Mission that Ridley -- and Philips -- were hired as speakers to tell us "Islamic values are universal values" and we have nothing to fear?

Oh, and about that fear.

It was this same Ridley -- happy to "put up with a brother" like Zarqawi, once filmed cutting off the head of American hostage Nick Berg -- who last week accused Australians of being among the worst haters of Muslims.

Stop the hatred

How like her to condemn the fear her own words rightly provoke. And how disturbing that Mercy Mission holds her up as the kind of Muslim who does us good.

Or -- I hesitate to ask -- is this really the best our Muslim leaders can offer? Is this really their "true picture" of Islam?

I beg of them. Prove it isn't. Until you do, I'm afraid I shall take you at your grim word.

Join Andrew to discuss this on blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt

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End of Document

In fear for the future of Britain; MIGRATION

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

March 3, 2007 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: INSIGHT; Pg. 6

Length: 1561 words

Byline: Julie Szego - Julie Szego is an Age reporter

Body

Controversial British columnist Melanie Phillips, currently in Australia, believes her country is in denial about home-grown Islamism and incapable of seeing that it is setting itself up for cultural immolation.

WRITER Melanie Phillips gets called many things: Islamophobe, voice of right-wing moral outrage, scourge of Britain's Guardian-reading liberals, a doom merchant, a fearless prophet whose moment has come. But one thing the award-winning tabloid columnist and author of the controversial Londonistan: How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within rarely gets called these days - not convincingly, anyway - is irrelevant.

Phillips, who believes Britain has fallen victim to a moral and cultural malaise that has turned London into "the epicentre of Islamic militancy in Europe", is currently visiting Australia. She comes amid raging controversy, here and in Britain, about national identity. Britain's likely next prime minister, Gordon Brown, on Thursday suggested new migrants should be denied citizenship unless they agreed to do voluntary community work, claiming the recent imposition of citizenship and language tests did not go far enough. Migrant groups, and some Opposition MPs, slammed the idea as divisive, with one communal leader complaining Brown was lumping immigrants in with criminals.

In Australia, emotions are still raw after visiting Israeli academic Raphael Israeli said Australia should cap Muslim immigration to avoid some of the problems facing France, where the Muslim population had reached a "critical mass". The Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, which dumped Israeli in protest against his comments, now hosts Phillips a little tentatively.

Phillips does not advocate Muslim immigration quotas. Muslims, she says, should be welcome to set up faith-based communities in Britain provided they "subscribe to an overarching notion of national identity". But Phillips' idea of national identity, with its rejection of "multiculturalism" and call to re-embrace "British values", shares an obvious affinity with the Howard Government's own, highly contentious, agenda.

Britain, Phillips writes, "is currently locked into such a spiral of decadence, self-loathing and sentimentality that it is incapable of seeing that it is setting itself up for cultural immolation". The nation is in denial about the threat of home-grown Islamism, she says. The British, inculcated with the idea all cultures are equal, now struggle to confront their enemy. Britain has become not only al-Qaeda's chief target, Phillips says, but also the terror group's chief recruiting ground.

In fear for the future of Britain MIGRATION

Before September 11 and especially the London bombings, Phillips - a former Guardian staff member before defecting to what her colleagues regard as the dark side - had little influence beyond conservative ranks. Now "Londonistan", a term coined by French and Algerian authorities to describe the city's harbouring of terrorists in the 1980s and '90s, is part of the general lexicon and people such as Phillips are loud voices in the national conversation.

Says Phillips: "People not only appease (Islamic extremism) but have come to absorb the state of mind of the people who are trying to destroy them. There is a state of confusion where people come to mistake their friends for enemies. And they see their enemies, if not quite as friends, then at least as people who need to be protected from their friends."

There are continuing symptoms of this underlying disease, Phillips says. At marches against Israel's bombardment of Lebanon last year, white middle-class women carried banners reading: "We are all Hezbollah now." Anti-semitic conspiracy theories about Jews running world affairs are openly discussed. People excuse would-be terrorists as victims of discrimination, segregation or Islamophobia, against all evidence.

She mentions how the police, casting a typically wide net, arrested suspects in relation to an alleged plot to blow up trans-Atlantic flights and, more recently, behead a British Muslim soldier. When some of those arrested were later released, the case provoked claims of an Islamophobic conspiracy.

Many would agree such trends are worrying. But Phillips goes further still, insisting the problem isn't confined to the extreme left. She talks about a "mainstream consensus" that sees Israel and the United States as mainly responsible for global instability.

"It's a pathology that's taken over public debate; there's not a cigarette paper (of difference) between right and left on this," she says. "The possibility of George W. Bush attacking Iran to stop it from getting the bomb is seen as a bigger threat to world security than Iran actually getting the bomb. I mean, to me, that's just irrational."

She accepts some of this might simply reflect disenchantment and apprehension about the Bush agenda. But she then veers into a discussion about Britain's snobbery towards the US and lingering resentment over America's late entry into World War II. In Phillips' world, such national quirks can take on an unexpectedly sinister character.

A profile of Phillips last year in the Guardian observed: "Though she accuses the BBC of having a default left-wing position that produces a closed belief system, Phillips' own system now seems tightly closed - immaculate, airless, finished . . . Pressed on this, she denies it: 'I'm very aware all the time that I may be wrong. There is not a day that goes past when I don't think, "Am I wrong?" ' Yet reading her book and listening to her argue, the overwhelming impression is of steely self-certainty."

A more concrete criticism of Phillips is that she places undue focus on Islamic extremists in a way that tars all Muslims with the same brush. She rejects this: "I say in my book that there are many, many truly moderate Muslims in Britain, in the West and around the world . . . people who simply draw spiritual sustenance from their faith." Muslims, after all, are the main victims of global jihad.

When it comes to identifying moderates, the devil is in the definition, she says. Many in Britain think a moderate is someone who condemns suicide bombings in Britain but justifies them in Israel or against US forces in Iraq. Such people aren't moderate, in her view. Nor are people who renounce violence but wish to thrust sharia law on the majority.

Phillips points out that the Muslim Council of Britain, a mainstream umbrella group the Government funds and helped establish, last month called for all state schools to effectively scrap "un-Islamic" activities such as dancing and mixed-sex excursions. Its head has openly expressed his desire for Britain to become more Islamic, claiming the country might even benefit from more arranged marriages.

But Phillips is heartened by recent signs of Britain's moderate Muslims fighting back. A new communal organisation, the Sufi Muslim Council, has been set up in opposition to the Muslim Council of Britain, which it

In fear for the future of Britain MIGRATION

brands as too extreme and unrepresentative. And last month the Muslim Educational Centre of Oxford vowed to help a Buckinghamshire school legally defend its decision not to let a **female** pupil wear the niqab, a garment covering the face.

"We trust that you will continue to resist any move to implement this kind of minority ethnic obsession," the organisation said, in a letter to the school. The local authority, "those nice white liberals," as Phillips describes them, had refused to intervene on the school's behalf. "You see, new migrants come here wanting to integrate into the majority, only to find there's nothing to integrate into," Phillips says.

People of various politics (although Phillips rejects the "right-wing" tag) are wondering about this now. Writer Martin Amis, commenting on the rise in anti-Muslim victimisation, recently suggested Britain needed "to become what America has always been- an immigrant society. 'A Pakistani immigrant, in Boston, can say 'I am an American,' and all he is doing is stating the obvious. Can his equivalent, in Bradford, say the equivalent thing in the equivalent way?"

Phillips, instead, believes mass immigration, along with multiculturalism "and the onslaught mounted by secular nihilists against the country's Judeo-Christian values", have "hollowed out" Britain. She writes of "a debauched and disorderly culture of instant gratification, with disintegrating families, feral children and violence, squalor and vulgarity on the streets."

She admits a Muslim fundamentalist, inclined to cast the West as decadent, might draw some comfort from her views. "I agree the West is decadent . . . and, yes, so do many Muslims, but the world view that propels us in this direction is radically different." Her guiding light is liberty - for individual and nation.

But these days universities teach children there is no such thing as "truth", teachers (apparently) resist teaching British history because they are ashamed of it, the European Union sets too much of Britain's agenda. Is Phillips afflicted by nostalgia for a Britain that no longer exists?

Yes, nation's evolve, she says. "But I believe people are entitled to cultural self-expression. You can't call yourself a democrat if you don't believe in nations. This means you believe in tyranny."

Londonistan, by Melanie Phillips, published by (Gibson Square, can be ordered through bookstores. RRP \$49.95.

Julie Szego is an Age reporter.

Graphic

TWO PHOTOS: Melanie Phillips, author of Londonistan, argues Britain is locked into a cycle of self-loathing.
PICTURE: EDDIE JIM

Load-Date: July 3, 2007

City remembers A-bomb victims

Belfast News Letter (Northern Ireland)

August 10, 2006 Thursday

Ulster Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 13

Length: 164 words

Body

A MINUTE'S silence was held at Belfast City Hall yesterday lunch time to honour the hundreds of thousands of men, women and children killed in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II.

Representatives of the Justice Not Terror Coalition also used the event to highlight the ongoing crisis in the Middle East between Israel and Hezbollah fighters in the Lebanon.

Hundreds of white peace balloons were released over City Hall and a petition to Prime Minister Tony Blair was signed.

The petition urged the Government not replace the Trident missile system or develop any other nuclear military capabilities.

Mairead Corrigan Maguire, the Nobel Peace Laureate, also handed in a letter to the Lord Mayor Councillor Pat McCarthy asking him to join the Mayors' For Peace campaign, which was started by the then Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1982.

The bombings of the Japanese cities in 1945 are the only time nuclear weapons have been used in the history of warfare.

Load-Date: August 11, 2006

LETTERS

The Forward

September 8, 2006

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Section: Editorial; Pg. 8

Length: 1510 words

Body

Halachic Change a Core Conservative Belief

The comment by Rabbi Joel Roth, a Jewish Theological Seminary professor, that the Conservative movement unfairly levels charges of misogynism against those who choose to daven in minyanim that forbid women to play any public ritual role is surely puzzling ("Conservative Rabbis Predict Gay Ban Will Fall, Canadian Shuls Weigh Split With Movement," September 30). That such minyanim are peopled by men who do not consider themselves misogynists is unmistakable. No one would say, for instance, that all men who daven in Orthodox minyanim are misogynists.

What is at issue is what a person purports to believe in when they call themselves a Conservative Jew. Conservative Judaism holds as a core belief that Halacha changes - not by the heavens, but by real people studying Torah in unapologetic conversation with the times in which we live. To believe in halachic change - and then to choose not to accept that Halacha ought to change to reflect women's equality and dignity - may not be misogynistic, but it certainly communicates one's beliefs about women.

It is unfortunate that Roth focuses on the perceived wrongs dealt to those future leaders at the Jewish Theological Seminary who are not egalitarian. It seems to me that the real victims of their choice to daven in non-egalitarian minyanim are the girls and women in the congregations, schools and camps where these students will, upon graduation, serve as rabbis and educators.

Rabbi Joanna Samuels

Congregation Habonim

New York, N.Y.

No Denying High Rate Of Jews Carrying Gene

As the parent of two children with Familial Dysautonomia, I found an August 25 article by Sander Gilman to be of particular interest ("Genetic Diseases? Yes. But Must We Call Them 'Jewish'?"). Although I understand Gilman's point that the implication may be that one group is "inferior," and it would benefit everyone to take advantage of genetic testing, there is no getting away from the fact that one out of 30 Jews of Eastern European descent are carriers of this recessive gene. It is practical and important that information about testing be directed to them via the synagogues, schools and organizations they frequent.

LETTERS

Also, the possibility that some Hasidic families might hide a child who has Familial Dysautonomia is not necessarily because they cannot accept the idea that he or she is not smart - many Familial Dysautonomia children are not even intellectually impaired - but possibly because the parents are concerned the other siblings may find that their family history will make them less eligible for a shidach, or match, one day.

This was not entirely unreasonable, since carrier tests were only recently available. Two carriers can now have a healthy child, with the help of modern medicine.

Elaine Coplin

Hollywood, Fla.

Check Hamas's Role in Fox News Kidnapping

Especially since some Palestinians have been known to falsify events in order to support their cause - see the shelling of the Gaza beach earlier this year, and the exaggeration of the assault on Jenin in 2002 - I am surprised that the Forward would laud the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority for its role in freeing two Fox News newsmen ("Let Them Go," September 1).

Is it not out of the realm of possibility that Hamas orchestrated the entire abduction from start to finish, in order that they might be seen as peacemakers by the West? At the first news conference after their freedom was announced, the former captives spoke of the Palestinian people as being "very beautiful and kindhearted." Odd words from people just released from the clutches of that very kindhearted people. Is it not possible they were forced to say this by Hamas, as a condition for their release?

Before we start to lavish praise on Hamas, perhaps we should wait for the details to emerge as to who was behind these kidnappings. I would expect the Forward to exhibit a tad more prudence before it cheers Hamas for resolving a situation that they are more than capable of having created. As far as we know, the leopard has not yet changed his spots.

Rabbi Aryeh Leifert

San Antonio, Texas

Armenian Appreciation

I greatly appreciated a candid September 1 article on the Armenian genocide issue and the evident polarization in the Jewish community's response to it ("Showdown Set in 'Genocide' Debate").

With fervent anticipation, we Armenians look to the champions of conscience in your community. We sense that now, 90 years after the fact, the balance is finally ready to be tipped toward moral integrity over political expediency. We pray that justice and truth will triumph now so as to help prevent future holocausts.

Robert Ajemian

Sunnyside, N.Y.

Revisit Laws of Warfare

Having studied and taught on Jewish laws of warfare for many years, I was interested in an August 25 article on the Rabbinical Council of America's position that Israel need not be so careful about collateral damage ("Rabbis: Israel Too Worried Over Civilian Deaths"). I went to its Web site and read the statement, which could not possibly have been a responsum, or rabbinic legal opinion.

It would be difficult to justify such a position based on rabbinic laws of warfare, which explicitly requires that non-combatants be permitted to leave the arena of war. Israel's policy honors that law.

LETTERS

And while Hezbollah is a non-government organization and therefore not a signatory to the Geneva conventions or any other covenants concerning the conduct of war, it is an Islamic organization, and the indiscriminate targeting of non-combatants is forbidden by Islamic law. In fact, all acts of terrorism directed at non-combatants conducted by Muslims are in violation of Islamic tradition. Political aims have trumped religious law for groups that practice suicide bombing, firing rockets at non-military targets, and so forth. In addition using civilians as shields by attacking from residential neighborhoods is a war crime.

Grief and outrage at the slaughter of innocents is right and proper. Soldiers engaging in military actions know that their lives are at risk. Soldiers fighting for a nation committed to laws restricting military action must honor those restrictions - no matter who the enemy is. This is not just a matter of national pride, although it is that, too. The Jewish state sets a higher standard for itself, even in the conduct of war. Whether or not that is right is the underlying issue here.

In the Torah, there is a commandment forbidding the cutting down of fruit trees in time of war for military purposes (Deuteronomy 20:19-20), and another requiring a Jewish army to seek peace before prosecuting a war (Deuteronomy 20:10-12). From the beginning, and in our most basic source of law, limits are placed on the conduct of war. It seems to me that the Rabbinical Council of America's position violates both the letter and spirit of that law. I hope they are not letting politics trump our religious tradition.

Rabbi Philip Bentley

Agudas Israel Synagogue

Hendersonville, N.C.

Give Abolitionist Credit

In a September 1 review of my book, "Moses Levy of Florida: Jewish Utopian and Antebellum Reformer," arts writer Glenn Altschuler presents a highly ambiguous assessment ("A Century Later, A Jewish Pioneer Gets His Due"). "More interesting than influential," Altschuler writes of Levy, the subject of my biography is nevertheless "eminently worthy of our attention."

Although I am heartened by this last remark, once the reviewer strips Moses Levy of his influential role, one may reasonably ask: What qualifies this individual as worthy of any note?

Levy's achievements were substantial. For instance, in 1820s London, Levy emerged as a Jewish activist and celebrity without parallel. His "Plan for the Abolition of Slavery" was praised by the editors of *The World*, the leading evangelical newspaper at the time. The *London Literary Chronicle* recommended the tract "to the serious attention of the legislature and the public."

After the release of Levy's plan, a new antislavery organization advanced its innovative tenets. Attendance during Levy's speeches at prominent venues approached 1,000, and his activities were routinely noted in the venerable *Times*. Levy's activism, according to one contemporary, "made his name so well known, as to render any further introduction... unnecessary." This recognition took place at a pivotal time during the British abolitionist crusade, which is regarded by many as the greatest human rights campaign of all time.

Yet Altschuler disregards this evidence and, quite astonishingly, maintains that Levy's abolitionism "received no endorsements."

As I have acknowledged, all utopians are especially vulnerable to a particular brand of cynicism. For obvious reasons, communitarian idealists fell short of their visions of heaven on earth. Thus Levy's best attributes include his role as a disseminator of radical and innovative ideas, and not as a colonizer.

While it is hard to quantify the influence of any activist, the evidence is overwhelming that Levy's clout was most substantial indeed.

LETTERS

C.S. Monaco

Oxford, United Kingdom

Load-Date: September 8, 2006

End of Document

2006: The Year In Pictures: Part 2

The Sunday Times (London)

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Body

PIE IN THE SKY

Belgian chefs tuck in to a gourmet meal suspended on a crane 50 metres above the Brussels traffic in April. The organisers hope the idea will catch on commercially. The seats and safety belts are of a kind used on rollercoasters

FISH OUT OF WATER

Above: rescuers attend to the northern bottlenose whale that became stranded while swimming up the Thames in January. Watched by thousands of onlookers, the men placed the young whale in a special pontoon near Battersea Bridge and then on to a barge in an attempt to transport it to deeper water in the Thames estuary. Sadly, the 18ft mammal died during the journey.

UP IN ARMS

Right: protesters outside the Danish embassy in London in February demonstrate against cartoons satirising the prophet Muhammad. Omar Khayam (centre) a drug offender dressed as a suicide bomber was later arrested and returned to prison for breaking the terms of his parole. Some of his fellow demonstrators were arrested for incitement to murder and stirring up racial hatred

SCENE OF CARNAGE

Top: the scene on the A457 near Abergele, north Wales, where four cyclists were killed after a driver lost control of his car on the icy roads in January

HITTING THE ROOF

Above: houses in Kensal Rise damaged by the tornado that ripped through northwest London earlier this month. Up to 150 houses were affected

FINAL JOURNEY

Above: an RAF C-17 transport plane brings back the coffins of 14 servicemen killed in an air crash in southern Afghanistan in September. A repatriation ceremony was held at RAF Kinloss. The Nimrod surveillance aircraft, taking part in Nato operations, had come down in Kandahar in Kandahar province

GROUND ATTACK

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Below: in September, British soldiers in Afghanistan run to escape an ambush by Taliban insurgents, whose rocket-propelled grenades have set fire to agricultural land. The troops, from 16 Air Assault Brigade, were attacked while patrolling the area near Zumbale September

MARINES FLY IN

Right: in October, Royal Marines arrive in Now Zad, in the southern Afghan province of Helmand, to take over from the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers in assisting Afghan police. The Fusiliers engaged with Taliban fighters 150 times in 105 days as part of Operation Silica

LIFE ON MARS

A January expedition in Hanksville, Utah a site chosen by the Mars Society as resembling Martian terrain. The society is a nonprofit group of scientists dedicated to the exploration and settlement of Mars, and its volunteers endure a variety of exercises to improve our understanding of what life would be like on the Red Planet

LIGHTING-UP TIME

Above: a "circumhorizon arc" appears in the sky over north Idaho in June. This rare meteorological phenomenon is caused by sunlight passing through ice crystals in high clouds. (The white line to the right is the vapour trail of a jet)

ORIENTALL

Yao Defen (far right), 34, sits outside her home with a friend. Her size she stands about 7ft 8in high is the result of a tumour in her pituitary gland. The tallest woman in Asia, she rivals Sandy Allen of the US for the title of tallest woman in the world

FURRY STREAK

Above: moments after Europe win their third successive Ryder Cup in September, a man clad only in a well-placed patch of fur skips across the green and dives into the pond at County Kildare, before (inset) being led off by officials. Right: England's Ricky Hatton (left) in a gripping moment before beating Luis Collazo of the US in Boston in May. Far right: the Formula One driver Jenson Button celebrates after winning the Hungarian Grand Prix in August

LIFE'S A PITCH

Above: English fans try to distract Australia's Shane Warne on day two of the second Ashes test in Adelaide in December. In May he made a memorable splash in the tabloids when a photo showed him cavorting with two 25-year-old models and a blow-up toy. Left, from top: David Beckham throws up after scoring from a free kick against Ecuador in the World Cup in June; the England cricket captain, Andrew Flintoff, despairs in a test match against Australia in Adelaide in December in which they lose to the hosts; the England rugby captain, Martin Corry, slumps to the ground in the latest in a series of humiliating defeats this time against South Africa in November which could cost him his captaincy

URBAN APARTHEID

This aerial view of suburban Sao Paulo caused a stir at the Venice Architecture Biennale, which this year looked at how cities shape our lives. On the left is the shanty town of Paraisopolis (Paradise City). On the other side of the fence, carefully segregated from the favela's shacks, is the leafy quarter of the affluent. The apartment block's tiered balconies, each with its own swimming pool, are designed in a fan shape so that every one catches its share of the sun

HUMAN WAVE

2006: The Year In Pictures: Part 2

Left: in May an exhausted would-be immigrant crawls along Gran Tarajal beach on Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands. He has just landed after a perilous journey, sailing from Africa in a makeshift boat. Some 10,000 illegal African immigrants arrived in the Canaries in the first five months of the year, hoping to find a better life in Europe. The Canaries, seven islands in the Atlantic, are part of Spain but are much closer to Africa than to the Spanish mainland. Below: the man is helped by a Red Cross worker. Bottom: he lies exhausted on the beach among the other would-be immigrants

THE BUMS RUSH

Left: a body-piercer at the Vegetarian Festival in Phuket. Such acts of self mortification are performed to invoke the Chinese gods, who are trusted to protect the brave participants from harm

HELLO, CHEEKY

Above: German workers climb to complete the erection of a vast billboard on an exhibition centre in Oberhausen in May. This eye-catching display advertised the opening of a nearby shopping centre

CULINARY KILLS

Left: villagers create the illusion of severed heads on plates, at a traditional carnival held to celebrate New Year in the Macedonian village of Vevcani

BAT OUT OF HELL

Above: a baseball bat slips from the hand of a Cleveland Indians player and into the crowd, during an away game against the Texas Rangers

GOWN AND OUT

Left: Pete Doherty and Kate Moss at a London Fashion Week event in October. Rumours are rife: that he is fed up with her telling him to give up drugs; that she is pregnant; that they will marry; that they will announce their engagement at the event

SWEEPING STATEMENT

Right: a bad-tempered Boy George, 45, takes to the streets of New York in August to sweep them clean. He was sentenced to five days' community service for wasting police time. The punishment turns into a media circus and he fails to complete his community service

BABY MADONNA

Above: Madonna's decision to adopt one-year-old David Banda from Malawi is deeply controversial. In October she and Guy Richie obtain temporary custody

KLASS ACT

Right: Myleene Klass gets viewers in a lather when she cools down under a waterfall in November, on I'm a Celebrity... Get Me out of Here!

CHURCH MEETING

Left: a heated moment for Charlotte Church and Gavin Henson, on holiday in South Africa in January

WAKE ME UP...

Right: George Michael struggles to stay conscious after being found slumped against his steering wheel for the second time this year, this time in October. He is later cautioned for possessing cannabis

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EQUAL DISABILITY

Above: dressing to match a colour-co-ordinated Heather Mills takes her injured dog to an animal hospital in Brighton in December. Meanwhile, the battle between Mills and McCartney continues it is still canines at dawn

FIGHTING FIT

Right: Kylie Minogue knocks spots off the competition in Sydney, Australia, in November, at her first live show since recovering from breast cancer. Her other costumes that night include a black PVC minidress with laced knee-high boots

GOLD STAR

Left: the US rapper Kanye West (left) wins a gong at February's Brit awards. He performed his track Gold Digger accompanied by 77 bikini-clad women sprayed in gold body paint

GREASE MONKEY

Far left: the Little Britain star David Walliams, swathed in goose fat, gets ready to cross the Channel in July for the charity Sport Relief

AGONISING WAIT

Above: a landslide victim smokes a cigarette as he waits to be evacuated from his village on the Indonesian island of Java. He was rescued from the ruins of his home four days after the disaster on January 4

MINERS' MEMORIAL

Below: a makeshift memorial is set up in front of the Barbour County courthouse, West Virginia, for four miners from the county killed in the Sago coalmine in January. Only one of 13 miners survived the blast

MEASURE OF FAMINE

In July, Medecins Sans Frontieres closes the specialist feeding clinic in Kanyabayonga, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where this malnourished child was taken to be measured and fed. The town had been the scene of fierce fighting

TOO LITTLE WATER

Above: in March, nomadic herdsman near Wajir, in the drought-stricken northeast of Kenya, try to raise a dying camel to its feet. Their aim is to get the animal to a waterhole that might just save its life. A long period without rain has dried out many waterholes and turned rivers to sand, killing thousands of animals

TOO MUCH SNOW

Right: at least 20 people are trapped inside a collapsed ice-skating rink in Germany. The roof of the rink, at Bad Reichenhall in the Bavarian Alps, gives way in early January under a heavy snowfall, which also hampers rescue efforts. Fifteen people, some of them children, are killed in the accident

WHEELS ON FIRE

Left: a burning Israeli vehicle is removed from a street in the West Bank city of Nablus in June. Palestinians set fire to it during clashes with the Israeli army - troops were searching the city to root out militants

SUPREME JUSTICE

Above: in February, Israeli police throw a Jewish settler out of a window in the illegal West Bank settlement of Amona. Settlers clash with riot police after the Supreme Court authorises the demolition of nine homes

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DEATH IN THE SAND

Below left: in June, television news captures Huda Ghaliya, a Palestinian girl of 10, screaming next to the body of her father after an Israeli shell killed seven members of her family on a beach in Beit Lahiya, Gaza

HOLY SMOKE

Below: Lebanese watch Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader, on television in July. As he speaks, black smoke rises from new Israeli attacks on Hezbollah strongholds in the southern suburbs of Beirut

ROYAL FLUSH

Above: one is awkward and embarrassed - Prince Charles with his wife, the Duchess of Cornwall, during their state visit to India in March. Right: Zara Phillips nervously bites her nails before competing in the showjumping section of the Festival of British Eventing at Gatcombe Park in August. She went on to claim individual gold at the World Equestrian Games in Germany, and this month was named BBC Sports Personality of the Year. Far right: the Queen smiles at a smirking Prince Harry as she inspects soldiers at their passing-out parade at Sandhurst in April

BUNNY BUILDER

Above: Hans Wagner shows off his gigantic rabbit, Herman, at his home in Berlin in February. Herman is almost 3ft tall and eats a bale of hay a week

PIG IN THE MIDDLE

Right: a pig clings to a wall at a farm in China in July after widespread flooding caused by the tropical storm Bilis, which claimed more than 600 lives

PANDAMONIUM

Above: baby pandas enjoy a walk in February at China's Wolong nature reserve, which is home to 20% of the 1,500 or so giant pandas left in the world

LIVING IT LARGE

Above: a genuine "elephant in the room", part of an exhibition held by the graffiti artist Banksy in Los Angeles in September. The massive 37-year-old Indian pachyderm was painted from head to tail to look like wallpaper. It was included among other important works such as photographs of a scantily clad Paris Hilton surrounded by live cockroaches, and a picture of two policemen kissing

DRIVEN UP THE WALL

Right: the animal-control officer Tim Orth tries to rescue a raccoon from the wall of an apartment block in Burlington, Iowa, in September. It had been sitting on a fourth-floor window ledge and made a break for it when his would be captor appeared. But the escape was foiled when Roth caught it from a window on the sixth floor. The animal was later released into the countryside

JULY 2, 2006

David Beckham (left) steps down as England captain after the team's unseemly exit from the World Cup in the quarter-final, when they were beaten by Portugal. He was later dropped from the team by the incoming manager Steve McClaren

JULY 6, 2006

2006: The Year In Pictures: Part 2

Al-Qaeda marks the first anniversary of the 7/7 bombings with the release of a video of the Tube bomber Shehzad Tanweer (left), who killed seven people at Aldgate station. On the video he warns that it is 'the beginning of a string of attacks'

JULY 9, 2006

The Swiss tennis champion Roger Federer, 25, wins Wimbledon for the fourth time in succession, beating his Spanish rival, Rafael Nadal. Federer becomes only the seventh man to win four times in a row. 'I'll come back and try for a fifth,' he says

JULY 11, 2006

Within 11 minutes, 209 are killed and over 700 injured when seven co-ordinated bomb blasts tear through trains and stations during the rush hour in Mumbai (left). The attacks came just hours after suspected Islamic extremists killed seven people in Kashmir

JULY 14, 2006

Jason Handy (left), the last man to face the bench at Bow Street magistrates' court, is released on bail after breaching his Asbo. The court whose cast of defendants has included Oscar Wilde, the Kray twins and Jeffrey Archer closed its doors after 271 years

JULY 19, 2006

Wisley, Surrey, registers the hottest July day on record, with temperatures soaring to 97.7F. Across the country, roads melt, railway lines buckle, schools close and zookeepers help animals cool down by giving them fruit-and blood-flavoured ice lollies

JULY 23, 2006

A giant inflatable walk-in art work (left) in Riverside Park, Durham, collapses, killing two women and injuring 13. Up to 30 people were carried off in the structure when it tore free from its moorings, shot 30ft up in the air, then collided with a post

JULY 27, 2006

The British chess prodigy Jessie Gilbert, 19, falls to her death from the eighth floor of a hotel. She was said to be suffering from depression. In a video testimony made two years previously, she claimed her father raped her. He was later found not guilty

JULY 30, 2006

Pamela Anderson, 39, marries the rapper Kid Rock, 35, on a yacht in St Tropez, after an on-off romance lasting several years. 'I'm in love, I'm happy, I see the light,' she wrote on her website. Four months later, both parties filed for divorce

AUGUST 1, 2006

The Cuban leader Fidel Castro, 79, temporarily hands over power to his brother Raul, 75, while having intestinal surgery. In a letter read out on TV he said stress forced him to have the op, and joked he had no plans to hold power when he turned 100

AUGUST 3, 2006

The insurance magnate John Charman is ordered to pay his ex-wife, Beverley (right), £ 48m. It is believed to be the UK's biggest divorce award, about 37% of his £ 131m fortune. The Charmans were married for 29 years. He is to appeal against the ruling

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AUGUST 4, 2006

The Scottish MP Tommy Sheridan, 42, wins his libel case against the News of the World. It took the jury three hours to dismiss allegations that he was a serial adulterer and a swinger who used drugs. The newspaper paid him £ 200,000 in damages

August 4, 2006

A foxhunter becomes the first person in England and Wales to be convicted for illegal hunting with dogs. In a private prosecution by the League Against Cruel Sports, Tony Wright (right), of the Exmoor Foxhounds, is found guilty of breaching the Hunting Act of 2004

AUGUST 9, 2006

Two teenage brothers are found guilty of killing Damilola Taylor. Danny (right) and Rickie Preddie, 18 and 19, were convicted of the manslaughter of Taylor, 10, who bled to death after an attack with a broken bottle in Peckham, south London, in 2000

AUGUST 10, 2006

A plot to blow up passenger planes in flight from Britain to the United States is foiled, and 24 suspects are arrested. The plan entailed detonating devices smuggled in hand luggage and emergency security measures subsequently led to lengthy delays at airports

AUGUST 11, 2006

The UN security council calls for an end to the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon. As well as an end to the violence, the council calls for the release of the three abducted Israeli soldiers, whose kidnapping started the war

AUGUST 15, 2006

A British man (left) is under guard in hospital after jumping off a hotel balcony in Greece with his two children, killing one of them. John Hogan, 32, is later charged with the murder of his son, Liam, 6, and the attempted murder of his daughter, Mia, 2

AUGUST 18, 2006

Pete Bennett, 24, wins Big Brother 7, claiming that the show has 'changed his life for the better'. The musician, who suffers from Tourette syndrome, says the experience helped him rebuild the confidence he lost when he was diagnosed with the condition at 14

AUGUST 20, 2006

The Rolling Stones kick off their UK tour at Twickenham rugby stadium instead of the new Wembley stadium, which is still plagued by building delays. 'I think Wembley is going to be ready when the Arctic Monkeys retire,' says Jagger (right)

AUGUST 24, 2006

Pluto is stripped of its planetary status and reduced to being a 'dwarf planet' after 2,500 scientists find that it fails to dominate its orbit around the sun. Textbooks will now have to describe the solar system as having just eight leading planets

AUGUST 28, 2006

2006: The Year In Pictures: Part 2

At least three people are killed and 20 wounded in a bomb blast in the Turkish resort of Antalya. The attack comes within hours of three bombs exploding in the resort of Marmaris, for which the rebel Kurdistan Freedom Falcons claim responsibility

AUGUST 31, 2006

Two masterpieces by the artist Edvard Munch are recovered two years after they were stolen by masked gunmen from an Oslo museum. The *Scream* and *Madonna* (left) were found in a police operation. 'The damage was much less than feared,' said a spokesman

SEPTEMBER 4, 2006

After 20 years on the loose, the serial rapist James Lloyd is traced through his sister's DNA and jailed for life. His capture is hailed as the biggest victory yet in a 'cold case' using this type of DNA evidence. Lloyd, 49, tied up his victims with tights and stole their shoes

SEPTEMBER 5, 2006

Felipe Calderon is declared Mexico's president-elect after two months of political uncertainty. Judges reject allegations by the losing candidate, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, that there had been widespread fraud throughout the campaign

SEPTEMBER 7, 2006

Tony Blair confirms that he will step down as prime minister within a year. Referring to the ongoing power struggle for his successor, he says: 'It has not been our finest hour, to be frank.' But his farewell speech to the Labour party conference goes down well

SEPTEMBER 12, 2006

The Pope prompts a bitter controversy when he addresses academics in Regensburg, Germany. He quotes a 14th-century Byzantine emperor as saying the Muslim concept of holy war is unreasonable. Muslims are incensed and widespread rioting ensues

SEPTEMBER 17, 2006

An audio recording is discovered in which Ferenc Gyurcsany (right), the prime minister of Hungary, admits that before winning this year's elections, he and his party had lied to the public for four years about the state of the country's economy

SEPTEMBER 19, 2006

A military coup sees the ousting of Thailand's leader Thaksin Shinawatra, whose abrasive style and great wealth had appeared to divide the nation. The leader of the coup, General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, said he wanted to restore democracy in his homeland John Reid, the home secretary, is heckled as he speaks in Leyton, east London, urging Muslim parents to prevent their children from succumbing to Islamic extremism. One opponent, Abu Izzadeen (left), yells: 'How dare you come to a Muslim area?'

SEPTEMBER 24, 2006

A five-month-old baby girl dies after being savaged by two rottweiler guard dogs at a pub run by her grandparents in Leicester. Witnesses described how passers-by looked on helplessly as the dogs mauled the baby's face. The animals were destroyed

SEPTEMBER 29, 2006

2006: The Year In Pictures: Part 2

Two teenage boys survive after being shot one in the arm, the other in the chest inside a crowded McDonald's restaurant in Brixton, south London. Their attacker flees, leaving them on the floor. The Metropolitan Police begins an investigation

OCTOBER 2, 2006

A gunman goes berserk in an Amish school in Pennsylvania, shooting dead five girls and injuring several others before killing himself. The killer, Charles Carl Roberts IV, 32, picked only young girls as victims, in revenge for an incident 20 years ago

OCTOBER 5, 2006

Muslims by suggesting in his local paper that women visitors to his Blackburn surgery who wear a veil might consider removing it. That way, he says he can 'see what the other person means, and not just hear what they say'

OCTOBER 7, 2006

The Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya renowned for exposing abuses of human rights by Russian troops in Chechnya and for her opposition to Putin is shot dead in a lift in Moscow. It is suggested her murder was ordered by the government

OCTOBER 9, 2006

North Korea carries out its first nuclear weapons test in defiance of international warnings. Its ally China expresses 'resolute opposition', but North Korea says the test has not caused a leak of radiation and would maintain 'peace and stability' in the region

OCTOBER 11, 2006

The death toll in Iraq since the US-led invasion tops 655,000, according to an American university. George Bush contests the researchers' methods, but they argue that their 'cluster sample' approach is more reliable than counting dead bodies

OCTOBER 12, 2006

Dhiren Barot, 34, from north London, pleads guilty to conspiring to murder people in a series of bombings in Britain and the US. Prosecutors say he intended to cause 'injury, fear, terror and chaos'. A month later he is sentenced to life

OCTOBER 12, 2006

Justin Hawks (right), the lead singer of the rock band the Darkness, leaves the group and books into the Priory to tackle his cocaine addiction, which he says made him 'volatile and really unpleasant'. He is now considering becoming a counsellor

OCTOBER 12, 2006

The Turkish author Orhan Pamuk wins the 2006 Nobel prize for literature. Earlier this year, Pamuk, 54, faced prosecution for 'insulting Turkishness' for talking about the murder of Armenians in Turkey in the first world war. The charges were dropped

OCTOBER 19, 2006

Aishah Azmi, 24, a teaching assistant in Dewsbury, loses her case for discrimination and harassment against the junior school that has banned her from wearing a full-face veil, or niqab, in class. But her victimisation claim is upheld: she receives £ 1,000 for 'injury to feelings'

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OCTOBER 20, 2006

Clare Short (right) resigns as a Labour MP in protest at what she calls an 'arrogant, error-prone government'. Short, who remains a Labour-party member, said she left because she could 'not go on being rebuked every week'

OCTOBER 30, 2006

A report commissioned by the Treasury gives a stark forecast on climate change. It warns that if a new deal isn't struck to reduce carbon emissions, the costs of disruption to world economies will be 'similar to those associated with the great wars'

OCTOBER 31, 2006

The police marksman who shot dead Jean Charles de Menezes after the failed bombing of July 21, 2005, kills a suspected armed robber in Kent. The Menezes family are 'horrified' that he has returned to duty before the inquiry into Jean Charles's death is complete

NOVEMBER 3, 2006

Jackson Pollock's No 5, 1948 (left) a classic early drip painting by the man dubbed 'Jack the Dripper' is said to become the world's most expensive painting when it is sold privately by the American entertainment mogul David Geffen for a reported £ 73m

NOVEMBER 14, 2006

Almost 200 criminals who were forced to stop taking drugs in jail win payments of up to £ 5,000 each in an out-of-court settlement by the UK Prison Service. The inmates alleged that the 'cold turkey' treatment imposed upon them amounted to assault

NOVEMBER 16, 2006

Millions of shoppers pay double the price for what they believe to be free range eggs, which were actually produced in factory farms. Leading high-street retailers including Tesco, Asda and Sainsbury's had no idea they were part of the scam

NOVEMBER 18, 2006

Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes (right) get married in a castle in the town of Bracciano, Rome. Guests include Richard Gere and Jim Carrey. The Bracciano city hall rented windows of a nearby building for £ 680 each to fans wanting a glimpse of the newlyweds

NOVEMBER 23, 2006

Nine members of a forgery gang receive sentences of up to seven years for flooding the country with over £ 14m in fake notes. Four generations of the same family were involved in the operation. Police believe many of the same notes remain in circulation

NOVEMBER 23, 2006

Alexander Litvinenko (right), 43, a former KGB agent, dies from polonium- 210 radiation poisoning - he claimed at the hands of President Putin. He had recently been investigating the murder of a friend, the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya

NOVEMBER 28, 2006

Michael Grade resigns as chairman of the BBC to become executive chairman of ITV. The BBC is 'disappointed' by his decision. ITV, which has been struggling with falling ratings and advertising, calls his appointment 'a real coup'

2006: The Year In Pictures: Part 2

NOVEMBER 29, 2006

The 20-month-old unborn baby elephant inside the womb that made front-page news around the world is revealed to be a silicon model. The detail is omitted from the original press release from Channel 4 about the documentary, *Animals in the Womb*

NOVEMBER 29, 2006

Andy Robinson, head coach of England's rugby union team, resigns after it suffers a run of eight defeats and its world ranking slumps to seventh place. 'I have been advised that those who have governance over me will not continue to support me,' he says

DECEMBER 1, 2006

Matt Willis is crowned 'King of the Jungle' in the sixth series of *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!* When the former *Busted* star beats Mylene Klass and Jason Donovan (the favourites) his response is: 'This is just weird. I do not know what to say'

DECEMBER 3, 2006

A series of explosions at a fireworks warehouse in East Sussex (left) kills two firemen and injures at least 12. A mushroom cloud of smoke can be seen from several miles away. Twelve ambulances, an air ambulance and 10 fire engines attend the scene

DECEMBER 3, 2006

Anneli Alderton (left), 24, - a victim of the Suffolk serial killer - is seen alive for the last time. She is caught on CCTV on the 17.53 train from Harwich to Colchester after visiting her son. A week later she was found murdered. She was three months pregnant

DECEMBER 5, 2006

Tomma Abts (left), 38, from Germany, wins the Turner prize. She is the first **female** painter to win the £ 25,000 prize since it was founded 22 years ago. The judges describe her paintings as 'compelling images that reveal their complexity over time'

DECEMBER 11, 2006

Iranian students (left) hold pictures of President Ahmadinejad and chant 'Death to the dictator' as he gives a speech. The protest was sparked by his recent denial of the Holocaust, and it was the first time he had faced such public hostility

DECEMBER 11, 2006

Kofi Annan (right) gives his final speech as the UN secretary-general. Annan's tenure, which began in 1997, has been riddled with criticism, including allegations that he did not act swiftly enough to stop the massacres in Srebrenica and Rwanda

DECEMBER 17, 2006

Little Britain's Matt Lucas and his boyfriend, Kevin McGee (right), celebrate their civil partnership with a panto-themed party in London. David Walliams attends as Christopher Biggins and various guests, including Sir Elton John, come as Captain Hook

DECEMBER 17, 2006

2006: The Year In Pictures: Part 2

The Liberal Democrat MP Lembit Opik, 41, announces he is dating Gabriela (near right), one of the Cheeky Girls, the Romanian twins who had a 2002 hit with Cheeky Song (Touch My Bum). He has split up with his fiancée, the weather presenter Sian Lloyd

DECEMBER 18, 2006

A 20-year-old Somali man is convicted of murdering Sharon Beshenivsky (right) during a bungled robbery in Bradford in November last year. Two others are acquitted of murder, but found guilty of manslaughter. The trial, which started 11 weeks ago, continues

DECEMBER 18, 2006

England lose the Ashes in Perth. The Australian team (right) regained the urn, which they lost last year, after beating their rivals by 206 runs in the third test, resulting in a 3-0 lead. The last time the Australians were beaten on home ground was 20 years ago

DECEMBER 19, 2006

A court in Libya sentences five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor (right) to death for deliberately infecting hundreds of children in Libya with HIV. The defendants, arrested in 1999, say that they are being made scapegoats for unhygienic hospitals

DECEMBER 19, 2006

Robert Curbeam and Christer Fuglesang work on the International Space Station. This spacewalk, which lasted over six hours, is Curbeam's fourth setting a record for the number of spacewalks completed on a mission by a single crew member

Load-Date: January 20, 2007

34 to watch in 2007 ; Political figures, entertainers top soon-to-be familiar faces

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Cox International Correspondent

Body

These biographical sketches were compiled by Don Melvin in London, Margaret Coker in Jerusalem, Larry Kaplow in Baghdad, Craig Simons in Beijing, Jeremy Schwartz in Mexico City, Mike Williams in Miami and special correspondents Sabra Ayres in Moscow and Nick Wadhams in Nairobi.

RENE PEREZ

Musician, rapper / 28 / Hato Rey, Puerto Rico

Calle 13 is sold in the reggaeton section of your local record store, but the inventive Puerto Rican duo defies labels. Their first single begins with a klezmer horn, they are known to loop accordions over their beats and their lyrics recall the wickedly clever acrobatics of early Beastie Boys. The group, made up of Perez on the vocals and Eduardo Cabra on beats, has surpassed better-known reggaeton artists like Daddy Yankee and Don Omar, at least in the critics' hearts. They've already won three Latin Grammys and an MTV music video award and have been nominated for a Grammy award. Lately Perez, who studied animation at the Savannah College of Art and Design, has been everywhere, popping up in duets with singers like Nelly Furtado. Look for their sophomore effort in March.

EUROPE

GORDON BROWN

Chancellor of the Exchequer

34 to watch in 2007 Political figures, entertainers top soon-to-be familiar faces

London

Brown, Britain's finance minister, will almost certainly become prime minister in 2007. The current PM, Tony Blair, has said he'll quit during the coming year; Brown looks unbeatable as the new leader of the governing Labor Party and thus the next prime minister. An intellectual heavyweight, he sometimes has to pay for excess baggage weight because of the academic tomes he takes on vacation. But Brown, a dour Scotsman, faces a couple of key questions as he heads for the top job: Will he distance himself from the United States to avoid the tag of "Bush's poodle," which so damaged Blair? And will he ever learn to smile? He's been practicing lately, but the jury's still out.

VLADIMIR PUTIN'S SUCCESSOR

Moscow

The Russian constitution prevents Putin from running for a third term in 2008. Most observers believe he will handpick a successor. So far, two names have emerged as possible candidates: Sergei Ivanov, 53, the defense minister and first deputy prime minister, or Dmitry Medvedev, 41, a deputy prime minister. Ivanov and Putin share a common background. Both are from St. Petersburg. Both are former KGB agents. Ivanov likes to project the image of a hawk.

Medvedev is a longtime Putin loyalist who is also a board member of the state energy giant Gazprom. With a handsome face and a younger look than Ivanov, he is known as the "softer" of the two potential candidates.

LEWIS HAMILTON

Race car driver

21

Tewin Wood, England

When Hamilton drives for McLaren Mercedes at the Grand Prix in Melbourne in March, he will become the first black person ever to race in Formula 1. Blindingly handsome and blindingly fast, he is regarded as one of the most talented drivers of his generation --- and, many say, an odds-on bet to become as much of an icon as Tiger Woods.

Hamilton has always known what he wanted to do, and he has been groomed as a driver from an early age: He first told McLaren he wanted to race for them when he was 10.

LILY COLE

Supermodel

18

London

Cole, an elfin redhead who's already one of the world's hottest supermodels, remains refreshingly down-to-earth. She accepts only limited assignments so she can concentrate on her studies. She got As in her pre-university exams in English, history, drama, philosophy and ethics; she plans to major in politics. She quit as the face of De Beers after learning the company evicted Kalahari Bushmen to free up land for a diamond-mining operation in Botswana. Plucked from the streets by a talent scout when she was 14, her success so far --- including several magazine covers --- seems staggering. But she'll be even bigger news soon. In mid-2007, the movie "Phantasmagoria: The Visions of Lewis Carroll," directed by rock star Marilyn Manson, will be released. Cole plays Alice.

FERNANDO BOTERO

Artist / 74 / Paris, New York

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His works have been praised for their depiction of the everyday life and culture of his native Colombia, and his artistic vision and talent have earned him comparisons with Picasso and Rubens. Known for his portraits and sculptures of almost comically rotund people, Botero has become one of Latin America's best-known living artists. He started painting bullfighting scenes in his native Medellin at age 13, selling them for 5 pesos. But Botero is also a scathing critic of politics and governments, as seen in his recent series of shocking portrayals of the torture of prisoners at the infamous Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. With no shortage of injustice and violence in the world, Botero has plenty of inspiration for future works.

SEGOELNE ROYAL

Socialist Party leader

53

Paris

Royal, a breath of fresh air in the stodgy politics of France, is beautiful, glamorous and effective. In November, this native of Senegal won the nomination of the Socialist Party to run for president, garnering 60 percent of the vote compared with 20 percent for her closest (male) rival. Unlike **female** politicians who emphasize their toughness, Royal, who has four children with her long-term partner, has been photographed wearing a bikini. A committed leftist, she nevertheless emphasizes law-and-order issues and admires British Prime Minister Tony Blair's "Third Way." But she's inexperienced; a recent trip to the Middle East was marred by gaffes. If she defeats the center-right candidate, probably Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, in April, she will become France's first woman president.

SILVA

Singer

17

Vayq, Armenia

Silva Hakobyan, as her name was at birth, grew up in obscurity in a country one-fifth the size of the state of Georgia. From an early age, she felt compelled to sing: It's as necessary to her, she's said, as oxygen. Throughout her childhood, she sang songs written by her brother and sister, honing her craft and entering competitions. Still, few outside Armenia had heard of her. But in December, using the song "I Like," she won the BBC World Service's "Next Big Thing" competition, defeating competitors from around the world. With a voice like an angel and an exquisite pop sensibility, she is likely to release a debut album in 2007; her music is favored to make the transition from unheard to ubiquitous.

TEODOR CURRENTZIS

Musical director, Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre

33

Novosibirsk, Russia

The young conductor from Siberia is creating a stir from Moscow to Paris. Born in Athens, Greece, Currentzis came to Russia in the 1990s to study music and has stayed, he says, to change the way the world sees classical music. His style of grand arm and hand gestures while conducting has surprised audiences who associate Novosibirsk more with gulags and snow than classical musical genius. His appearance --- tall, thin with flowing, long brown hair --- has wooed many of his **female** fans, and attendees at after concert parties say he is more Rolling Stone than Rachmaninoff. Critics say his ego may be bigger than his talent, but most agree that Currentzis' extravagant style has brought new attention to young, Russian talent.

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ILHAM ALIYEV

President of Azerbaijan

45

Baku, Azerbaijan

His critics call Aliyev a dictator who took power after his father's death and a rigged election in 2003. Others see him as a master of a delicate balancing act among Russia, the United States and Iran. As the president of an oil- and gas-rich country, Aliyev has the muscle to stand up to Russia, while at the same time enjoy close ties with Vladimir Putin, who was in the KGB with Aliyev's father.

A new oil pipeline opened this year in Baku that bypasses Russia and carries Caspian Sea oil to Europe and beyond. The United States has been promised permission to open a base in the South Caucasus nation. At the same time, Aliyev pledges peace and friendship with neighboring Iran. If tensions between Iran and the United States increase, or relations with Moscow and Washington sour, will Azerbaijan be forced to choose sides?

MIDDLE EAST

MUQTADA AL-SADR

Shiite cleric and political figure

30-something

Najaf, Iraq

The young cleric has built on the respect for his father, believed to have been assassinated by Saddam Hussein's agents in the 1990s, to run an anti-American Shiite movement born in the slums of Baghdad. His Mahdi militia has fought against U.S. troops and been blamed for systematic killings of Sunni civilians and other Shiites. They hold fundamentalist "courts" to punish foes. But he put his proxies into the parliament and provides key support for Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. His followers lead key ministries that U.S. officials say are corrupt machines funneling money and jobs to al-Sadr's men. With his movement growing rapidly, al-Sadr may hold the key to Iraq's stability or disintegration. Some believe U.S. troops need to go after him and his forces.

TARIQ AL-HASHEMI

Iraq's vice president

64

Baghdad

Al-Hashemi is the highest-ranking Sunni Muslim member of the divided and weak Iraqi government. He has risked the ire of rejectionist Sunnis by taking his religious Iraqi Islamic Party into the government and faced the threat of Shiite extremists who seek to push Sunnis out of leadership. Three of his siblings have been assassinated since April, around the time the new government took office. The gray-haired, English-speaking former business executive threatened to resign this fall unless Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki reined in militias threatening and killing Sunnis. Such a move would signal the end of the tentative Sunni participation in the government and bring a collapse in U.S.-backed attempts to foster reconciliation between the fighting sectarian factions.

SA'AD KHALIFA

Iraqi comic actor

42

Dara'a, Syria

Iraqis watch this diminutive funny man who, with the producers and writers at the popular Al-Sharqiya channel, provides a comical take on the mayhem around them. During Ramadan he starred in the nightly show, "Hurry up, He died," which, in Arabic, can be combined to make the same word as, "Governments." He played the last living Iraqi. His spoof news show offered this headline from the day's violence: "Unknown kidnappers took unknown people to an unknown location." He also stars in the hit show, "Caricature." Much of the taping is done in Dubai. One of Khalifa's co-stars was assassinated in Iraq in November.

MAHMOUD ABBAS

President of the Palestinian Authority

70

Palestinian territories

Abbas is skating on the fine edge of political oblivion. He has failed to persuade his rivals in the Islamic party Hamas to give up armed resistance to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He has also failed to overturn crippling sanctions leveled against Palestinians by the United States, Israel and Europe. Aides say the frustrated Abbas is ready to resign, raising fears that Palestinian politics will take on an even more radical bent. If this occurs, promises in Washington to turn its attention to the Middle East crisis could be too little, too late.

HEBA KOTB

Sex therapist

39

Cairo, Egypt

Kotb is the Arab world's equivalent of Dr. Ruth. Her weekly television show "Big Talk" focuses on all matters sexual: foreplay, impotence and female orgasm. A veiled and observant Muslim who was educated in the United States, Kotb's work is nothing short of revolutionary for a culture that shuns open discussion of sex. Kotb operated a private sex clinic in Cairo for two years before expanding her message to the Arab airwaves. Her advice stems from both her scientific and religious background, and she liberally quotes the Quran as well as Masters & Johnson to her call-in listeners. Her aim isn't sexual promiscuity. It's slowing the number of divorces in the region by bringing education, intimacy and a modicum of liberation to the Arab home.

HASSAN NASRALLAH

Leader of Hezbollah

46

Beirut, Lebanon

Nasrallah, a Shiite sheik, has the power to spark --- or avert --- civil war in his small but important country. He also poses an enormous challenge to the Bush administration's commitment to democracy in the Middle East. Nasrallah's Hezbollah party resigned from the U.S.-backed government, demanding more power for Lebanon's historically disadvantaged Shiites. Nasrallah bucks American policy with his cozy relations with Iran and Syria --- but he has publicly called for peaceful protests to change Lebanon's political system. The catch is his Hezbollah guerrillas, whom many Lebanese admire for ending Israeli occupation of their country and others revile for their destabilizing effect. The question is whether Nasrallah will turn to violence if Lebanon's president refuses to share power with the country's largest demographic group.

AMI AYALON

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Politician and peace activist, former general

51

Kerem Maharal, Israel

Ayalon is the type of politician Israelis are nostalgic for: a career military man, a former intelligence chief and an ardent peace activist. No wonder he's the leading candidate to take over the Labor Party come spring. For more than a year Labor has moved lockstep with the ruling Kadima Party of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his policies against immediate negotiations with Palestinians and for deep welfare cuts, angering the party's leftist base. If Ayalon wins Labor's internal elections, he could revitalize peace efforts with his "People's Voice" accord, a document that satisfies most Palestinian demands, opens Jerusalem for all groups and ends Israeli settler presence in the West Bank. From an ex-general's lips, this vision --- like Ayalon's Labor predecessor Yitzhak Rabin's Oslo Accord - could muster support from cynical and war-weary Israelis.

MOHAMMAD ALI ALABBAR

Tycoon and visionary

46

Dubai

Alabbar is the chairman of Emaar, one of Dubai's largest companies, whose construction, education and health care projects are modernizing the Middle East. An economist by training, Alabbar made a fortune by building shopping malls across the region. Now, his new entrepreneurial goals have a more humanitarian bent. By 2010 he wants to operate chains of private U.S.-modeled schools and health care clinics stretching from Egypt to India - social services that many regional governments have failed to provide but will be crucial for the region's future economic stability. His vision extends to politics as well. He's one of the few Arab businessmen to have met with Israeli officials about development projects in a future independent Palestinian state.

LATIN AMERICA

FIDEL CASTRO

President of Cuba

80

Havana

After 47 years as a fire-breathing icon of anti-Americanism, Castro may well pass from the scene in 2007. His failure to show at his own delayed birthday bash in December confirmed to most Cuba-watchers that Castro is gravely ill, perhaps with terminal stomach cancer. While Cuban exiles have long hoped for radical change in post-Castro Cuba, experts say that isn't likely. Castro's brother, Raul, 75, has already quietly and firmly taken over, aided by several younger leaders. Expect a big party among exiles in Miami when Fidel finally dies, but little drama on the island itself, other than a huge, somber funeral.

HUGO CHAVEZ

President of Venezuela

52

Caracas

34 to watch in 2007 Political figures, entertainers top soon-to-be familiar faces

Filling in for Fidel Castro as America's chief critic in its own backyard will be Hugo Chavez, a bombastic populist fresh off winning a new six-year term in December. Flush with oil money, Chavez has built impressive social programs in Venezuela's poor barrios and captured the imagination of Latin America's impoverished millions with his America-bashing rhetoric. But experts say his attempts to spread socialism and build a new, Third World anti-American coalition won't amount to much. Still, expect new fountains of propaganda from the man who stood before the United Nations and called George W. Bush "the devil." His other favorite nickname for Bush is "Mr. Danger."

FELIPE CALDERON

President of Mexico

44

Morelia, Mexico

The first few months of 2007 will be crucial for the new Mexican president. Calderon faces a deeply divided country approaching near rebellion in some states. Look for the conservative to push popular reforms, like cutting the cost of government bureaucracy, to build up some badly needed political capital. Calderon must walk a painfully narrow tightrope: Missteps could plunge his administration into six years of darkness. He will be continuously hounded by leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who claims Calderon beat him through electoral fraud and has promised to shadow him for the duration of his rule.

ANA DE LA REGUERA

Actress

29

Veracruz, Mexico

After enchanting Mexico and much of Latin America, De la Reguera is poised to become a marquee name north of the border. Often compared with Spanish superstars Penelope Cruz and Paz Vega, the former telenovela actress has hit the big time in her native Mexico, starring in a slew of movies and hosting MTV's Latin American video award show. U.S. audiences caught a glimpse of her as an angelic nun in Jack Black's "Nacho Libre" and look for her to return to U.S. screens in 2007 with the releases of "Celestina," "Paraiso Travel" and "A Happy Death." She has also landed gigs as spokeswoman for Macy's and Caress, so her face could suddenly be everywhere.

JOAQUIN "EL CHAPO" GUZMAN

Drug cartel leader

52

Sinaloa, Mexico

"El Chapo," or Shorty, is the most visible face of the nearly five-year drug war that has decimated Nuevo Laredo and left more than 2,000 dead in 2006. After escaping prison in 2001 in a laundry basket, Guzman has strengthened his Sinaloa Cartel and set his sights on the territories of the Matamoros-based Gulf Cartel. Known for digging elaborate tunnels along the border, Guzman has been mythologized in Mexican pop culture and is the subject of numerous narcorridos, or folk songs glamorizing the drug trade. The battle between the two cartels may well be the biggest challenge facing new President Felipe Calderon. Will the saga end in 2007? Residents are praying one cartel emerges triumphant, if only to reduce the bloodshed.

ALFONSO CUARON

Film director

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45

Mexico City

Cuaron has directed some of Mexico's most cutting-edge films, like "Y Tu Mama Tambien," the 2001 film that helped launch the careers of Mexican actors Gael Garcia Bernal and Diego Luna. His most recent effort, 2006's critically acclaimed "Children of Men," cemented his reputation as one of the world's most technically accomplished directors for his long, single-take shots. Cuaron is among a trio of Mexican directors --- including "Hellboy's" Guillermo del Toro and Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu of "Babel" and "Amores Perros" fame --- bringing Mexican film to prominence. With three projects in the works, including a drama about Mexico's 1968 student uprisings, look for Cuaron to continue to shine.

AFRICA

SHEIK HASSAN DAHIR AWEYS

Leader of Somali militant Islamic movement

71

Mogadishu, Somalia

Aweys is one of the most influential leaders in the loose band of Islamic groups known as the Council of Islamic Courts that now controls much of Somalia. He will help determine whether the lawless country erupts into war that could engulf the Horn of Africa. A Muslim sheik, Aweys denies links to terrorism, though he was a leader of an Islamic group that the United States has branded a terrorist organization, and it is his prominence in the group that has fueled fears that the Somali Islamists are linked to al-Qaida. A former colonel in Somalia's army, he is also a bitter enemy of Ethiopia, which backs the transitional government holed up in the town of Baidoa. Nicknamed "The Fox," Aweys has talked of a "Greater Somalia" incorporating Ethiopia and Kenya.

GENEVIEVE NNAJI

Actress

27

Lagos, Nigeria

Nigeria's film industry --- known as Nollywood --- is booming. And it has no bigger celebrity than Nnaji. The star of dozens of low-budget but widely popular films, Nnaji is a rare African actress bidding for the tabloid-style fame of her American contemporaries. She signed a lucrative sponsorship deal as the face of Lux soap ("Lux Brings Out The Star In You") and has her own music CD titled "No More." Nnaji's success outside Africa may be a sign that Nollywood is ready to break into the Western market at last. A few African films have earned praise abroad --- South Africa's "Tsotsi" won the Oscar for best foreign film--- but Nnaji could help bring to African filmmakers the lasting respect they deserve.

ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF

President of Liberia

68

Monrovia, Liberia

Johnson Sirleaf became Liberia's president in early 2006 on promises to restore lasting peace to her country, shattered by two decades of war. The new year will bring her biggest test: The honeymoon with her people is over. She must prove that she can neutralize the thousands of former child soldiers who have yet to disarm and have no

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qualms about resorting to violence. She must jump-start the economy. And she must create a haven of peace that keeps her neighbors, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast, from sliding into renewed chaos themselves. Johnson Sirleaf has pressed the United Nations to lift embargoes on timber and diamonds, resources that her predecessors sold off to fund their private armies and pad their foreign bank accounts. Can she bring tangible benefit to her people --- such as electricity and roads that can actually be driven on --- to sustain her reputation as West Africa's best hope?

ZACKIE ACHMAT

AIDS activist

44

Johannesburg, South Africa

Achmat, an HIV-positive gay man, once refused to take anti-retroviral drugs even though he could afford them because patent restrictions made them too costly for South Africa's poor. Achmat dropped his protest in 2003 after forcing pharmaceutical companies to allow some generic drugs in South Africa, one of the countries hardest hit by the AIDS pandemic. He is now helping turn his nation's AIDS policy from an embarrassment into an example for much of the continent. Achmat is also bent on drawing attention to the poorly publicized links between AIDS and tuberculosis, estimated to infect two-thirds of AIDS patients in sub-Saharan Africa. He is pushing drug companies to invest more research in tuberculosis drugs, many of which are decades old.

GODFREY "GADO" MWAMPEMBWA

Political cartoonist / 37 / Nairobi, Kenya

One of Africa's most famous political cartoonists, Mwampembwa is helping drive a cartooning renaissance across the continent --- from Nigeria to South Africa to Uganda --- that has gained him fame abroad and intense dislike from his own leaders. In a newspaper-mad culture, millions see Gado's trenchant commentary in Kenya's leading daily, The Nation. His favorite subjects include the government's endemic corruption and the often petty squabbles of Kenyan politicians. Gado has faced down threats from government ministers before and could do so again in 2007, with elections set for the end of the year. Will Kenya's leaders tolerate such skewering with the stakes so high? Kenya emerged from dictatorship just five years ago, and some of its politicians are still unaccustomed to the artist's poisoned pencil.

ASIA

BAN KI-MOON

Incoming United Nations secretary-general

62

Seoul, South Korea

Polite. Conciliatory. Loyal. Those are words often used to describe Ban, who will replace Kofi Annan as U.N. secretary general on Jan. 1. Capping a career with the South Korean foreign ministry, Ban has vowed that his U.N. tenure "will be marked by ceaseless efforts to build bridges and close divides." With the world more entwined than ever --- with everything from terrorism to environmental protection demanding a global response --- whether he creates consensus among the organization's 192 member states will be of genuine importance.

MUHAMMAD YUNUS

Founder and director of Grameen Bank

66

34 to watch in 2007 Political figures, entertainers top soon-to-be familiar faces

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Bangladesh's "banker to the poor," Yunus will capitalize on publicity from the Nobel Peace Prize --- awarded to him and his Grameen Bank in December --- to urge money-lenders around the world to make small-business loans to the poor. Yunus is credited with inventing microfinance, the practice of lending small amounts of money to people too poor to qualify for typical bank loans. Since Yunus started the Grameen Bank with a \$27 loan in 1974, it has grown to nearly 7 million borrowers, 97 percent of whom are women. "Poverty is the absence of all human rights," Yunus said in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech. "Once the poor can unleash their energy and creativity, poverty will disappear very quickly."

SHINZO ABE

Prime minister of Japan

52

Tokyo

Abe has faced a trial by fire since becoming Japan's prime minister in September: He has stepped up pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program and moved to improve strained relations with China. As head of the world's second-largest economy and America's closest Asian ally, his next moves will be crucial. In 2007, analysts will watch to see whether Abe builds regional cooperation or becomes more isolationist, perhaps even pushing for a stronger Japanese military to counter the North Korean threat and China's growing military. Such a shift would stoke regional tensions.

MARGARET CHAN

Incoming World Health Organization director-general

59

Hong Kong

When Chan, a former head of Hong Kong's health ministry, takes control of the world's largest public health organization on Jan. 4, she'll face a slew of challenges. Along with continuing programs to combat traditional diseases like tuberculosis and AIDS, she'll be tasked with managing the global response to bird flu, which has killed at least 154 people, mostly in Asia, and could spark a deadly pandemic if the H5N1 virus mutates into a form that spreads easily among people. In a speech accepting the WHO post, Chan promised to focus on improving public health in Africa and among women. "Improvements in the health of the people of Africa and the health of women are key indicators of the performance of WHO," she said.

DALAI LAMA

Tibetan spiritual leader

71

Dharamsala, India

Even Dalai Lamas can't live forever. While Tibetans believe that the current Dalai Lama, who is still healthy, will be reincarnated after he dies, pressure to reach a compromise with Beijing will grow in 2007 for the Tibetan government in exile. The Dalai Lama is concerned that his passing could leave the exiled community fragmented while Tibet's traditional culture is altered by the immigration of ethnic Chinese; Beijing, which has controlled Tibet since 1950, is interested in appeasing international opinion before the 2008 Olympics. The Dalai Lama's representatives have held five rounds of secret discussions with Beijing since 2002, and his chief envoy said last

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month that Tibetan exiles might be willing to "accept their place within the People's Republic of China of their own free will.

Graphic

Photo: SA'AD KHALIFA/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: PASCAL PAVANI / Getty ImagesPainter Fernando Botero, 74, shows some of his works that depict the torture and abuse of Iraqis in Abu Ghraib prison. Botero, a native of Colombia, has become one of Latin America's best-known living artists./ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: LEWIS HAMILTON/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: ILHAM ALIYEV/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: MAHMOUD ABBAS/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: MOHAMMAD ALI ALABBAR/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: HUGO CHAVEZ/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: FELIPE CALDERON/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: MARGARET CHAN/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: LILY COLE/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: PAUL HAWTHORNE / Associated PressRENE PEREZ of Calle 13/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: ANNA ZIEMINSKI / Getty ImagesActivist Zackie Achmat embraces a supporter in Cape Town, South Africa. Achmat is credited with forcing pharmaceutical companies to allow some generic AIDS drugs in the nation./ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: GODFREY "GADO" MWAMPEMBWA/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: MUQTADA AL-SADR/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: SHEIK HASSAN DAHIR AWEYS/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: GORDON BROWN/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: Sergei Ivanov/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: SEGOELNE ROYAL/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: SILVA/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: TEODOR CURRENTZIS/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: TARIQ AL-HASHEMI/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: AMI AYALON/ImageData* ImageData*

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Photo: HEBA KOTB/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: HASSAN NASRALLAH/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: FIDEL CASTRO/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: ANA DE LA REGUERA/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: JOAQUIN "EL CHAPO" GUZMAN/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: ALFONSO CUARON/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: BAN KI-MOON/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: MUHAMMAD YUNUS/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: SHINZO ABE/ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: DALAI LAMA/ImageData* ImageData*

Graphic: A political cartoon by GODFREY "GADO" MWAMPEMBWA/ImageData*

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Unwarranted attacks

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Body

I'VE VISITED Israel on many occasions over the past 30 years and have many friends and family there. I have also experienced some of the incidents at first hand and at the same time learned much about how Israelis and Arabs in very many areas of the country, to this day, live and work in harmony.

Over the years, Hezbollah has been installing rocket launchers under cover, next to and often in domestic buildings in many villages in the south.

When rockets are launched the Israelis get a laser fix on the firing position and their bombers try take to them out. The local population has been continuously informed that they should get well clear before the raids start.

Some years ago, my wife and I were awaiting a train in Nahariya when out of the blue rockets were fired from Lebanon killing two elderly female tourists.

Israel has never initiated any such action unless it has been attacked.

HAROLD W. TOBIAS, Clarkston, Glasgow.

Load-Date: August 11, 2006

A Greenham Common woman: her part in the Cold War's downfall

The Times (London)

September 2, 2006, Saturday

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Section: FEATURES; Books; Pg. 8

Length: 1426 words

Byline: Jane Wheatley

Body

Ann Pettit, founder of the peace camp, has written a memoir of her 10-year protest. She recalls with Jane Wheatley how the anti-missile movement was born in a Welsh cottage

IN THE SUMMER OF 1982, IN A restaurant in a wooden shack in a forest outside Leningrad at the height of the Cold War, a young Englishwoman stepped up to the bar where a listless muzak was playing and handed over a tape of early Elvis Presley.

The first track was Hound Dog: "The effect on the assembled diners was electrifying. Everything stopped, all eating, all conversation, then tables and chairs were pushed aside and as one body the diners threw themselves into frenzied dancing. They boogied wildly through Blue Suede Shoes, Jailhouse Rock, Don't be Cruel, till suddenly, in mid track, the tape was switched off and replaced by safe Soviet muzak. Shrugging their shoulders, the dancers returned to their tables."

The young woman and her two companions had travelled to the USSR to promote the idea that, as no one on either side really wanted to go to war, the Iron Curtain was a case of Emperor's new clothes. The visit was an act of extraordinary optimism and courage: peace campaigners were generally believed by the West to be Communist sympathisers and by the East to be in the pay of the CIA. Today, it would be like rocking up to a Hezbollah stronghold and over a cup of mint tea suggesting that all this bombing was really very silly when all the average person on both sides wanted was to live in peace with their neighbours.

The road to Russia began in the spring of 1981 with four women sitting round a kitchen table in a Welsh farmhouse. The host was Ann Pettit, owner of the Elvis tape, and they were meeting to discuss her plan to stage a march from Cardiff to Greenham Common in Berkshire to protest at the imminent arrival of US cruise and Pershing missiles at the military base there. The plan was modest: the march, involving perhaps 50 women, would be the protest, then they would all go home again.

Instead, the decade-long Greenham Common Peace Camp would become perhaps the most iconic, certainly the most enduring, symbol of anti-war sentiment that the world had seen.

The women had six small children between them, very little money and no official support from CND or anyone else. But they were intelligent, well informed about East-West politics and angry: "The Cold War," writes Pettit in her memoir, "consisted of two ruling powers, each of whom believed the other was possessed by such insane malevolence as to be on the brink of armed invasion, an attack which could only be deterred by the possession of enormous quantities of nuclear weapons."

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They called themselves Women for Life on Earth -"because these weapons go on killing silently and invisibly through generations as yet unborn" -and set off from Cardiff on a hot August morning with plentiful supplies of lemonade, biscuits, Elastoplast and sunblock, wearing scarves displaying the figure of a naked woman with a raised, clenched fist. They arrived at the gates of Greenham air base a month later with lengths of chain and padlocks bought at a local ironmongers and a newly-formed plan to chain themselves to the perimeter fence.

When the first women walked up to the gate, the single policeman on duty thought that they were the cleaners. Subsequent reaction was equally and disappointingly humdrum: "The British military regarded us as a practical problem, a health and safety issue," Pettit recalls, "they showed us where the tap was for water and how to dig latrines and where the manhole was to tip our Elsan buckets of sewage." In an attempt to drum up media interest, one of the women went to the offices of The Sun: "What can we do to make you take some notice?" she asked a reporter despatched downstairs to see her. "Stay there," he said.

"What is the point?" Pettit asked a friend, a Catholic priest, in growing frustration at their lack of impact. "It's a witness," he told her, "an act of great evil is planned for this place, and it is better to stand before it as a silent witness, than to walk away and pretend not to know."

There was a march to Hyde Park where Pettit gave an impassioned speech which brought sacks of letters, visitors and offers of support. But it wasn't until December the following year -when more than 12,000 women linked arms to surround the 9-mile perimeter fence in a 12-hour vigil -that the world finally took notice. Embrace the Base "ambushed the British psyche" in Pettit's words: "It was unique in the history of protest and uniquely effective."

The following December, 50,000 protesters turned up for a re-run, lighting candles, building fires, singing songs among the brambles and oaks of the English wood that surrounded the base.

That same month, the two chief negotiators from the US and USSR left stalled arms negotiations and went for a walk in a different wood outside Geneva. They talked about a programme of nuclear arms reduction. Nothing would happen immediately, but it was a first crucial step. Within a year the Cold War was officially over.

A few weeks before the 25th anniversary of the arrival of the first women at Greenham Common, Ann Pettit and I meet at the site of the original main gate to the base, now an unguarded mini roundabout leading to a business park. We look round for an entrance to the common, returned to the people of Newbury "for their enjoyment" but find our way barred: "I knew I should have brought my wire cutters," murmurs Pettit. We drive round to the proper entrance: "Ah, the blue gate!" she exclaims. "This is where the young lesbians had their camp, they were exuberant party girls."

Different factions dispersed to different gates, she explains: There were the militant feminists, the spiritual ones and the Welsh women at yellow gate where you could always be sure of a cup of tea and some cake. She points to a substantial house, partially hidden behind tall trees: "That was the HQ of RAGE - Ratepayers against the Greenham Encampment. They claimed we brought down their property values."

We walk through a friendly wooden side gate, its top rail worn smooth by the passage of many hands, and on to the common. There are Exmoor ponies grazing here now and little burnet moths, jet black with red spots on their wings.

"We are inside the base here," Pettit says soberly. Does she miss all the excitement? "No," she says. "It tailed off really. The turning point was, 1983-84; Gorbachev the reformer saw the way forward to peace. In 1985 I had my third baby and that really put a stopper on my campaigning days.

I was a woman with three children, a husband, a cow that needed milking and a vegetable patch."

She continued to visit the camp, walking round the base and chatting to soldiers detailed to watch the fence in case the women tried to break in: "Some of them were sympathetic. During Embrace the Base, a young American soldier pushed a note through the wire; it said something like, 'God bless you. There are some of us in here who agree with what you are doing.' Then there was a postscript: 'Don't tell anyone where this came from'."

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She has brought a picnic: a salad of homegrown beans, peas, tiny new potatoes, eggs from a neighbour's hens, parsley. We eat it shaded from the hot July sun by the branches of a beech sapling.

Pettit has written a memoir of those stirring times, a clear-eyed, moving account of an era, so easily forgotten in the maelstrom of current events, when the world stood so frighteningly and for so long on the brink of destruction.

The most surprising chapters tell the story of the bold visit to the Soviet Union and the friendships made with fellow peace campaigners there who risked so much more for their beliefs. At one point, Pettit and her companions were grilled by a KGB colonel: their stomachs turned to water and they dared not lift their cups of tea for fear of spilling.

Yet the title, *Walking to Greenham*, gives no hint of such drama: rather it suggests right-on sandals and lentils. She should change it, I venture: do a Spike Milligan and call it *The Cold War: My Role in its Downfall*. Pettit laughs: Greenham, she agrees, did its bit towards ending the arms race: "We were accused of being communists: so many parallels with today -if you criticise Israel, 'what are you, a Muslim lover?' But it was a time when you knew you had to do something."

* *WALKING TO GREENHAM* by Ann Pettit

Honno, £ 8.99

Times Bookshop £ 8.59 (free p&p)

* *COMMON GROUND* by David Fairhall

I. B. Tauris, £ 18.99; 224pp

Times Bookshop £ 16.99 (free p&p) 0870 1608080

timesonline.co.uk/booksfirst

Load-Date: September 14, 2006

Ninety Iraqis killed during Shia festival

Daily Mail (London)

January 31, 2007 Wednesday

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Section: ED 1ST; Pg. 12

Length: 175 words

Body

AT least 90 Iraqis died yesterday in a wave of bombings and shootings.

The attacks, timed to coincide with the Shi'ite celebration of Ashura, were blamed on Sunni insurgents.

Iraqi authorities had deployed 11,000 police and soldiers in Kerbala, the focus of the religious festival, but the bombers struck elsewhere.

Three women and a teenage boy were among 13 killed when a roadside explosion ripped through a procession of Shi'ites in Khanaqin, north-east of Baghdad.

Minutes later, a suicide bomber struck worshippers outside a Shi'ite mosque in Balad Ruz, 50 miles south of Khanaqin, killing 23.

Gunmen also attacked two minibuses carrying pilgrims returning from Najaf, the holy city 100 miles south of the Iraqi capital. Four were killed and nine wounded.

An estimated 50 more Iraqis were killed in further attacks around the country, police said.

Tensions were evident during other Ashura celebrations across the Middle East with Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah warning a huge gathering in Beirut's southern suburbs of the threat of civil war.

Load-Date: January 31, 2007

Letter: You say - Terror is the enemy

Liverpool Daily Echo
August 10, 2006, Thursday
Main Edition

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 20

Length: 155 words

Byline: Tony Higgs

Body

WHY is everyone treating Israel as villains, when they are trying to defend themselves against terrorist organisations?

Instead of the other Arab nations having a go at Israel, why do they not support the Lebanese government in getting rid of Hezbollah?

The Arab nations say they want peace in the Middle East' it is time they do something instead of, in some cases, supporting and hiding terrorists.

No-one wants to see innocent women and children being killed or seriously injured, but they are on both sides of the fence, not just on one side.

The whole civilised world should be more pro-active in getting rid of terrorists and not be afraid to speak out. The only way to beat terrorists is for everyone to unite under one umbrella and work towards a common goal, of making the world a safer and fairer place to live, work and raise a family without fear of being targeted for being of one religion, colour or gender.

Tony Higgs, Walton

Load-Date: August 10, 2006

LEADERS TAKE A MODERATE VIEW

Daily Record

August 18, 2006, Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 13

Length: 163 words

Byline: JoanBurnie

Body

GOOD to hear the Israeli warlords think their only mistake was not going in hard enough.

See, bombing the whole of Lebanon flat and killing tens of thousands instead of a piffling 1000-odd would clearly have solved the Middle East's problems.

But then I've long thought the Israeli P.M. is actually high up in Hezbollah which is why he was so eager to turn some of the nastiest terrorists going into worldwide heroes.

Meanwhile a word to Dr Syed Pasha, the secretary general of the Union of Muslim Organisations of the UK - don't make a bad situation worse by demanding GB brings in Sharia Family Law for your co-religionists.

Maybe stoning adulterous women to death and whipping rape victims would be a big draw, especially during the Edinburgh Festival, but I have a feeling Women's Aid, not to mention female Muslims, might not be terribly happy about it.

Still, big of Dr Pasha not to insist it should apply to us all. Obviously he's one of those moderates we keep hearing about.

Graphic

LEADER: Olmert

Load-Date: August 18, 2006

Islam, Terror and the Second Nuclear Age

The New York Times

October 29, 2006 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section 6; Column 1; Magazine; Pg. 50

Length: 8349 words

Byline: By Noah Feldman

Noah Feldman, a contributing writer, is a law professor at New York University and adjunct senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Body

I.

For nearly 50 years, worries about a nuclear Middle East centered on Israel. Arab leaders resented the fact that Israel was the only atomic power in the region, a resentment heightened by America's tacit approval of the situation. But they were also pretty certain that Israel (which has never explicitly acknowledged having nuclear weapons) would not drop the bomb except as a very last resort. That is why Egypt and Syria were unafraid to attack Israel during the October 1973 Yom Kippur War. "Israel will not be the first country in the region to use nuclear weapons," went the Israelis' coy formula. "Nor will it be the second."

Today the nuclear game in the region has changed. When the Arab League's secretary general, Amr Moussa, called for "a Middle East free of nuclear weapons" this past May, it wasn't Israel that prompted his remarks. He was worried about Iran, whose self-declared ambition to become a nuclear power has been steadily approaching realization.

The anti-Israel statements of the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, coupled with Iran's support for **Hezbollah** and Hamas, might lead you to think that the Arab states would welcome Iran's nuclear program. After all, the call to wipe the Zionist regime from the map is a longstanding cliché of Arab nationalist rhetoric. But the interests of Shiite non-Arab Iran do not always coincide with those of Arab leaders. A nuclear Iran means, at the very least, a realignment of power dynamics in the Persian Gulf. It could potentially mean much more: a historic shift in the position of the long-subordinated Shiite minority relative to the power and prestige of the Sunni majority, which traditionally dominated the Muslim world. Many Arab Sunnis fear that the moment is ripe for a Shiite rise. Iraq's Shiite majority has been asserting the right to govern, and the lesson has not been lost on the Shiite majority in Bahrain and the large minorities in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. King Abdullah of Jordan has warned of a "Shiite crescent" of power stretching from Iran to Lebanon via Iraq and (by proxy) Syria.

But geopolitics is not the only reason Sunni Arab leaders are rattled by the prospect of a nuclear Iran. They also seem to be worried that the Iranians might actually use nuclear weapons if they get them. A nuclear attack on Israel would engulf the whole region. But that is not the only danger: Sunnis in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere fear that the Iranians might just use a nuclear bomb against them. Even as Iran's defiance of the United States and Israel wins

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support among some Sunnis, extremist Sunnis have been engaging in the act of takfir, condemning all Shiites as infidels. On the ground in Iraq, Sunni takfiris are putting this theory into practice, aiming at Shiite civilians and killing them indiscriminately. Shiite militias have been responding in kind, and massacres of Sunni civilians are no longer isolated events.

Adding the nuclear ingredient to this volatile mix will certainly produce an arms race. If Iran is going to get the bomb, its neighbors will have no choice but to keep up. North Korea, now protected by its own bomb, has threatened proliferation -- and in the Middle East it would find a number of willing buyers. Small principalities with huge U.S. Air Force bases, like Qatar, might choose to rely on an American protective umbrella. But Saudi Arabia, which has always seen Iran as a threatening competitor, will not be willing to place its nuclear security entirely in American hands. Once the Saudis are in the hunt, Egypt will need nuclear weapons to keep it from becoming irrelevant to the regional power balance -- and sure enough, last month Gamal Mubarak, President Mubarak's son and Egypt's heir apparent, very publicly announced that Egypt should pursue a nuclear program.

Given the increasing instability of the Middle East, nuclear proliferation there is more worrisome than almost anywhere else on earth. As nuclear technology spreads, terrorists will enjoy increasing odds of getting their hands on nuclear weapons. States -- including North Korea -- might sell bombs or give them to favored proxy allies, the way Iran gave Hezbollah medium-range rockets that Hezbollah used this summer during its war with Israel. Bombing through an intermediary has its advantages: deniability is, after all, the name of the game for a government trying to avoid nuclear retaliation.

Proliferation could also happen in other ways. Imagine a succession crisis in which the Saudi government fragments and control over nuclear weapons, should the Saudis have acquired them, falls into the hands of Saudi elites who are sympathetic to Osama bin Laden, or at least to his ideas. Or Al Qaeda itself could purchase ready-made bombs, a feat technically much less difficult than designing nuclear weapons from scratch. So far, there are few nuclear powers from whom such bombs can be directly bought: as of today, only nine nations in the world belong to the nuclear club. But as more countries get the bomb, tracing the seller will become harder and harder, and the incentive to make a sale will increase.

II.

The prospect of not just one Islamic bomb, but many, inevitably concentrates the mind on how Muslims -- whether Shiite or Sunni -- might use their nuclear weapons. In the mid-1980's, when Pakistan became the first Islamic state to go nuclear, it was still possible to avoid asking the awkward question of whether there was something distinctive about Islamic belief or practice that made possession of nuclear technology especially worrisome. Most observers assumed that Islamic states could be deterred from using nuclear force just like other states: by the threat of massive retaliation.

During the last two decades, however, there has been a profound change in the way violence is discussed and deployed in the Muslim world. In particular, we have encountered the rise of suicide bombing. In historic terms, this development is new and unexpected. Suicide bombing has no traditional basis in Islam. As a technique, it was totally absent from the successful Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union. Although suicide bombing as a tool of stateless terrorists was dreamed up a hundred years ago by the European anarchists immortalized in Joseph Conrad's "Secret Agent," it became a tool of modern terrorist warfare only in 1983, when Shiite militants blew up the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon.

Since then, suicide bombing has spread through the Muslim world with astonishing speed and on a surprising course. The vocabulary of martyrdom and sacrifice, the formal videotaped preconfession of faith, the technological tinkering to increase deadliness -- all are now instantly recognizable to every Muslim. And as suicide bombing has penetrated Islamic cultural consciousness, its list of targets has steadily expanded. First the targets were American soldiers, then mostly Israelis, including women and children. From Lebanon and Israel, the technique of suicide bombing moved to Iraq, where the targets have included mosques and shrines, and the intended victims have mostly been Shiite Iraqis. The newest testing ground is Afghanistan, where both the perpetrators and the targets are orthodox Sunni Muslims. Not long ago, a bombing in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand Province, killed

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Muslims, including women, who were applying to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. Overall, the trend is definitively in the direction of Muslim-on-Muslim violence. By a conservative accounting, more than three times as many Iraqis have been killed by suicide bombings in the last 3 years as have Israelis in the last 10. Suicide bombing has become the archetype of Muslim violence -- not just to frightened Westerners but also to Muslims themselves.

What makes suicide bombing especially relevant to the nuclear question is that, by design, it unsettles the theory of deterrence. When the suicide bomber dies in an attack, he means to send the message "You cannot stop me, because I am already willing to die." To make the challenge to deterrence even more stark, a suicide bomber who blows up a market or a funeral gathering in Iraq or Afghanistan is willing to kill innocent bystanders, including fellow Muslims. According to the prevailing ideology of suicide bombing, these victims are subjected to an involuntary martyrdom that is no less glorious for being unintentional.

So far, the nonstate actors who favor suicide bombing have limited their collateral damage to those standing in the way of their own bombs. But the logic of sacrificing other Muslims against their own wills could be extended to the national level. If an Islamic state or Islamic terrorists used nuclear weapons against Israel, the United States or other Western targets, like London or Madrid, the guaranteed retaliation would cost the lives of thousands and maybe millions of Muslims. But following the logic of suicide bombing, the original bomber might reason that those Muslims would die in God's grace and that others would live on to fight the jihad. No state in the Muslim world has openly embraced such a view. But after 9/11, we can no longer treat the possibility as fanciful.

Raising the question of Islamic belief and the bomb, however, is not a substitute for strategic analysis of the rational interests of Islamic governments. Like other states, Islamic states act on the basis of ordinary power politics as much as or more than on the basis of religious motivation. Pakistan, which tested a series of warheads in 1998, at the height of tensions with India, has not used its atomic power as a tool of the faithful in a global jihad. The proliferation operation spearheaded by the nuclear scientist -- and sometime Pakistani national hero -- Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan appears to have been based on a combination of national interest and greed, not on religious fervor. Khan found buyers in Iran and Libya, but also in decidedly non-Islamic North Korea. (In a twist much stranger than fiction, Saddam Hussein apparently turned down the offer.)

Some observers think that Iran, too, wants the bomb primarily to improve its regional position and protect itself against regime change -- not to annihilate Israel. According to this view, Iran's nuclear push reflects a drive to what is sometimes called national greatness and might more accurately be defined as the ability of a country to thumb its nose at the United States without fear of major repercussions. A televised pageant hastily arranged to celebrate Iran's atomic program in April of this year featured traditional Persian dancing and colorful local garb intermixed with make-believe vials of enriched uranium. To an Iranian audience accustomed to decoding official symbols, these references were nationalist, not pan-Islamic. (They were also subtly subversive of the mullahs: singing and dancing are not favored forms of expression in the clerical enclave of Qom.)

But at the same time, Ahmadinejad has emphasized Iran's pan-Islamic aspirations to act on behalf of Muslims everywhere. An emerging nuclear power needs friends. Right now Iran wants to reduce, not promote, division between Sunnis and Shiites -- and promoting broader "Islamic" interests by going after Israel is one way to lessen Sunni fears about Iran's rise. Ahmadinejad has put his money where his mouth is, providing Hezbollah with medium-range missiles -- though apparently not chemical warheads -- to use against Israel. The nationalist language he has sometimes used at home may be a cover for sincerely held pan-Islamic ends -- a version of the old revolutionary strategy of making nationalist claims in order to attract the support of those fellow Iranians who do not respond well to Islamist ideology. That it is convenient for Iran to emphasize Islamic unity does not mean that at least some of its leaders do not believe in it as a motivating goal.+

It is common among foreign-policy realists to suppose that a country acting on nationalist motives is easier to deter than a country moved by religious ones. There is no especially strong evidence for this assumption -- plenty of nationalist regimes have done crazy things when they logically should have been deterred -- but the claim has a common-sense ring to it. Nationalists care about peoples and states, which need to be alive to prosper. It is a basic tenet of nationalism that there is nothing higher than the nation-state itself, the pinnacle of a people's self-expression. Religious thinkers, on the other hand, believe almost by definition that there is something in heaven

greater than government here on earth. Under the right circumstances, they might sacrifice lives -- including their own -- to serve the divine will as they interpret it.

III.

We urgently need to know, then, what Islam says about the bomb. Of course there is no single answer to this question. The world's billion-plus Muslims differ regarding many aspects of their 1,400-year-old religious tradition. Furthermore, nuclear weapons are a relatively new technology, unforeseen by the Prophet and unmentioned in the Koran. Nevertheless, contemporary Muslims are engaged in interpreting their tradition to ascertain how and when nuclear power may be used. Their writings, contained in fatwas and treatises that can be found on the Web and in print, tell a fascinating and disturbing story.

The Islamic discussion of nuclear weapons is profoundly intertwined with a parallel discussion of suicide bombing that is also taking place in the Muslim world. Suicide bombing and nuclear weapons typically kill without discrimination, murdering soldiers or civilians, men or women or children. And using nuclear force against another nuclear power can be suicidal, in the broad sense that retaliation may destroy the nation that attacked first. Beyond these commonalities is the fact that the rise of suicide bombing is driving a historic reconsideration of what might be called the Islamic ethics of violence. To consider Islam and the bomb today must thus inevitably draw us into the complex legal and political thinking of those Muslim authorities who justify the use of force.

The story starts with traditional Islamic law. The Shariah never followed the Roman adage that in war the laws are silent. Because jihad is a pillar of Islam, and because in Islam God's word takes legal form, the classical scholars devoted considerable care to identifying the laws of jihad. In common with the just-war doctrine developed in Christian Europe, the law of jihad governed when it was permissible to fight and what means could lawfully be adopted once warfare had begun. There were basic ground rules about who was fair game. "A woman was found killed in one of the battles fought by the Messenger of God," runs a report about the Prophet Muhammad considered reliable and binding by the Muslim scholars. "So the Messenger of God forbade the killing of women and children." This report was universally understood to prohibit the deliberate killing of noncombatant women and children. Some scholars interpreted it to mean that anyone incapable of warfare should be protected and so extended the ban to the elderly, the infirm and even male peasants, who as a rule did not fight. Muslims living among the enemy were also out of bounds. These rather progressive principles were broadly accepted by the Islamic legal authorities, Sunni and Shiite alike. For well over a thousand years, no one seriously questioned them.

Such black-and-white rules were well suited to the hand-to-hand or horse-to-horse combat characteristic of limited medieval wars. A few quirky challenges did arise, and the Muslim lawyers had to deal with them. The great theologian and jurist al-Ghazali, who wrote in the 11th and 12th centuries and was widely noted for his revival of religious piety and his skepticism of secular philosophy, dealt with the problem of human shields. He ruled that if the enemy drove captured Muslims before him, the Muslim army could still fight back, even if it might mean killing some of those Muslims. The reason he gave was that "we know that the law intends minimizing killing." There was also the catapult -- precursor of artillery and air power -- which was capable of sending a burning projectile into a populated city, where the resulting fire might kill women or children. Authorities differed on whether that tactic was permissible. Some disallowed the catapult when children or Muslim captives were in the city. In support, they cited a verse from the Koran that reads, "Had they been separated clearly, then We would have chastised the unbelievers among them with a painful chastisement." According to this school of thought, the "separation" of permissible targets (i.e., non-Muslim men) from impermissible targets is the precondition for a general attack. Another school of thought, by contrast, permitted the use of the catapult regardless of collateral damage in order to serve the general interest of the Muslims.

No law can exist for a millennium without being broken, and there are scattered historical reports, mostly from Christian chroniclers, of Muslim forces acting outside the bounds of lawful jihad, without the authorization of the scholars. Men were always considered legitimate targets, and Muslim armies sometimes slaughtered them just as Muslims could be slaughtered by their enemies. Remarkably enough, though, the legal principles of jihad protecting women, children and fellow Muslims survived well into the modern era, when the secular regimes of the Muslim world began to fight according to secular ideas. The World War I Armenian genocide, which took place in the last,

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secularizing gasp of the declining Ottoman Empire, was the first really substantial systematic violation of the ban on killing women and children in recorded Islamic history. In the bloody 20th century, when mass exterminations took place in Europe, Africa and Asia, Muslim states had a relatively better record, marred of course by Saddam Hussein's gassing of the Kurds. And there have been the genocidal killings in Darfur in this new century. Even these horrific events, however, were not dignified by the claim that they were permitted under the law of jihad.

IV.

The last two decades have seen a challenge to this Islamic tradition of warfare under law, a challenge driven mostly by the attempt to justify suicide bombing despite its evident inconsistency with Islamic tradition. On the subject of suicide, the Koran could hardly be clearer: "Do not kill yourselves; for surely God has been merciful to you." Faced with this explicit text, the solution of the militant Islamist ideologues has been to avoid the category of suicide altogether and to treat the bomber as a martyr rather than as one who has taken his own life. This interpretation is not very convincing in historical terms: martyrdom classically meant that another person killed the Muslim warrior, not that he pushed the button himself. Nevertheless, many Muslims now seem to find the argument convincing. Even among rather secular Muslims, it has become standard to refer to suicide bombers as martyrs.

The killing of women, children and Muslim men, however, has proved harder to explain away as a permissible exercise of jihad. The reaction to 9/11, which has (so far) been the high-water mark of suicide bombing, illustrates the nature of the difficulty of reconciling suicide bombing with Islamic law. One problem concerns the offensive nature of the attack at a time when the United States was not at war with any Muslim entity. Offensive jihad requires the authorization of a legitimate Muslim leader, absent on 9/11. A more serious concern was the obvious reality that the 9/11 attacks were certain to kill -- and did kill -- women, children and Muslims, all in direct contravention of classical jihad principles. Since the whole point of 9/11 was to announce and embody jihad on the international stage, the attacks quickly became the centerpiece of a high-stakes debate about whether they did or did not qualify as legitimate acts of jihad.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, it was sometimes asserted in the West that there were no Muslim voices condemning the attacks. This was never true. Prominent Muslim scholars expressed their disapprobation in public arenas like television and the Internet. These included senior Sunni scholars like the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia and the head of Al-Azhar, in Egypt, nominally the flagship institution of Sunni higher learning -- who gave a news conference. More popular figures, like Al Jazeera's resident cleric, Sheik Yusuf al-Qaradawi, explained that Islam "considers the attack on innocent human beings a grave sin." Shiite scholars also spoke out, including Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran.

The position of the Muslim scholars and observers who condemned the 9/11 attacks was simple and consistent across the Sunni-Shiite divide: this was not jihad but an unlawful use of violence. Offensive jihad was prohibited in the absence of formal authorization by a Muslim leader. But even if the attacks could somehow be construed as defensive, the perpetrators of 9/11 broke the rules with their willingness to kill women and children. In confident and insistent tones, these critics cited the classical scholars and insisted that nothing in Islamic law could justify the tactics used by Al Qaeda. Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, the Lebanese cleric whose spiritual authority is recognized by Hezbollah, gave an interview to the Beirut newspaper Al Safir in which he asserted that given their impermissible choice of targets, the 9/11 bombers were not martyrs but "merely suicides."

At the same time, it is important to note that in 2001 few prominent Muslim scholars -- the Saudi grand mufti was the main exception -- condemned the use of suicide bombings in all circumstances. Fadlallah approved the attack on the U.S. Marines in 1983 and, according to the United States, played a role in ordering it. Qaradawi, whose television presence gives him reason to stay within the Islamist mainstream, distinguished the 9/11 attacks from the permissible defensive jihad of the Palestinians. He was happy to praise a God who "through his infinite wisdom ... has given the weak a weapon the strong do not have, and that is their ability to turn their bodies into bombs as Palestinians do." Qaradawi has also repeated the common view that the killing of Israeli women is justified on the grounds that all Israelis must serve in the military, and so no Israeli is a true noncombatant: "An Israeli woman is not like women in our societies, because she is a soldier."

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The equivocation by Muslim scholars with respect to the technique of suicide bombing reflected the reality that throughout the Muslim world, Palestinian suicide bombers were by 2001 identified as martyrs dying in a just cause. This, in turn, was the natural outgrowth of the decades before suicide bombing, when Palestinian terrorists were applauded for killing Israeli civilians, including women and children. Given that embracing Palestinian suicide bombing had become a widespread social norm, it would have been essentially unthinkable for an important Muslim scholar to condemn the practice without losing his standing among Muslims worldwide. In the Islamic world, as in the U.S. Supreme Court, the legal authorities cannot get too far away from their public constituency without paying a price.

What happened, in other words, is that without the scholars paying too much attention to the question, the killing of Israeli women and children had become a kind of exception to the ordinary laws of jihad. Opportunists like bin Laden then began to widen the loophole to include new victims. With respect to the unauthorized nature of his offensive jihad, bin Laden asserted that in fact the attacks were defensive, since in his mind the U.S. was occupying the sacred soil of Saudi Arabia -- just as Israel was occupying the Muslim land of Palestine. Once all of Saudi Arabia was placed on a par with the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, traditionally closed to non-Muslims, the presence of American soldiers anywhere on the Arabian Peninsula (even if their presence was with the permission of the Saudi government) could be depicted as a profanation, a violation of the Prophet's deathbed directive to "banish the pagans from the Arabian Peninsula."

Bin Laden was embroidering on the theories of his onetime mentor Abdullah Azzam, the intellectual godfather of Al Qaeda. Azzam was a Palestinian Islamist who made his way to Afghanistan via Saudi Arabia and established the so-called Bureau of Services to channel Arab youth into the Afghan jihad. As Azzam trod his personal path from Palestinian militancy to universal pan-Islamic jihadism, he wrote an influential treatise called "Defense of Muslim Lands." In it, Azzam argued that not a single hand span of Muslim territory anywhere could ever be ceded to the enemy "because the land belongs to Allah and to Islam." Though Azzam would never have acknowledged it, his account of the divine ownership of Muslim lands was probably influenced -- unconsciously, to be sure -- by religious-Zionist claims about the holiness of the Land of Israel.

When it came to the killing of civilians, bin Laden's thought developed more gradually. In early pronouncements, before 9/11, he spoke as if the killing of women and children was inherently an atrocity. "Nor should one forget," he admonished an interviewer in 1996, "the deliberate, premeditated dropping of the H bombs [sic] on cities with their entire populations of children, elderly and women, as was the case with Hiroshima and Nagasaki." After 9/11, however, the argument changed. Now bin Laden began to suggest that American civilians were fair game. He could not argue that like Israelis, all Americans were subject to mandatory military service. Instead he proposed that because "the American people are the ones who choose their government by their own free will," and because they "have the ability and choice to refuse the policies of their government," attacks on American civilians were justified. Voting was now playing the role for Americans that military service played in the case of Israelis: the active step transforming civilians into fair game.

Such an appeal to collective responsibility was, however, pretty weak in Islamic legal terms. It might suffice for bin Laden's videotaped self-justifications, and it might salve the consciences of potential jihadis hoping to join the rank and file of Al Qaeda. But it would never satisfy serious students of classical Islamic law, who found the 9/11 attacks problematic from an Islamic legal perspective.

In Saudi Arabia in particular, radical Muslim scholars with much more learning than bin Laden have sought to develop legally persuasive justifications for civilian killings. Probably the most sophisticated effort from a legal standpoint is a document titled "A Treatise on the Law of the Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction Against the Unbelievers," written in 2003 by a brilliant Saudi dissident named Sheik Nasir bin Hamad al-Fahd. (Fahd, a theorist rather than an activist, is currently back in prison, as he has been off and on for almost a decade.) The treatise begins with the assumption that the world's Muslims are under attack. But how are today's Muslims supposed to defend themselves, given their military inferiority? Fahd's response is that, if they have no other choice, they may use any means necessary -- including methods that would otherwise violate the laws of jihad. "If the unbelievers can be repelled . . . only by using" weapons of mass destruction, then "their use is permissible, even if you kill them without exception."

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Lest his argument prove too much, Fahd tempers it by the claim that the Muslims fighting the jihad may not inflict disproportionately more harm on the enemy than the enemy has inflicted on them. That raises the question of the extent of American guilt. "Some Brothers have added up the number of Muslims killed directly or indirectly by [American] weapons and come up with a figure of nearly ten million," the treatise states. This total, Fahd concludes, would authorize the use of weapons of mass destruction to kill 10 million Americans: indeed, "it would be permissible with no need for further [legal] argument." (The number is never explained or analyzed, and you might assume that it was meant to correspond very roughly to the population of New York.)

Fahd's arguments sit uneasily with the classical Islamic discussions of the laws of jihad. The classical Islamic law never explicitly says that women and children may be intentional targets if it is the only way to win the jihad. It does not allow violations of the law just because the enemy has broken the rules or killed many Muslims. So the treatise must fall back on whatever evidence it can muster from the classical sources that seems to modify the basic rules. The catapult rears its head and is cited as precedent for nonspecific killing. The right to fight even when Muslim hostages may be killed is brought out as proof of the permissibility of collateral damage when there is no other choice.

The legal arguments in use here are stronger than bin Laden's makeweights, but they, too, would probably not be sufficient on their own to justify the deviation from the legal traditions of jihad wrought by today's jihadis. The notion that it's right because it's necessary is doing the real work, and old-fashioned legal arguments are following along. It is no accident that the argument from necessity has been so prominent in modern Western writing about modern warfare in general and the nuclear bomb in particular. If the technology of mass destruction can be exported, why not the justification that comes with it?

Within the world of radical Islam, there are those who believe that the erosion of the laws of jihad has gone too far. There are reports of difficulty recruiting foreign candidates for suicide missions directed at Iraqi civilians. The debate about how jihad may be prosecuted is not over by any means. But it is an unavoidable fact that the classic restrictions on the killing of women, children and Muslims in jihad have been deeply undermined in the last decade.

V.

If the Islamic laws of war are under revision, or at least the subject of intense debate, what does that mean for the question of the Islamic bomb? The answer is that the expanding religious sanction for violence once thought unacceptable opens the way for new kinds of violence to be introduced and seen as legitimate in turn. First Israeli women and children became acceptable targets; then Americans; then Shiites; and now Sunnis of unstinting orthodoxy. It would seem that no one is out of bounds.

It is therefore now possible to imagine that the classical Islamic principles governing war would not be applied even by a self-consciously Islamic regime deciding when and if to detonate a nuclear device. The traditional ban on killing women, children and fellow Muslims would have gone a long way toward banning most potential uses of nuclear power by a sincerely Islamic state actor. As those prohibitions have eroded, the reassurance that might be afforded by a state's Islamic commitments has waned.

This means that a nuclear Islamic state would be at least as willing to use its weapons as a comparable non-Islamic state. But would an Islamic state be prepared to take the jihad to the enemy even if it would result in what amounts to collective suicide through the destruction of the state and its citizens? If the leaders of Iran or some future leaders of a radicalized, nuclear Saudi Arabia shared the aspiration to martyrdom of so many young jihadis around the world, might they be prepared to attack Israel or the United States, even if the inevitable result were the martyrdom of their entire people?

The answer depends to a large degree on whether you consider Islam susceptible to the kind of apocalyptic, millennial thought that might lead whole peoples, rather than just individuals, into suicidal behavior. It is important to note that for all his talk of the war between civilizations, bin Laden has never spoken of the end of days. For him, the battle between the Muslims and the infidels is part of earthly human life, and has indeed been with us since the days of the Prophet himself. The war intensifies and lessens with time, but it is not something that occurs out of

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time or with the expectation that time itself will stop. Bin Laden and his sympathizers want to re-establish the caliphate and rule the Muslim world, but unlike some earlier revivalist movements within Sunni Islam, they do not declare their leader as the mahdi, or guided one, whose appearance will usher in a golden age of justice and peace to be followed by the Day of Judgment.

From this perspective, the utter destruction of civilization would be a mistake, not the fulfillment of the divine plan. Even the most radical Sunni theorists of jihad invoke a passage from the Koran according to which civilization itself -- "the crops and the cattle" -- must not and cannot be destroyed completely. Bin Laden might seem to have few qualms about killing millions of Americans or other Westerners. He might well use a nuclear device if he gambled that there would be no enemy for the United States to bomb in retaliation. But even he might not be prepared to unleash a global nuclear conflagration on the expectation that a better order would emerge once many millions of Muslims and infidels died. (Bin Laden has called for Muslims to acquire nuclear weapons, and in the 1990's reportedly tried to acquire them himself -- but there is little hard evidence that he has made subsequent efforts in that direction.)

With respect to Shiite eschatology, there is greater reason for concern. Iran's Shiism is of the "Twelver" variety, so called because the 12th imam in the line of succession from the Prophet disappeared into a state of occultation -- or being hidden -- from which he is expected to return as the mahdi. Ayatollah Khomeini played on the messianic overtones of this belief during the Iranian revolution, in which some of his followers went so far as to hint that he might be the returning imam. Moktada al-Sadr's Shiite militia in Iraq is called Army of the Mahdi. Recently, Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, contributed to renewed focus on the mahdi, by saying publicly that the mission of the Islamic revolution in Iran is to pave the way for the mahdi's return, and by visiting the mosque at Jamkaran, on the outskirts of Qom, where, according to one tradition, the vanished imam was last seen. Some reports suggest that youth religion in Iran is increasingly focused on veneration of the vanished imam.

Islam has a vision of the end of days, with wars between the faithful and the tribes of Gog and Magog (Yuj and Majuj in their Arabic incarnation). Twelver Shiism is, at its core, an eschatological faith, focused on the ultimate return of the imam-mahdi, who will restore the Shiites to their rightful place and redeem their generations of suffering. Since the vanished imam is by tradition a human who has never died, but remains in occultation, he is also believed to affect the course of events even from his hidden place. And Shiite tradition fills in the picture of the mahdi's return with an elaborate account of signs that will herald the event, including advance messengers, earthquakes and bloodshed.

But belief in redemption -- even accompanied by wars and death and the defeat of the infidels -- need not translate into a present impulse to create a violent crisis that would precipitate the messianic situation. Like their Jewish counterparts, Shiite religious authorities have traditionally sought to resist speculation about the imminence of a messianic return. Shiite messianic thought is less focused than its messianic Christian counterpart on generating global crisis and letting God sort things out. Khomeini himself believed that the mahdi's advent could be hastened -- but by social justice, not by provoking war. This put him on the activist side of Shiite teaching about the mahdi, much as he was also an activist about the exercise of worldly power by the mullahs. A popular revolutionary slogan urged the imam's coming but asserted that Khomeini would govern alongside him.

Other Shiite thinkers, by contrast, take a more fatalist stance, and prefer to believe that the mahdi's coming cannot be hastened by human activity -- a view that corresponds loosely to Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's belief, with regard to Iraq and elsewhere, that the clerics should not themselves govern. One small, semi-secret Iranian organization, the Hojjatiya Society, was banned and persecuted by Khomeini's government in part for its quiescent view that the mahdi's arrival could not be hastened.

Ahmadinejad is not the only or even the most important player in Iran's nuclear game. The supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, still makes the ultimate decisions on armaments and other matters, and there are numerous factions in the country with opposed interests and ideology and goals. Nevertheless, Ahmadinejad has in some respects succeeded in making the nuclear issue his own, and as a result his personal views about the end of days have been the subject of much speculation and innuendo, inside Iran and out. The Mideast scholar Bernard Lewis, in a recent Wall Street Journal column, hinted darkly and without much evidence that Ahmadinejad might be

planning a nuclear attack on Israel for the Night of Power (this year it fell on Aug. 22), when the Prophet Muhammad made his mystical journey to the Furthest Mosque, associated in tradition with al-Aqsa in Jerusalem. Rumors, possibly spread by Ahmadinejad's enemies, have tied him to the outlawed Hojjatiya -- a link mistakenly interpreted outside Iran as evidence that he might want to bring back the imam by violence, rather than that he might prefer to wait piously and prepare for the imam's eventual return on his own schedule. It is of course impossible to gauge the man's religious sensibilities perfectly. Yet the relative absence of a contemporary Shiite trend to messianic brinkmanship suggests that Ahmadinejad's recent emphasis on the mahdi may be interpreted more in terms of an attempt to summon Khomeini's legacy and Iran's revolutionary moment than as a desperate willingness to bring the nation to the edge of war. When Ahmadinejad invoked the mahdi in his now-famous letter to George Bush, he seemed to be using the doctrine in ecumenical terms, emphasizing the Islamic tradition that Jesus -- revered as a prophet, though not as the Son of God -- will return alongside the mahdi and govern in tandem with him.

So although a renewed Shiite messianism does create some cause for concern about the potential uses of an Iranian bomb -- in particular because it suggests that Ahmadinejad may be more a utopian than a realist -- it is almost certainly a mistake to anticipate that Iran would use its nuclear power in a way that would provoke large-scale retaliation and assured self-destruction. Iranian leaders have been more than ready to sacrifice their own citizens in large numbers. During the Iran-Iraq war, major efforts went into recruiting young boys to the Basij militias, which were then sent to the front lines on what were essentially suicide missions. Religion played the central part in motivating the teenage soldiers, and it is reasonable to believe that religion helped salve the consciences of those who ordered these children into battle. Yet even this discounting of the value of human life -- in a war started by Saddam Hussein, not by Iran -- fell short of voluntarily putting an entire nation at risk. Ahmadinejad surely understands the consequences of using a nuclear bomb, and Shiite Islam, even in its messianic incarnation, still falls short of inviting nuclear retaliation and engendering collective suicide.

VI.

These worries about an Islamic bomb raise the question of why we trust any nation with the power that a nuclear capacity confers. Why, for instance, do we trust ourselves, given that we remain the only nation actually to have used nuclear weapons? The standard answer to why we keep our nuclear bombs -- a response developed during the cold war -- is that we must have the capability to deter anyone who might attack us first. The promise of mutually assured destruction was its own kind of collective suicide pact, albeit one supposed to scare both sides out of pushing the button. That is why, throughout the heyday of the unilateral disarmament movement, critics of this justification pointed out that our threat was only credible if we were, in fact, prepared to kill millions of civilians in a rapid act of retaliation. If this kind of killing was morally unjustified, went their argument, then the threat to use it was also immoral.

The truth is that we hold on to our nuclear capability not only as a matter of deterrence but also to maintain our own global strategic position. If we do not want Islamic states -- or anyone else for that matter -- to have a nuclear capability, it is not necessarily because we consider them especially likely to bring on their own destruction by using it. It is, rather, that we do not want to cede some substantial chunk of our own global power to them. This principle -- if it is a principle -- lies behind the general strategy that is embedded in the international nuclear-nonproliferation treaty. Everybody involved understands that if any government got a chance to acquire nuclear power before the other treaty members had a chance to notice and impose sanctions, it would jump at the opportunity.

So the nonproliferation regime is not and could never be based on some principle of international fairness. But it does not follow that the United States and its allies should simply accept the development of nuclear technology by just anyone. It should be relevant to our deliberations that a particular candidate is our enemy. When it comes to Islamic states, there is serious reason to worry that, both now and in the immediately foreseeable future, popular anti-American sentiment is especially likely to play an important role in the shaping of foreign policy. Over the next quarter-century, it is conceivable and certainly desirable that Islamism and anti-Americanism may be unlinked. But we must be honest and acknowledge that in the short term at least, the U.S. democratization strategy has done

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almost nothing to reduce Islamist anti-Americanism, whether Shiite or Sunni -- this despite the fact that the same strategy has benefited Islamists across the region by allowing them to run for office and enter government.

Much of the reason for this close linkage between Islamism and anti-Americanism comes from Iran. As an enemy of the United States, which has worked consistently against American interests, Iran is in a category by itself, most nearly matched by North Korea, the other still-standing member of President Bush's axis of evil. In this, Iran's motives have been primarily Islamic-ideological, not pragmatic.

For many years under the shah, Iran was a natural American ally -- precisely because it was Shiite and non-Arab, and uncomfortably close to the Soviet Union and its fantasy of a warm-water port. Even after the 1979 revolution and the hostage crisis, it is possible that the United States would have eventually reopened relations with an avowedly Islamic Iran had the government softened its anti-Americanism. The United States has never made secularism a condition of friendship. It has been fully prepared to support Islamic states like Saudi Arabia, and even used religion to cement the anti-Communist alliance during the cold war. The Iraqi Shiite Islamists have been willing to work alongside the Americans, and the United States has in return treated them as its allies, democratically chosen by the Iraqi electorate.

Islamist anti-Americanism is the direct legacy of Ayatollah Khomeini's success in marrying Islamic faith to anti-imperialism -- making "Death to America" into a religious chant, not just a political slogan. Of course the United States was hardly blameless. It did everything it could to open itself to the imperialist charge, including, in Iran, backing the famous 1953 counter coup that removed from power Iran's first democratically legitimate prime minister, Mohammed Mossadegh. Contemporary Islamists can also point to America's continuing hypocritical support of regional authoritarian regimes.

Iranian-rooted Islamist anti-Americanism has worked far better than its designers might have imagined, spreading to Sunni Islamists who have little love to lose for Iran. The marriage of Islamism and anti-Americanism will probably be considered by history as the most significant consequence of the Iranian revolution. Anti-Americanism has become a staple of Islamist sermons and Web postings, an effective tool for drawing to the movement angry young people who might not naturally be drawn to religion. Bin Ladenism, in this sense, owes much to the Iranian revolution even though Al Qaeda was never Iran's direct ally. United States support for Israel has always been an important part of the argument for Islamist anti-Americanism, but today it is by no means a necessary component. If U.S. support of Israel were to weaken, the American presence in Iraq and elsewhere in the gulf would easily substitute as a basis for hatred.

The United States therefore has strong reason to block its enemy Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons -- not simply because Iran will seek to become a greater regional power, as any nation might do, but because the Islamic Republic of Iran as currently constituted is definitionally anti-American. There need not be a direct threat of Iranian first use against either the United States or Israel for this reason to weigh heavily. A nuclear Iran will be a stronger and more effective enemy in pursuing anti-American policies under the banner of Islam. That will not change until the Iranian state abandons either its Islamic identity or its association between Islam and anti-Americanism. Iran's eagerness to acquire nuclear capacity need not be a result of a particularly Islamic motivation, but if and when Iran does have the bomb, its enhanced power and prestige will certainly be lent to policies that it conceives as promoting the Islamic interest.

Whether force, negotiation or some combination is the right path to take to keep Iran from going nuclear is of course a hugely important question. It turns on many uncertain facts, like the true progress of Iran's nuclear program and how much it can be affected by air attack; Iran's capacity and will to retaliate against an attack; whether there is any chance Iran would respond to negotiations; and the ability of the United States to withstand any retaliation while 150,000 U.S. troops are in Iraq. As we have recently learned in Iraq, it is not enough to think you have a good reason to go to war -- you must also have a realistic understanding of the practical and moral costs of things going horribly wrong. Any choice, though, must be made against the backdrop of the reality that the Islamic government of Iran is not only unlikely to collapse soon -- it is also very unlikely to become less anti-American in the near future.

The same, unfortunately, is true of the world's Islamist movements, for whom anti-Americanism remains a rallying cry and a principle of belief. Perhaps the promotion of democracy in the region, pursued consistently by the United States over the long term, might someday allow the rise of leaders whose Islamism is tempered by the need to satisfy their constituents' domestic needs -- and who eschew anti-Americanism as wasteful and misguided. Iraq was the test case of whether this change could occur in the short term. But we failed to make the experiment work and gave Iraq's Islamist politicians, Shiite and Sunni alike, ample grounds to continue the anti-American rhetoric that comes so easily to them. In the wake of our tragic mismanagement of Iraq, we are certainly a generation or more from any such unlinking of Islamism and anti-Americanism, if it is to occur at all. And Islamism itself shows no signs of being on the wane as a social or political force.

That means that the best we can hope for in nuclear Islamic states in the near term is a rational dictator like Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, who sees his bread buttered on the side of an alliance with the West. Such rulers can be very strong and can bring stability, but we also know that their rule (or reign) promotes Islamist opposition, with its often violent overtones. When such rulers die or otherwise fall from power, the Islamists will be poised to use the international power conferred by nuclear weapons to pursue their own ends -- ends for now overwhelmingly likely to be anti-American.

None of this is inherent in the structure of Islam itself. Islam contains a rich and multivocal set of traditions and ideas, susceptible to being used for good or ill, for restraint or destruction. This interpretive flexibility -- equally characteristic of the other great world religions -- does not rob Islam of its distinctiveness. An Islamic bomb would not be just the same as the nationalist bomb of a majority-Muslim state, nor would it be the same as a Christian bomb or a Jewish one. But its role in history will depend, ultimately, on the meaning Muslims give it, and the uses to which they put their faith and their capabilities. In confronting the possibility of the Islamic bomb, we -- Muslims and non-Muslims alike -- need to remember that Islam exists both as an ideal system of morals and values and as a force that motivates actual people living today, with all the frailties and imperfections that make us human.

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Graphic

Drawings (Drawings by James Victore)

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LETTERS FROM READERS

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Body

Kudos for dealing with reckless drivers

Kudos to St. Louis County Prosecutor Robert P. McCulloch for charging Mary Lott with involuntary manslaughter in the death of Missouri Department of Transportation worker Kenneth Hoierman ("Motorist is charged in death of highway worker," Dec. 9). This is a courageous step when it is next to impossible to convict drivers in a society in which many people still view fatal car crashes as accidents instead of the completely preventable tragedies that most are.

We need laws that make it easier for the judicial system to deal appropriately with all reckless drivers, not just those who have enough alcohol or drugs in their blood to get convicted, or those who kill highway workers. Dealing appropriately with reckless drivers should involve a combination of incarceration, fines and loss of driving privileges.

The latter, despite what most people still think, is not necessarily punishment, at least not in the conventional sense of the word. Many people do not need a car to get around, even in St. Louis. Those of us who love bicycles could show so many what a joy it is not to drive.

Karen Karabell | St. Louis Board chair, St. Louis Regional Bicycle Federation

Reporting on suicide should include prevention

Regarding "People are wondering, who's next?" (Dec. 10): It is understandable that stories about individual deaths by suicide might be newsworthy to the local community and need to be covered. In response, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention along with the Annenberg Public Policy Center and others have developed recommendations to encourage responsible, accurate and informative reporting about suicide.

These reports should explain the real causes of suicide, list suicide warning signs, include expert opinions and where someone can go for help if they are feeling depressed or suicidal. Reports should avoid describing the suicide method or sensationalizing the suicides.

Although the article delves deeply into the tragic deaths of these four teenage boys lost to suicide and discusses the fear of contagion, it misses a real opportunity to inform the public about suicide and ways to prevent it. For example, research shows that more than 90 percent of people who die by suicide have an underlying (although not always diagnosed) psychiatric illness at the time of their death. We also know that the best way to prevent suicide is education and vigorous treatment of depression and other mental illnesses that can lead to suicide.

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Dr. Paula Clayton | New York Medical Director, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Irony of Iraq milestones

That war itself seems a natural part of human existence perhaps teaches us about the symmetry of justice, like an echo coming back. That sound reverberated as I listened to the Iraq Study Group pronounce repeatedly and emphatically the need for Iraq to institute "milestones." Ironically, it is the book "Milestones" that terrorism experts claim is the manifesto for Osama bin Laden's movement.

Written by Egyptian writer and activist Sayyid Qutb during his political imprisonment in the late 1950s, "Milestones" argues almost mystically against modern materialism. The book was published in 1964, but was banned as treasonous. Two years later, Qutb was hanged by the Egyptian government when he refused to renounce his beliefs, declaring, "The time has come for a Muslim to give his head in order to proclaim the birth of the Islamic Movement."

For the neo-conservative and evangelical Americans who have fostered the predicted "clash of civilizations" - the West versus the Muslim world - the Iraq commission's ironic insistence on "milestones" may eerily signal that the West has come full circle to defeat.

James Baker and the others nobly seek to avoid the abyss that lies beyond this, but the invasion and occupation of Iraq have not been only a military miscue, but also an act of injustice. The commission's 79 recommendations might correct the former, but something more will have to come around to right the latter.

Eric E. Vickers | St. Louis

Prevent wider conflagration

The Iraq Study Group's report is an effort to think of something, change course somehow, to prevent an American defeat in Iraq, but it's too late for that. The American military effort has reached the end of its ability to affect a situation that has descended into anarchy and civil war.

The ISG's critics argue that we cannot expect diplomacy with Iran and Syria to be of any help in winning the war. That is correct because the Bush war already is lost. The impelling imperative to communicate with Iraq's neighbors is to prevent our failed foreign policy from turning into a wider conflagration that envelops the entire region. That goal is achievable. Iran and Syria have a vested interest in seeing it achieved, and we have no time to waste in inaugurating such an effort.

At home, our best hope is diplomacy. Perhaps a senior bipartisan group of the new Democratic congressional leaders and what's left of the Republican leadership should meet with the president, again and again if necessary, to go to the mat in convincing him that he must get over himself and face the facts. The election is over, and the nation's best interest demands statesmanship.

We should declare a cease-fire in hopes that it will be reciprocated, begin withdrawal of U.S. combat troops and name a time for them to be gone from Iraq, not in 2008, but by summer or fall of next year.

Andy Ayers | University City

The appeasing adults

When will the media stop fawning over the consultation of James Baker by the Bush administration? The media now love the so-called "realists" of the first Bush administration, now anointed as the "adults." The release of the Iraq Study Group report shows what are "adult" positions: the appeasement of dictators and murderous terrorists by throwing whatever you can at the terrorists and their enablers if they will just go away (except, of course, that they do not go away, they keep coming back for more). That includes sacrificing our one true friend and the only liberal democracy in the entire Middle East, Israel. But Israel is not enough, so let's give them Lebanon, too. This is what passes for realism? Buying off terrorists who have proved that buying them off just emboldens them?

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It is what we should expect of Mr. Baker. In 1991, Mr. Baker and the first Bush administration demonstrated that realism means a willingness to throw your friends under the bus. During the Gulf War, Israel absorbed countless unprovoked Scud missile attacks from Iraq without any response. It did so at the urging of the United States and despite its best instincts that absorbing such attacks only leads to more. Israel was correct; the non-response led to more attacks. To repay Israel for its compliance with U.S. strategy, those solons Mr. Baker and then-President George H.W. Bush repaid Israel by forcing the Oslo Accords and Yassir Arafat on Israel, resulting in a decade and a half of unrelenting terrorism and the build-up of Hamas and Hezbollah, putting Israel's existence at even more risk.

Spare us the "realists." They embolden enemies and abandon friends every time.

Jay M. Kirschbaum | Chesterfield

Mink: Finally right

I never, ever have agreed with anything Eric Mink has written, and usually I find his views irritating. My hat is tipped to him, however, on his "Storm debris" (Dec. 6) column. He is correct in his assessment of the lameness of AmerenUE's excuses and the failure of its management. Somehow, area residents need to be given the option of buying their electric power from other suppliers. Service could not be worse, and the competition for customers only could make it better.

Stan Viglione | Ballwin

Rash response

It is disturbing when so many people lose power. But more disturbing is the illogical thinking of some people.

People said AmerenUE should have trimmed trees more aggressively. But when huge limbs succumb to the immense weight of water, that "aggressive" tree-trimming would require almost all trees by power lines to be cut down.

People are mad at Ameren about the Taum Sauk reservoir, but Ameren executives immediately accepted responsibility.

People complain that Ameren's response to this storm was inadequate. But it is in Ameren's best interest to get everyone back online as soon as possible. Ameren was not getting money for a half million customers, and it paid thousands of linemen to travel hundreds of miles to work in icy-cold conditions to get the power back on. Ameren has everything to gain from a quick response.

I see no legitimate complaint against Ameren, although I see rash human thinking on the consumers' parts.

Matt Angeli | South St. Louis County

Offensive words

The Post-Dispatch devoted a large amount of space lately to the issue of whether or not the N-word is offensive. Editors and writers understand that while some people are comfortable using what historically has been an extremely offensive insult to African-Americans, the word is not appropriate for a headline or for everyday usage in a major metropolitan newspaper. The word offends many, and for good reason.

So if the Post-Dispatch believes that words do carry meaning, especially those words that have been associated with the exploitation and abuse of a group of people, why did no one object to the headline "Pimp your house" (Dec. 9)? It's absurd and offensive to associate this word with what is for many people a spiritual and family-centered time of year. "Pimp" conjures only one meaning for anyone who doesn't use this word in everyday speech. The Post-Dispatch should not insult readers by using this word as if it no longer is offensive to women. It worries me to think of what the paper may resort to next to appear hip.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Rebekah Matt | Crestwood

Notes

YOUR VIEWSOPINION

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Body

Eagleton: Courage, conviction and guts

Courage, conviction and guts. Those were the words that former U.S. Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton used to describe then-U.S. Sen. John Danforth on his retirement from the Senate, but they also describe Mr. Eagleton. I first voted in 1974, and Mr. Eagleton was my choice. Later, as a U.S. Army cadet, I marched in a St. Patrick's Day parade with him in St. Louis. Much later, in law school he assisted me through telephone calls with a paper on the War Powers Act. In January 1977, at the Missouri State Society breakfast in Washington, he introduced me to Mr. Danforth, his friend.

Mr. Eagleton was and is an inspiration to public service. He always reached across party lines to help Missouri and its citizens. On the national level, his work on the War Powers Act, a current issue in sharp debate, shines forth. Personally, I will miss this good man and fine senator. He was in many ways Missouri, just as Harry Truman was. Rest well and Godspeed, my friend.

Sam Kramer | St. Louis

Ending prejudice

I cringed when I opened my paper and saw the article "That's so gay" (March 1). Those words may not seem significant to many, but they mean a lot to me and probably to many other lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered readers. Imagine hearing a term that describes yourself being used as a synonym for "stupid" in common speech. It creates a hostile environment and trashes the self-image of gay teens.

As a former Missouri student, I would have been ecstatic to see the educational system pay any amount of positive attention to the plight of LGBT students or any negative attention to the students and teachers that encouraged this hatred to continue. As the article hinted, many (I would dare say most) "out" gay students suffer either physical or verbal abuse at the hands of their peers. I'm impressed at the high school's strong stance against harassment.

As a staunch proponent of free speech, I hesitate to agree that any words should not be allowed. However, when the words are promoting prejudice in an educational setting and tormenting gay kids, I might not be so "staunch" anymore.

Nichole Vickrey | Alton

Gardasil: False security

LETTERS FROM READERS

For years, Concerned Women for America has been pointing out the insufficiency of the "safe sex" attitude. Condoms are touted as the answer to unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. CWA of Missouri has pointed out that one of the deadliest STDs for women is human papillomavirus, the cause of 98 percent of cervical cancers. Each year, 5,000 American women die from cervical cancer. HPV is transmitted skin-to-skin, so the condom does not always protect against the virus. Our message is ignored by the powers that be; they don't want to admit that there is no "safe sex" other than a monogamous relationship between two uninfected people. That reeks of the "wait until marriage" message these leaders also don't want to hear.

Now we hear about this sometimes-deadly STD, but only as Merck is ready to make millions on the sale of its "miracle cure." Vaccine proponents are working with state legislatures to mandate this vaccine for 9- to 11-year-old girls. The HPV vaccine offers a false sense of security. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention admits that the vaccine protects against only four HPV types, which together cause 70 percent of cervical cancers. This vaccine does not guard against the other 116 strains of HPV, nor any other STD.

I hope the Missouri Legislature will not fall prey to the pressure of lobbyists on this ill-advised measure. The designer of marriage and sexual union has designed a good thing. It is good only in that context; any other context can lead to disease and heartbreak.

Bev Ehlen | Warrenton

Area Director/Legislative Liaison, Concerned Women for America of Missouri

Bartering with health care

If anyone had any doubts about how things get done in this city, those doubts should be dispelled by the latest version of the Barnes-Jewish Hospital deal on Forest Park. To guarantee the support of the African-American caucus on the Board of Aldermen, as well as that of Comptroller Darlene Green, BJH promised to look into putting a trauma center somewhere north of Delmar. A trauma center in that area of the city is an important gain, but why should it be necessary to trade 9.4 acres of Forest Park to get much-needed health services from BJH for the city's north side? How can BJH barter with health care and still pretend to hold the moral high ground?

Imogene M. Dwyer | St. LouisRed-light running

The Feb. 26 "Along for the Ride" column listed the locations of area red-light cameras, in response to a reader's request for a "public service." Presumably, the letter-writer wants to do his red-light running at other intersections. It seems to me that the true public service would be to obey traffic laws and stop at red lights.

Joe Cordeal | Ballwin

Supporting donor profits

Thanks to the St. Louis Metropolitan Medical Society for boycotting an event attended by Gov. Matt Blunt and featuring Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt ("Medical group plans to boycott Leavitt of HHS, Blunt," March 2).

Better still, they should support the universal national health insurance program, House Resolution 676. Politicians support private health insurance companies' profit plans and show no concern for the 47 million Americans without health insurance. Only U.S. Rep. Lacy Clay, D-St. Louis, of all our area congressmen, supports the bill. Do the others think only of their financial support from insurance companies?

Eugene P. Schwartz | Clayton

Farm of the future

Missouri Farm and Food Preservation Act, Senate Bill 364, is being promoted as a bill to protect our family farms, but it will do the opposite. Under current laws, third-class counties have a right to use health ordinances to protect

LETTERS FROM READERS

the health and safety of their communities. SB364 would take away the control of the counties to protect their communities against the environmental impact of concentrated animal-feeding operations.

The Missouri Department of Agriculture and big farm associations have decided that corporate farms will be Missouri's future and have opened the doors for corporate farms by removing more restrictions.

To promote SB364, they are telling farmers that it would protect them from government regulations. In truth, state law protects a farmer's right to farm. Only industrial farms are regulated by the state because of the volume of animals.

No one is attacking the family farmer - except the corporations. The corporations want to take over the control of agricultural activities in Missouri and force others to work for them or go out of business. They are the ones killing the family farms. If people fall prey to corporate propaganda promoted by the Department of Agriculture and big farm associations, then they will be the ones who will be forced out by industrial agriculture.

State Rep. Belinda Harris | D-Hillsboro

Like the playground bully

Again, a Palestinian terror group warns that the United States will face "a wave of violent attacks" if it does this or does that. Last month, Hezbollah warned that any military adventure by the United States and Israel against Iran (to protect Israel from potential Iranian nuclear attack) would have dangerous consequences across the Mideast.

On the playground of Hamilton School and much later during basic training at Fort Bragg, I found myself facing bullies who were almost twice my size. In both cases, I fought back but took a sound licking. Even when the bullies threatened me during the fights with "Now you've made me mad!" I kept fighting - and losing. The bully moved on to victims who were less likely to put up a fight.

A bully's a bully in any language. Today, many of the bullies are Islamic fundamentalists on the playground of world peace. If our country does not put up a fight, we'll continue to endure the likes of both World Trade Center bombings and the 1983 suicide bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut.

In Iraq, as on the playground of Hamilton School, it's better to fight and lose or even fight and enjoy no clear victory than appease the bullies, hoping we don't make them angry.

Larry Steinman | Chesterfield

Kerry's at it again

I disagree with the headline "Kerry blasts Sam Fox at hearing" (Feb. 28). It should have read: "Kerry embarrasses himself again."

James E. Reynolds | Town and County

Beware the cure

"Australia will switch light bulbs to cut greenhouse gases" (Feb. 21) reported about Australia's plan to convert from incandescent to compact fluorescent bulbs. It was most unfortunate that the article described CFBs's efficiency advantage without mentioning the serious environmental threat they pose. CFBs contain mercury, a highly toxic substance that we have labored for decades to remove from the environment.

Most people are unaware that CFBs cannot be disposed of as normal household trash. CFBs are discarded safely only as hazardous waste through qualified sites. Supporters of regulations that protect the environment undermine their credibility when they allow opponents to point to examples of incomplete or one-sided presentations of an issue, whether intentional or not.

Thomas Grote | Creve Coeur

LETTERS FROM READERS

Notes

YOUR VIEWS OPINION

Load-Date: March 7, 2007

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ISRAEL: Profits Vs. Prophets; Critics fear unique culture is being lost

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

April 1, 2007 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: CALGARY BUSINESS; Pg. E3

Length: 1466 words

Byline: A. Craig Copetas, Bloomberg; With reporting by David Rosenberg in Jerusalem and Jacob Doctoroff in Tel Aviv

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

It's a soft 3-iron shot between miracles along the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus of Nazareth walked on water and New York-based Americas Partners LLP general partner Joseph Bernstein is spending \$46 million US to build the first 36-hole championship golf course in Israel.

"This is God's proving ground and the most exciting deal I've done in my life," Bernstein says of the Galilee Golf Club seaside course atop Mount Arbel.

Construction begins after the holy days of Passover and Easter, with celebrated golf architect Robert Trent Jones Jr. sculpting fairways from the "green pastures" that inspired the Jewish King David to compose the 23rd Psalm and where the multitudes gathered beneath myrtle trees to hear the Christian saviour deliver His Sermon on the Mount.

"It took 10 years to get the Israeli government to approve the deal," says Bernstein, whose past real-estate developments include the Crown Building and Americas Tower in Manhattan.

"The project is unique," the 58-year-old attorney adds. "It's like building a golf course on Mount Rushmore, and that doesn't get close to the historical significance of Mount Arbel."

For Israel, the significance of a championship course with the cachet to lure marquee players such as Tiger Woods, stage professional tour events and host affluent corporate golf outings flows even deeper.

"Mount Arbel is the symbol for the booming Israeli economy," Bernstein says. "The Galilee Golf Club is a leitmotif for a country that has rid itself of isolation to become part of the global economy."

Although Hebrew University Prof. Robert Aumann, winner of the 2005 Nobel Prize in economics, politely suggests the God of Abraham might prefer a less secular tour guide for the Jewish state, Bernstein is right.

International investors in 2006 pumped a record \$23 billion US into Israel, fuelling economic growth by 5.1 per cent and pushing unemployment down to a 10-year low in the fourth quarter.

Israel's central bank says foreigners purchased \$1.4 billion in property last year and \$262 million in the first two months of 2007, and that consumer spending rose 4.8 per cent in 2006.

ISRAEL: Profits Vs. Prophets; Critics fear unique culture is being lost

"Our economy certainly works best when everybody is looking out for themselves, but there are two big dangers," Aumann says while playing with his grandson in Jerusalem.

"Israel simply being physically wiped out is the first. The second is the lost character of the Jewish state. Idealism created the state, it's what we strive for, what makes us unique in the western world. Yet the survival of Israel is paramount."

During Israel's 33-day war against Lebanon last summer, Iranian-funded Hezbollah terrorists to the north pocked what the Galilee Golf Club prospectus describes as "a cosy citadel in the Promised Land" with 20 Katyusha rockets.

"We'll convert their craters into bunkers," says Moshe Shapira, Bernstein's partner in the venture and general manager of Israel by the Sea Resort & Club, a sprawling estate of luxury golf villas and spa residences co-ordinated by Ritz-Carlton hotel chain co-founder Horst Schulze and scheduled to open in early 2009 alongside the first 18 holes.

The club will accommodate 1,500 full-time and 100 founding members, including former New York state attorney general Robert Abrams.

Memberships range from \$37,500 to \$150,000 US, and Shapira says he isn't having trouble finding takers.

"I'm more concerned about what the government intends to do about a peace agreement with the Palestinians and continue Israel's economic growth into the future," Shapira says.

"Israel must be a country that welcomes everybody's business -- Jews, Muslims, Christians -- and I want all of them to come to Mount Arbel for golf before visiting the holy sites in Jerusalem."

As Aumann tells it, the word of the Lord doesn't always mix with the principles that govern gross domestic product.

Israel's GDP was to a degree underwritten by "Jews throwing away their religion, throwing away their cultural heritage," he explains.

"Jews now don't any longer know why they are here in Israel," the 76-year-old Aumann frets. "What people want is a golf course. They pursue this and don't want to join the army and be bothered with all the conflicts. This is not a good thing."

Says Bernstein: "Nowadays, all young Israelis want to be Bill Gates. They have a mad sense of needing to achieve. It's not about money and the old stereotypes."

Still, the clash between the profits and prophets in a nation that counts 36 political parties in no small part governed by people waiting for the Messiah has lumbered the Israeli economy with a unique set of truly unseen market forces crying out in the wilderness.

Chief among them, Aumann says, is the voice of Moses, Israel's chief spiritual officer.

In Exodus, Moses heeded God's word and punished the Israelites for worshipping the golden calf. A few chapters later, during his farewell speech in Deuteronomy, Moses warned the nation about the downside of venture capital.

"And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage," the Torah quotes Moses as saying.

"Moses made a very good point," Aumann reasons. "We're beginning to pursue the gold calf, forgetting our ideals, forgetting why we're here."

Outside the headquarters of Jerusalem Venture Partners, in the hip capital-city quarter of Malha, young men sipping coffee-flavoured pop and listening to iPods make their way to work alongside young women with babies and BlackBerrys.

ISRAEL: Profits Vs. Prophets; Critics fear unique culture is being lost

Malha is the festive epicentre of Israel's thriving high-tech sector, where 46-year-old managing partner Erel Margalit manages a \$680-million portfolio of investments in some 40 Israeli and foreign technology companies.

Raised on a kibbutz that manufactured irrigation systems and armed with a doctorate in philosophy from Columbia University in New York, Margalit started JVP in 1993 and now compares Israel to a corporation that must reinvent itself to survive.

"We're reinterpreting what Israel is all about," says Margalit, whose 40 employees work in New York, Jerusalem, London and Shanghai. "Idealism was the engine of Israel's growth, but idealism today is not measured by the same process we used before. We no longer reflect back to biblical times. Judaism is a culture, not a religion, and I think we've demonstrated how to make a profit and still be idealistic."

Israel Borovich, chairman of El Al Israel Airlines Ltd., remains skeptical of the high-tech moloch.

"The path to the Middle East is through Dubai," the 65-year-old Borovich says. "They have developed an infrastructure that makes it very difficult for us to attract new visitors."

Avishay Braverman, a 59-year-old former World Bank senior economist, also harbours doubts about Israel's economic path.

"My fear is Israel becomes a capitalist oligarchy," says Braverman, who represents the Labour party in Israel's parliament. "Listen and listen hard: economic growth is problematic. Only seven per cent of the Israeli labour force is in the high-tech sector and it accounts for a mere 10 per cent of our economy. There is no trickle down."

"Simple materialism destroyed Israel 2,000 years ago," he says. "If we neglect the collective, Israel is finished. Privatization was a process we had to allow, but the government is incapable of managing privatization. Oligarchs run the country and we have some of the worst corruption in the world."

Indeed, at the bar of the American Colony Hotel in Jerusalem the joke goes that Israel has more corrupt politicians than Jews.

A recent poll conducted by Israel's Dahaf Institute found that 85 per cent of Israelis considered their political leaders to be corrupt.

Back on Mount Arbel, Chaim Cohen says he is ready to switch on his television to watch Tiger Woods play at the Masters.

Standing knee-deep in a field of purple and yellow wildflowers, the 63-year-old manager of Moshav Kfar Hittim (Wheat Village) says he didn't know much about the sport until Bernstein and Shapira explained the game and offered the 150 families who manage the highland farm and ranch co-operative a 26 per cent stake in the golf resort project.

"I never thought we'd be involved in a golf course," Cohen says, laughing through his thick, white moustache.

Slapping Cohen on the shoulder, Shapira says he's eager to include his new partner in a foursome. "What Chaim and I are doing represents what we as a nation want to achieve and is very much a part of our legacy," Shapira explains.

"Israel is trying to be a normal country," Cohen says as evening storm clouds scud from the north and cluster above Mount Arbel.

"We must do this."

With reporting by David Rosenberg in Jerusalem and Jacob Doctoroff in Tel Aviv

Graphic

Photo: Esteban Alterman, Bloomberg; A proposal by Moshe Shapira and his partners to develop the Galilee Golf Club on these wheat fields at the top of Mount Arbel raises fundamental questions about Israel's economy. ;

Photo: Esteban Alterman, Bloomberg; Moshe Shapira, one of the developers of the Galilee Golf Club, points on an aerial photograph of where the resort will be built on Mount Arbel, one of Israel's most historic places. ;

Photo: Esteban Alterman, Bloomberg; New York-based Americas Partners LLP general partner Joseph Bernstein wants to spend \$46 million US to build the first 36-hole championship golf course in Israel at the top of Mount Arbel, above. Some Israelis worry that the push for profits is undermining the collectivist roots that saw Israel survive and thrive, changing its fundamental character. ;

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Angela's ashes; Unlike Schroeder, who sued a newspaper that wrote that he dyed his hair, Merkel seems oblivious to how she is portrayed.

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Byline: James Button

Body

Germany's first **female** chancellor has survived her first year but her broad coalition has accomplished little. James Button reports.

IT WAS August and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, was holding her first news conference after the northern summer break. The room was packed, reporters fired questions. Merkel sat with her hands beneath the table. Every time she brought them out to make a gesture a hundred cameras clicked and flashed.

A reporter noticed she was using her hands more than usual, and asked her about it and what she thought of the busy cameras. Merkel smiled. Whenever she got a bit bored, she said politely, she waved her hands, just to test the reaction. It made a slow news conference go a little faster.

Everyone laughed. "It was a fantastic moment," says Merkel's biographer, the journalist Jacqueline Boysen. "Not long ago, no one would have expected a joke from her."

A year ago, no one expected much from her at all. Her centre-right coalition had won the popular vote in the September 18 general election but by a margin so narrow it was unable to govern in its own right. Six months earlier her Christian Democratic Union (CDU) had been tipped to unseat Gerhard Schroeder's unpopular Social Democrat-Green coalition in a landslide.

The centre-right's poor performance was blamed on her hesitant campaign and seemingly stiff, grey personality. Still, on October 10, the main right and left parties thrashed out a deal that created a grand coalition government with Merkel at its head.

There was no great hope it would hold. As the first **female** chancellor and first former East German to lead the unified country, Merkel had made history. Most people thought she would soon be history.

In the year that followed, the anti-Merkel mood not only died but her popularity soared to an astonishing 80 per cent in February, the highest figure recorded for a chancellor.

Today, though, her approval rating is back down to 30 per cent. The predicted vote for her party has sunk to 29 per cent, a little less than that of its coalition partner, the Social Democrats. People are again asking whether Merkel can last. What went wrong?

Angela's ashes Unlike Schroeder, who sued a newspaper that wrote that he dyed his hair, Merkel seems oblivious to how she is portrayed.

"Well, it's not the old Clinton dictum: it's the economy, stupid," says Alan Posener, chief commentator for the conservative newspaper Die Welt am Sonntag. Business is booming in the world's leading export nation. Growth is up and debt is down.

So is unemployment, though it remains high at 10.1 per cent. (Germany's problem is that its high-powered but highly automated manufacturing sector no longer creates jobs.) None of this is really Merkel's doing but it hasn't hurt her, either.

Rather, her roller-coaster ride is explained by an apparent contradiction. While voters didn't believe in her, many believed in the grand coalition. For seven years German politics had been stuck, as Schroeder struggled to get his reforms through an upper house dominated by the CDU and its ally, the small Christian Social Union.

Since the coalition represented nearly 70 per cent of the vote, many thought it had a unique mandate to tackle Germany's huge, structural problems, including its overblown health budget - at 10.9 per cent of gross domestic product the world's third highest, after the US and Switzerland - and underfunded pension system.

At first the hopes seemed justified. Merkel grew in popularity because she appeared to grow in the job. She was impressive on a visit to Washington. And far from being a right-wing ideologue - Margaret Thatcher reborn, as her opponents once painted her - she showed herself as a listener, determined to make the coalition work.

Having called for a freer labour market before the election, she toyed with the idea of a minimum wage. Critics in her party began to call her "an undercover Social Democrat", says Lutz Erbring, retired professor of politics at Berlin's Free University.

Yet for all the consultation, little has been done and increasingly "there is a general feeling they can't do it", Posener says.

Erbring says a bill to ban smoking in public places, backed by Merkel, was watered down to voluntary compliance after the tobacco lobby pressured the Christian Democrats. Rifts have reopened in the coalition and Merkel seems to lack the force to bring discipline to it.

In hindsight it also seems naive that the main parties could agree. Health most reveals their divide. For months they have argued over an ambitious plan to reform the system.

The goal is to reduce the spiralling costs of care - the Germans, an ageing population, are inveterate doctor-shoppers - and to shift more of the burden of payment from businesses and workers onto citizens.

Unlike the Australian system, where the taxpayer pays, in Germany health and welfare costs are mainly met by employer and employee contributions - historically in a 50-50 split. Employers say the system makes hiring workers too expensive: hence high unemployment.

Everyone agrees change is needed. But the parties are split, on left-right lines, on how much a new system should be state-run or exposed to private competition, and how much cost different socioeconomic groups should bear.

As talks dragged on, getting a deal on health became the defining test of Merkel's leadership. The Bavarian premier and coalition member, Edmund Stoiber, told his Christian Social Union party two weeks ago that without certain changes "it will be the end of the government". At 2.30am on Thursday, against the odds, Merkel brokered a deal. "Merkel has saved her chancellorship ... maybe," Erbring says.

Yet the compromise is messy, perhaps unworkable, and unlikely to resolve the doubts about Merkel.

Boysen captures the contradiction of her first year. "I am surprised by how sure and balanced she seems in the job. Yet people still don't know what she stands for."

Angela's ashes Unlike Schroeder, who sued a newspaper that wrote that he dyed his hair, Merkel seems oblivious to how she is portrayed.

Or even who the former East German physicist and pastor's daughter really is. Aware she had to make herself more appealing, Merkel, 52, last year ditched her frumpy suits and hair, which had been much mocked. Yet unlike Schroeder, who sued a newspaper that wrote that he dyed his hair, Merkel seems oblivious to how she is portrayed.

There is one rule, though. Her husband, Joachim Sauer, a chemistry professor, is off-limits. Sauer, an apparently austere man, is rarely seen with Merkel (they have no children). He was not at her swearing-in as Chancellor in November. Boysen says the fuss that followed forced Merkel to make a "rather poor" explanation in a tabloid newspaper that Sauer was travelling on professional commitments.

She showed a softer side during the World Cup in June. Watched intently by the cameras, and in a role that is not natural to her, she "impressed people by looking trustworthy in her enthusiasm", says Thomas Petersen of the Allensbach Institute for social research. At one goal she nearly jumped out of her seat in excitement.

The protege of former chancellor Helmut Kohl is still surprising people. If she is pragmatic on domestic politics, "on Israel and the US, she is a conviction politician", says Posener.

After Schroeder broke with George Bush over Iraq, Merkel has shifted her country closer to the US and further from Russia - a realignment Posener believes is popular, despite a fair amount of anti-Americanism in Germany. "Under Schroeder we got too close to Putin for comfort," he says.

Posener traces Merkel's feelings for America and her frequent talk about freedom, which baffles many Germans, to her East German past. "Because she had this experience of dictatorship, she hates dictatorships - and has an exaggerated idea of what freedom and markets mean."

Merkel has also aligned her Government with Israel, against public opinion. Last month she led an overwhelming parliamentary vote to send a naval force to Lebanese waters.

Posener says she never tried to pretend the mission was neutral peace-keeping. It was to disarm Hezbollah, in line with UN resolutions. Protecting Israel was Germany's historic duty, she says. She also told a senior CDU figure, who told Posener, that it was an issue on which she was prepared to stake her chancellorship.

"If the Iran [nuclear weapons] issue escalates and if it is a case of sanctions and possibly military action, and if the Social Democrats backed off, she would go ahead and do it, even if it destroyed the coalition," Posener says.

For now, the flashpoint is closer to home. Erbring thinks Merkel's biggest threat is not the Social Democrats quitting the coalition but rebellious Christian Democrat leaders: chiefly the state premiers Christian Wulff and Roland Koch, both of whom want her job. That said, Erbring does not believe either is in a position to challenge her before the next election, due in 2009.

Few think she will last, but then again few thought she would get this far. Merkel might do well to look at John Howard. Never much loved, he was patronised for years, and in his first year as prime minister seen to do a lousy job. But it is a fact of politics, especially in good economic times, that fortune flows to those who can hold on to power.

TAKING STOCK

GDP growth

.06% (2005) 2.4% (2006)

Inflation

2% (2005) 1.9% (2006)

Unemployment

Angela's ashes Unlike Schroeder, who sued a newspaper that wrote that he dyed his hair, Merkel seems oblivious to how she is portrayed.

11.8% (2005) 10.6% (2006)

Internet usage

15% increase since 2002.

Source: Economist; Federal Statistical Office, Germany

Graphic

PHOTO: Roller-coaster ... Chancellor Angela Merkel's popularity was at an all-time high in February, but since then it has more than halved and is now languishing around 30 per cent. Photo: AFP/Jochen Luebke

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The Hillary machine builds momentum

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

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Byline: ANNE SUMMERS www.annesummers.com.au Alan Ramsey is on leave.

Body

Within the next few weeks Senator Hillary Clinton is expected to announce the establishment of a presidential exploratory committee, the first step in her historic quest to become the first woman president of the United States.

Having such a committee will allow her to start raising money for her bid. Already a fabled fund-raiser for her Senate campaign and Democratic Party colleagues, Clinton is considered by some US political experts as likely to be the first candidate in history to raise US\$1 billion (\$1.28 billion) campaign war chest.

That's a lot of money - almost three times the record amount George Bush raised for his re-election effort in 2004 - but she will need every cent of it if she is to win the White House in November next year. After all, she spent US\$36 million to hold onto her New York Senate seat late last year, even though she was the clear frontrunner and there was no credible opponent.

Winning the country will be a herculean task, with polls showing a disapproval rate of about 40 per cent, but it is not impossible. Clinton's discipline, her focus, her formidable organisation and her unprecedented level of funds will propel her to where no woman has been before.

As an example of her already formidable national organisation, a colleague in San Francisco told me that after he criticised Clinton on a local radio station last month he had calls from two of Clinton's people within half an hour. That's attention to detail.

So far there have been two questions about Clinton: will she run? And can she win the presidential election?

It was always assumed the Democratic Party nomination was hers for the asking. Not any more. Now she is facing stiff opposition from the people whose primary votes she needs to secure the nomination. And it's all about the war. New York's Newsday this week described Clinton as being caught in "the Iraq paradox".

That paradox is encapsulated in what happened to Al Gore's 2000 vice-presidential running mate, Senator Joseph Lieberman, in Connecticut last year. Furious anti-war Democrats denied him endorsement for the Senate race because of his "yes" vote supporting the war in 2002, opting instead for the little-known Ned Lamont, who opposed the war. Trouble is, even in liberal Connecticut the electorate is much further to the right than the Democrats who turn out at primaries. Lieberman ran as an independent against Lamont - and won.

The Hillary machine builds momentum

This episode must have chilling resonance for Clinton as she calculates how to respond to George Bush's new strategy for Iraq and how to place herself in relation to her colleague Ted Kennedy's plan to legislate against a troop increase and weighs up whether she should apologise for voting for the war in the first place. She has described the Iraq policy as "failed" but, so far at least, has not repudiated the original decision to invade or called for the troops to be brought back.

Yet unless she does, she might find herself unable to win the support she needs within her party if she is to be the contender in 2008.

The Iraq war has taken off as a political mega-issue within the United States. It has had some extraordinary political fallout, most notably the defeat last November of the left-wing Republican Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island (he voted against the war) and the ousting of two Republican members of Congress from the key primary state of New Hampshire.

Before this development, Clinton had been honing a carefully calibrated transition from her preoccupation as first lady with families and children's issues which, it was claimed by adversaries, meant she would never have the stuff to order troops into combat.

She had worked hard to build her credentials as a potential commander-in-chief. She got herself on the Senate Armed Services Committee (the first New Yorker to do so), she speaks frequently on foreign policy and defence issues and, according to an article to be published on Monday in The New Yorker magazine, she talks about her husband's experience with Middle East and Balkans policy "as a way of signalling that nothing prepares a person for four years in the White House like eight years in the White House".

Now Clinton is caught between the rock of needing to prove to the country she is tough enough to take the US to war and the hard place of reassuring Democratic primary voters that she regrets her support for the Iraq invasion.

Clinton is facing tough challenges from anti-war Democrats. The former senator John Edwards (John Kerry's running mate in 2004) has repudiated his 2002 vote for the war and wants an immediate start to troop withdrawals. Edwards has declared his candidacy and is regarded by Clinton as one of her two biggest obstacles.

The other is the charismatic African-American Illinois senator Barack Obama, who has not declared and whose rhetoric on Iraq is rather contradictory but whose hands are clean because he was not in the Senate in 2002 when the vote that now haunts Clinton was taken. Both men are outpolling Clinton in Iowa, where the first caucus will take place and which will be an early indicator of the relative strengths of the various contenders.

Clinton is said to be irritated by the pressure on her to declare her candidacy so early - a year away from the first caucuses and primary election. Her husband, Bill, was able to wait until October, just three months out, before he made it official. She had planned to do the same, spending the year building prestige with her work in the Senate. She won't have that luxury now and the political abacus is being overworked as she figures out when to jump and what to say about Iraq.

Clinton won't be derailed, however. Her political trademarks of preparation, organisation and fund-raising are in overdrive and once they kick in we will see her run the perfect campaign.

She did it in New York where, arriving in a state in which she had never lived and having no personal election experience, she set out to charm voters by travelling, listening, responding and taking constituent representation to new levels. It worked. She won 67 per cent of the statewide vote last year. The question is: can she do the same with America?

She has started. Ever since the election she has been engaged in what The New York Times last week called "nearly non-stop political consultations" at dinners and drinks in Washington and New York with a wide range of potential allies whose advice she needs on how to stitch up the nomination. She is working hard at gauging how to play Iraq.

The Hillary machine builds momentum

Clinton herself is not an instinctive politician and this is seen as one of her weaknesses. Unlike her husband (who is 100 per cent on her case) and the newly anointed Democratic hero Obama, she is not warm and passionate and inspiring and finds it difficult to rouse enthusiasm even among her supporters. She is cautious to a fault. She seems to have too many advisers - 13 political consultants last August, according to Time magazine, in addition to 32 full-time staff and 10 people in her Senate office - and this could be crippling.

Recently she refused to meet the French Socialist Party presidential candidate, Segolene Royal, for what could have been an inspiring photo opportunity: the first two women ever to lead the US and France - if they win their campaigns, of course.

But Clinton "cannot afford the slightest false move", one of her advisers was quoted as saying, so she cancelled rather than risk being tainted by Royal's recent meeting with a Hezbollah politician.

Another wild card is the elevation of Nancy Pelosi to Speaker of the House of Representatives. Pelosi, who is now the public face of the Democratic Congress, is polished, professional and knows how to create a good media event, such as when she surrounded herself with 19 of her own and colleagues' children and grandchildren for her inaugural taking of the Speaker's chair. She is also considerably to the left of Clinton.

Pelosi has denied Clinton the chance to be the first woman to assume national political power in the US. If Pelosi's performance starts to wane, will this hurt Clinton? Interestingly, there is at least one poll that claims US voters would rather have a black president than a female one.

Despite these obstacles, I think Hillary Clinton's focus and her funds will see her prevail. At the end of what promises to be a long, gruelling but hypnotically exciting day in American politics, I believe Obama's lack of experience will rule him out of contention - although Clinton might consider him as a running mate (that's another story), that Edwards will burn brightly for a time but crash after the Super Tuesday primaries, and that having Pelosi as third in line to the presidency will get Americans accustomed to the idea of a woman running the national scene.

Clinton's challenge is to convince her party's anti-war hardliners that she is their best chance to beat the Republicans in 2008. It will be fascinating to watch how she finds a way through this political quicksand and avoids being bogged down by the Iraqi paradox.

She will, in my view, find a way and get the nomination, and once she does enough Americans will find the opportunity to vote for history so irresistible that she will win.

Graphic

ILLUSTRATION: John Shakespeare

Load-Date: July 17, 2007

***Disturbed by financing Whose favorite? Make a smart move Follow the rule
book Vulnerable citizens Coal for this Scrooge Thanks for prayers***

Sunday News (Lancaster, Pennsylvania)

December 17, 2006 Sunday

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Length: 1503 words

Byline: Sunday News Staff

Series: LETTERS

Dateline: Lancaster, PA

Body

Letters

CONVENTION CENTER-HOTEL PROJECT

There were several important and highly disturbing revelations at the Wednesday meeting of the finance committee of the Lancaster County Convention Center Authority:

- 1) It was announced that the debt to be placed on the proposed 300-room Marriott hotel will be \$233,000 a room. Contrast this with the proposed 14-story, 148-room downtown Harrisburg hotel at \$67,600 per hotel room. Unlike the proposed Lancaster Marriott, the Harrisburg project is totally funded by private investment.
- 2) When the Intelligencer Journal ran its infamous heading Aug. 11: "Center closes fund gap," the sponsors contemplated a final budget of \$160 million. The budget as of the Wednesday meeting is now \$168 million. And most of the vaunted savings contemplated in the Aug. 11 article have not come to pass.
- 3) At that time, observers estimated that the borrowing for the convention center would be \$54 million. Borrowing has now grown to \$64 million.
- 4) The project will be funded by "low floaters," a very dangerous form of long-term financing. When the bank letter of credit expires in five years, interest costs could double due to market conditions. Also, without a bank guarantee, the bonds would drop from investment quality to junk status, or even worse.
- 5) The letter of credit is predicated upon two factors: interest payments for the first two or three years, which are built into the construction budget, and a debt service reserve equal to one year's payment to help fund the last couple of years. The bank is relying upon revenue from the hotel room tax.
- 6) While the bank letter of credit guarantee is protected by the hotel room tax, lack of revenue generated by the convention center itself could cause operations to cease and the center to be shut down. We can envision how the authority and sponsors would run to the county commissioners for relief, at the expense of the taxpayer .

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7) And when the five years expire, and interest rates soar, the county will be asked to further bail out not only the operating deficit but also the much higher interest costs.

Six years ago, had anyone suggested that a well-meaning \$75-million project would grow into a \$200-million albatross (including costs to date), the person would have been consigned to radical fringe status.

Such shenanigans could only have taken place under the erstwhile good name of the sponsors: High; Lancaster Newspapers; and Fulton Bank. Oh, that their predecessors could be summoned from graves to bear witness to the spoilage of their legacies. Then this project would be properly consigned to its own grave and the sponsors' good names restored.

Luis A. Mendoza, Robert Edwin Field, April Koppenhaver, Bruce L. Clark, Bonnie C. Miller and

Christiaan A. Hart Nibbrig

GIL SMART

For a moment, I thought the Sunday News started a new cartoon feature, the conservative equivalent to "Doonesbury." It happened when Gil Smart proudly announced his column was voted Lancaster's favorite. Then I realized that there were no silly Opus-like characters, no frames, just print, but funny.

So now I'm wondering, has al-Qaeda upped its subscriptions to Lancaster County Magazine? Naaaah! OK, maybe Hezbollah. If we have the right to vote, why shouldn't the terrorists?

Well, there is a lot for jihadists to like there, especially Gil's constant railing against the war in Iraq. It's like political Monday-morning quarterbacking, except Gil's column appears on Sunday morning and Monday-morning quarterbacks reveal an alternative plan. So far, all I have heard from Gil is a lot of whining and moaning.

I thought by now the Democratic Party would be trumpeting its bold plan for Iraq. But it wasn't articulated during the campaign, so why be inconsistent and broadcast it now? The newly announced bipartisan plan could be adopted.

I'm not sure how the American part works, but for the terrorists the plan involves waiting until 2008 and then springing a free-for-all in Iraq once the U.S. forces are gone. In the meantime, Syria and Iran need to be involved in the process so that two foxes can guard the hen house.

Chris Henkle, Lancaster

I have a suggestion that will save you money and improve the quality of your newspaper. Cancel Maureen Dowd and remove Gil Smart from the Perspective section.

Before Smart was moved to the Perspective section he was semi-interesting. Granted, his columns were rambling and his logic flawed, but at least he presented a position one could argue with. Since moving to the Perspective section he apparently feels a need to compete with Dowd's shrillness. I rarely read him anymore. I gave up reading Dowd years ago.

They are merely name-callers and mudslingers. How does one debate such people without sounding equally juvenile?

Over the years I've read many thoughtful, diverse opinions from local letter writers. These letters are much more thought-provoking than anything Smart or Dowd seems capable of. I suggest you give their space to more (or longer) letters from readers.

I don't want to see Smart fired. We've all read ad nauseam about the family he must support. Perhaps he can take up cartoon drawing and find a new life in the comic strips.

Dick Eelman, Manheim Township

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Mr. Smart, when are you going to get smart? Ever since the beginning of time it was supposed to be one man and one woman, not two men and two women. That is what God has put down in the rules (the Bible). Read the Book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible. That is supposed to be our road map for life.

God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. Some of these people have changed their life around through the Lord Jesus Christ, and so can others, if they are willing. It can be done. Let God have his way. Marriage: one man and one woman.

Ruth Reese, Lancaster

OTHER SUBJECTS

In a Sunday News article [Nov. 26], Dennis Downey articulated the current crisis of care for people with disabilities. I would like to share with you what his information about priorities means, especially if you don't have a loved one in that world.

It means that an 85-year-old widow with health-care issues of her own is still caring for her 55-year-old disabled child at home because there's no money for opening new residential homes. It means that the police find an emaciated older adult living with the corpse of his mother.

It means that young adults who have graduated from special-education programs sit at home because they have no funding to go to a day program. Sitting at home may mean that a parent has to quit his job to stay home with the child. Sitting at home also means that important skills are lost. Sitting at home leads to boredom and depression.

It means that an adult with intellectual disabilities is found by the police in an abusive and horrendous living environment. That person spends weeks in the hospital, afraid to be touched by anyone and unable to communicate his wants or needs. It means that people are found living in basements.

Dr. Downey is correct when he says the future is now. All of the above exist in Lancaster County because the needs of people with disabilities are not nearly enough of a priority of those who make decisions that affect these vulnerable lives. It has been said that the measure of any society is how it treats its most vulnerable citizens. To all state legislators, county commissioners, U.S. senators and congressmen, I say, remember these people who need you on their side.

Michele Stiefel, Lancaster, president of the board, The ARC of Lancaster County

I always enjoy your "Sunday's Guest" columns, especially those written by Bill Adams [Dec. 3, "You better watch out; there's something in your stocking"], although I don't always agree with him. I wish to add a person for a stocking packed to the brim with coal.

This person broke the lock on a new freezer owned by Millersville Area Meals On Wheels and stole two cases of breakfast sausages meant to be used for a benefit breakfast. Twice a year, Millersville University's Phi Sigma Pi fraternity sponsors breakfasts to raise money for MAMOW. The thief also took two cases of diced chicken and two cases of chicken breasts.

MAMOW operates out of Millersville First United Methodist Church.

If anyone knows the identity of the thief, please report it to the Millersville police or call MAMOW at 872-2415.

If anyone would care to make a donation to help defray the money spent to replace the meats, send it to Millersville Area Meals On Wheels, 121 N. George St., Millersville, Pa. 17551.

Jean W. Roth, Millersville

I would like to thank all the wonderful people who are saying prayers for our family.

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When such a tragedy occurs it is so comforting to know that the power of prayer is with us. It will be a long haul for Shannon and Robb [who were thrown from their motorcycle in November], so please keep them in your prayers.

I would like to also thank all the medical personnel that are taking care of them both. It is a wonderful feeling knowing there are people that are so talented in their field.

Robb, Shannon and Linda Dombach, Lancaster

Load-Date: December 18, 2006

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LETTERS FROM READERS

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

August 4, 2006 Friday

THIRD EDITION

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Body

Raunchy on the river: Objecting to objectification

The article "Raunchy on the river" (July 30) profiles the increasing beer-drinking, breast-baring and raunchy vulgarity endured by families with children and other river floaters who feel it's gotten worse in recent years. They complain of drunken floaters spewing foul language, floating six-foot inflatable male body parts and women baring their bosoms.

Why are beer and breasts and inflatable male body parts on the Meramec River raunchy and shocking, but when corporate America slickly packages it, as with Hooters, it's a smart and acceptable marketing tool and good business model? At Hooters, ample breasts sell beer. On the Meramec, ample beer bares breasts.

I am not a prude, but rather have feminist reasons for objecting to Hooters: It would be nice if my sons were raised to view women as whole people rather than commodified, titillating pieces and body parts. Florissant, where the Hooters controversy is, has a reputation as a welcoming community for families, but would the parents of those children bused by a Hooters every day agree?

There is a connection between slickly packaged corporate marketing of women's (and men's) body parts and the profiled growing raunchiness on the river, rape and violence against women and even an increase in inappropriate sexual behavior among young children. They aren't quite sure what they're doing or why -- or its implications -- but they see it all around them, whether or not their parents have any say in it, and they probably figure they might as well join the crowd.

Ellen Geerling | Lake Saint Louis

Let nature win

There is a very simple resolution to problems on the rivers: Ban all alcohol on the streams, institute large fines for drinking and larger fines for littering. A few have ruined it for all of us. When we can keep the drunks off the streams and other people can enjoy themselves, nature will have won. In the end, it's all about nature and being able to enjoy the beauty and preservation of our most precious resource: water.

Don Pflieger | St. Louis

Seeking magnificence

LETTERS FROM READERS

Perhaps Erin Ryan of Glasgow Village is a bit naive about the use of Missouri streams. Her suggestion that families with children should steer clear of Saturdays on the river is remarkable. "Do you bring a 10-year-old to a strip club or Party Cove or a casino? Why would you bring them to a place where they are going to see body parts?" (Do people routinely take their clothes off at a casino?) Well, some of us enjoy the magnificence of the river without the obstruction of your body parts.

Here's a suggestion: Since families with children normally work and go to school during the week, why not have the drunks horse around on the river Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and visit their probation officers on the weekends?

Tim Adcock | Valley Park

Rush-hour woes

Regarding "Poplar Street commute turns ugly amid repaving" (July 31): I think that Marjorie Melton, president of the St. Louis Board of Public Service, and St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay should be made to drive across the river at rush hour on any of the downtown bridges twice a day just to see how much fun it really is. The Metro East plays an important part in the life of St. Louis. Closing the Eads Bridge to automobile traffic when it is needed the most borders on inept.

Ronald Miller | Collinsville

Hiding the design

The first design for Government Hill was a disaster. The second design, we are told, is much better ("Altered vision of site is rooted in tradition," Aug. 1). But how can anyone tell from looking at these small renderings?

The new drawings show Government Hill viewed from a great distance. The overhead views are a mess -- too tiny and blurry to comprehend. Could this be intentional because the designers don't want anyone to see and understand how this mess will look until it's too late to stop it?

Until the public is shown a clear new design, one that will not desecrate Government Hill for the sake of accessibility, the plan should not be adopted. The people have a right to see what they're getting. God forbid it would be another Richard Serra-type slap in the face for this city.

Cedric Nold | Fenton

Joining the circus

Jim Fox's commentary "The proper duties of a school board" (Aug. 1) reveals ignorance, not understanding of the issues related to the city school board.

Mr. Fox notes two school board functions: keeping an eye on income and expenditures and hiring a strong superintendent. If he attended St. Louis Public Schools board meetings, he would see that is what this board is doing. Former Superintendent Creg Williams resigned and left quickly because he knew there was cause. Diana Bourisaw, the acting superintendent, has impeccable qualifications and credentials.

Mr. Fox writes: "I wish the circus act that now passes for a school board in the city of St. Louis would rededicate itself to its only real job: Serve the children by watching over the funds and letting educators run the schools." The circus is not the school board; the circus surrounds the school board that is serving the children by doing what he advises. Sadly, Mr. Fox increased the size of the circus by joining it.

Helen Louise Herndon | St. Louis

Break-away women

LETTERS FROM READERS

Regarding "Catholic women will proclaim themselves as priests" (July 31): These women have broken away from the true Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church and the Magisterium. The Catholic Church's teachings are based on sacred scripture and sacred tradition, none of which these self-proclaimed priests are following. It is unfortunate that some feel so slighted by the Catholic Church and its teachings that they need to portray the church as some kind of men's social club. The Catholic Church founded 2,000 years ago is anything but exclusionary.

Sacred scripture and sacred tradition both show us that presbyters always have been men. It is true that there were women who were paramount in Jesus' life, like Mary his mother and Mary Magdalene, but neither was a presbyter.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "The Lord Jesus chose men to form the College of the twelve Apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry.... The church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible."

There are many opportunities in evangelization and catechesis. I encourage these women to take advantage of these opportunities.

Jim Hoefl | Afton

Second-class citizens

As I read Bill McClellan's "Young nun, 64, needs job to support dependents" (July 30), my blood pressure shot through the roof.

If there was ever any doubt in any- one's mind that the Catholic Church views women as second-class citizens, this sad story provides the proof. The thought that a nun has to find outside work to support her elderly fellow nuns is despicable. These women spend their lives devoted to Christ and the Catholic Church, living their vow of poverty and charity. They are thanked by the Catholic Church by being forced to work until they die to take care of the elderly nuns in their community.

This never would happen to a priest. Collections are frequently taken during Mass to support retirement homes for priests. It's no surprise that fewer women are joining the convent. If this church thinks so little of the nuns who are the very backbone of its very existence, where do you think you stand in their magnificent hierarchy?

Suzanne M. Gereaux | Independence, Mo.

Sad truisms of war

Watching the fighting between the Israeli armed forces and Hezbollah brings to mind two sad but true axioms of war:

Truism 1: War is fought by the young, suffered by women and children and started by older men who should know better.

Truism 2: Two rules:

Rule 1: In war, soldiers are killed and maimed along with the innocent, who seek only to be left alone to live in peace.

Rule 2: You can't change Rule 1.

John R. Stoeffler | Ballwin

A hands-off America

The world watches Lebanon in horror as history repeats itself. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's standoffish inclinations can be evaluated with the lessons of history.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Consider Cyprus, again serving as a transfer point to evacuate Americans. History repeats, for in 1983 it was the only Middle Eastern nation that agreed to allow us to evacuate dying and wounded Marines from the Beirut, Lebanon, barracks bombing. But Cyprus, too, is divided, a result of Turkey's brutal invasion in 1974, followed by the ethnic cleansing and continued occupation of northern Cyprus. This happened and continues only because of a weak hands-off American policy.

As with Cyprus, laissez-faire policies have yet to bring about a true solution regarding Israel. We need to actively seek a cease-fire as a first step to substantial negotiations. We have limited powers, but we need to make use of those we have. History also teaches us that the Middle East problems do not simply go away.

Nicholas D. Matsakis | Warson Woods

Chairman, Justice for Cyprus Committee

of Greater St. Louis

Notes

YOUR VIEWS OPINION

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End of Document

That was the Week that Was...

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

November 26, 2006 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 33

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Byline: Compiled by Anne-Marie Conway

Body

Home news

Britain: drugs capital of EU

As hospitals were being told not to treat patients "too promptly" because meeting targets was costing too much, drug addicts in Durham and south London were being given heroin on the NHS, at an annual cost of pounds 15,000 a head, a bargain when the average junkie is said to steal property worth pounds 45,000 a year to finance his or her habit.

A Europe-wide report revealed that Britain consumes more cocaine than anywhere else in the European Union.

Parties look to their inner tossers

Traditional Conservatives, already struggling to cope with the idea of The Guardian's social commentator Polly Toynbee as a better source of inspiration than, say, Winston Churchill, were then shocked to discover that their party was telling young voters to "tackle the tosser within". Rather than heeding this viral ad campaign aimed at preventing people from going into debt, cash-strapped Labour had, Tories claimed, chosen to divert councillors' levies to party HQ, and changed the rules on secret loans. Patricia Hewitt became the latest cabinet minister to be questioned by police about cash for honours.

Deterrence on the cheap

As the Cabinet rejected the idea of refurbishing Britain's Trident nuclear deterrent in favour of a replacement that could cost up to pounds 30bn, the Ministry of Defence admitted that British paratroopers in Afghanistan had been borrowing ammunition from their US counterparts because their own, cheaper, ordnance was defective.

Cross words get results

On Monday, check-in worker Nadia Eweida lost her appeal against British Airways over the right to wear a cross visibly with her uniform, prompting almost 100 MPs to condemn the airline's "deplorable behaviour". On Friday, the company said it was reviewing its policy.

Stormont Castle attacked

That was the Week that Was...

Twenty minutes into the first debate at the reopened Stormont Assembly, the building had to be cleared after the convicted loyalist killer Michael Stone, carrying a knife and an imitation fire-arm, threw a bag containing nailbombs, an axe and a garotte into the doorway. Eventually, after a rather non-committal speech, the DUP leader Ian Paisley said he was prepared to accept nomination as First Minister "after all the conditions agreed at St Andrews have been met". As expected, Sinn Fein nominated Martin McGuinness as Deputy First Minister. Yesterday, Stone was charged with attempting to murder McGuinness and the Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams.

Heads: must try harder

The 20 per cent of English headteachers who claimed they had no gifted pupils were told to look harder, which might have been encouraging were it not for Wednesday's claim by the education watchdog Ofsted that more than half of secondary schools were not providing a good education.

Heads pointed out on Friday that a record 45,000 pupils last year had challenged their GCSE marks, and that one in four had been regraded as result, implying that many others had also been badly marked.

Female staff fed up with being sexually harassed by their teenage students took heart from the announcement of a national network of "supernannies" - more accurately, clinical psychologists - to help problem families develop parenting skills and reduce antisocial behaviour. These schemes were immediately dubbed "Poppins centres".

What patient privacy?

As GPs expressed concern about the confidentiality of the planned national medical records database, patients had more immediate privacy concerns, with more than one in five at risk of being treated in a mixed-sex unit, despite Labour promises to phase them out.

No end to booze cruises

On Tuesday, the European Court of Justice ruled against consumers hoping to order cheap alcohol and tobacco over the internet without paying UK duty, thereby protecting the Treasury's pounds 16bn annual takings.

International news

Lebanon murder 'start of coup'

The resumption of diplomatic ties between Iraq and Syria on Monday, after almost 25 years, was immediately overshadowed by the assassination of the Lebanese Christian politician Pierre Gemayel, an outspoken critic of Syria, in Beirut on Tuesday. The US Ambassador to the United Nations suggested the murder might be "the first shot" in a coup by Syria and Iran, working through **Hezbollah**. Syria said it would not co-operate with a UN tribunal set up to try the suspected killers of Rafik al-Hariri, the former prime minister whose murder 21 months ago brought an end to 15 years of stability in Lebanon.

Hundreds die in Baghdad bomb onslaught

More than 200 people died as a wave of car bomb and mortar blasts struck Sadr City, a Shia area of Baghdad, on Thursday. Sunni gunmen also attacked the offices of the health ministry (run by a Shia). The following day, despite a city-wide curfew, at least 30 people were killed after attacks on mosques in Sunni areas. The subsequent closure of the city's airport forced the Iraqi President, Jamal Talabani, to cancel talks with Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. In the circumstances, Margaret Beckett's earlier "confidence" that Iraqi forces could assume control of Basra and allow British troops to start withdrawing from Iraq in April seemed somewhat optimistic.

Fusion is the way ahead

After a decade of negotiation, the EU, South Korea, Russia, China, the US, India and Japan formally gave the go-ahead for the euro10bn International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (or Iter, "the way" in Latin) on Tuesday.

That was the Week that Was...

But hopes of limitless clean energy from the fusion reactor, which will be built at Cadarache in southern France, will be on hold for decades.

People

Mohegans bury the hatchet

Almost 300 years after his predecessor came to London to persuade his ally King George II to protect Mohegan (not to be confused with Mohican) tribal lands in America, Chief Bruce Two Dogs Bozsum smoked a pipe of peace with the Queen - although Her Majesty did not inhale. The chief was carrying out burial rites over Mahomet Weyonomon, who had died of smallpox in 1736 before the king could hear his petition, and been buried in Southwark Cathedral.

To boldly swing...

A Canadian golf club manufacturer paid millions to have a rank amateur take a swing with a gold-plated six-iron on Thursday. The Russian cosmonaut Mikhail Tyurin, who had played only twice before, thus became the first man to hit a golf ball into space, dangling outside the International Space Station, 220 miles above Earth. Although the manufacturers hope the ball will be in orbit for three years, Nasa reckoned it would probably burn up in the Earth's atmosphere some time today.

Deaths noticed

Robert Altman, the American director of M*A*S*H, Nashville, Short Cuts and Gosford Park, aged 81.

Sir Edward Ford, the former courtier who coined the phrase "annus horribilis" to sympathise with the Queen, aged 96.

Christabel Burniston, founder of the English Speaking Board, aged 97.

Nick Clarke, the presenter of Radio 4's The World at One, aged 58.

Philippe Noiret, the French actor best known for his roles as the kindly projectionist in Cinema Paradiso and the poet in Il Postino, aged 76.

Business

US predators circle LSE

Clara Furse, the chief executive of the London Stock Exchange, rejected Monday's pounds 2.7bn hostile bid from the American exchange Nasdaq, which already owns just under 29 per cent of its stock. However, Thursday's disclosure that the US corporate raider Samuel Heyman has been buying up LSE stock over the past months, giving him 8.8 per cent of the exchange, suggested that the fight was not yet over.

Branson picks a fight

Sir Richard Branson described BSkyB's purchase of 17.9 per cent of ITV as "a blatant attempt to distort competition" by influencing the broadcaster's decision to turn down a merger offer from the cable company NTL, in which the Virgin boss holds a major stake. He also accused the Government of being "scared stiff of Rupert Murdoch".

Sport

Prima donnas on the pitch

That was the Week that Was...

Celtic shocked more than Manchester United fans by beating Sir Alec Fergus-on's team on Tuesday, thus making the last 16 of the Championship League for the first time in the Scottish club's history. This should add spice to this afternoon's Premiership confrontation.

The Queen showed her faith in the game by asking David Richards, the newly knighted Premier League chair-man, "Aren't they all prima donnas?"

Meanwhile West Ham fans were perfecting their new chant, *Ég blæs sápuþúlur a eilífu* (Icelandic for "I'm forever blowing bubbles"), after the club accepted an pounds 85m takeover bid from a consortium led by Eggert Magnusson.

Fresh starts, reprieves and watery ends

Oliver Fisher, the youngest golfer ever to play in the Walker Cup, turned professional on Wednesday. The 18-year-old from Chigwell in Essex joined Tiger Woods and Colin Montgomerie on IMG's books.

On Tuesday Scott Harrison, the Scot-tish boxer recently released from a Spanish prison on assault charges, was cleared to defend his WBO feather-weight title next month.

Mike Golding, the "High Seas Samaritan" who sailed 80 miles back upwind in a round-the-world yacht race to rescue a capsized British rival in the Southern Ocean on Thursday, found himself in trouble when his own mast broke several hours later.

Australia's five-times Olympic champion, Ian Thorpe, known as "Flipper" on account of his size 17 feet, announced his retirement from professional swimming on Tuesday, at the age of 24.

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That was the Week that Was...

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

September 3, 2006 Sunday

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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.

Load-Date: September 3, 2006

Oui, non, peut-etre; Despite the hoopla surrounding the French presidential election, many voters remain undecided

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

April 14, 2007 Saturday

National Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A22

Length: 1544 words

Byline: Peter Goodspeed, National Post

Body

Elections in France are a mixture of politics, passion and philosophy.

How else can you explain the tight four-way presidential race or the nearly 200 political tomes weighing down bookstore shelves and best-seller lists?

Yet, despite all the hoopla of election rallies, talk-show appearances, get-out-the-vote rock concerts, nine hours of free political advertising on radio and television and months of blanket media coverage, 42% of voters remain undecided.

As a result, the first round of presidential voting, scheduled for Sunday, April 22, has turned into an emotional debate about how France views itself.

Many commentators describe the election as "a battle for the soul of France." Candidates are scrambling to declare themselves guardians of the nation, while voters hotly debate issues such as immigration, racism, national identity and law and order.

Polls show right-winger Nicolas Sarkozy and socialist Segolene Royal in the lead, although centrist Francois Bayrou and far-rightist Jean-Marie Le Pen are surprisingly close behind.

According to the latest poll by the CSA Institute, Mr. Sarkozy is backed by 26% of voters, compared to 23.5% for Ms. Royal, 21% for Mr. Bayrou and 16% for Mr. Le Pen.

But the undecided -- a stunning 18 million people -- could easily swing the election any which way.

"We're in an era where voters are more and more like shoppers," says pollster Roland Cayrol of the CSA Institute. "People are hesitating more and more between the candidates and will decide at the last moment."

If no single candidate wins 50% of the vote on April 22, there will be a runoff between the two top vote-getters on May 6.

Oui, non, peut-etre; Despite the hoopla surrounding the French presidential election, many voters remain undecided

Six of the eight fringe candidates in the first round are radical leftists, who could cut deeply into Ms. Royal's vote base, paving the way for a repeat of the 2002 election, when a split vote on the left boosted Mr. Le Pen past the socialist Lionel Jospin into a runoff with Jacques Chirac, the French President.

That's exactly the scenario Mr. Bayrou, leader of the Union for French Democracy, hopes to exploit with calls for a government of national unity that rejects France's tradition of ideologically driven left-right politics.

A 55-year-old horse breeder, who describes himself as a consensus candidate, he aims to capitalize on voters' growing disgust with old-time politics.

Playing up his rural roots, Mr. Bayrou is doing everything he can to distance himself from the unpopular Parisian elite.

But he has positioned himself at the centre by being deliberately vague and France seems in no mood for equivocal blandness as it struggles with what may be a watershed election.

For the first time in 26 years, voters are poised to elect an entirely new generation of political leaders, abandoning decades of domination by Francois Mitterrand, followed by Jacques Chirac.

Anticipating that transition, the parties are fielding candidates who are predominantly in their early to mid-50s (usually they are older).

Ms. Royal, 53, also enjoys the cachet of being the first **female** presidential candidate of a major French political party.

Her campaign slogan, "La France presidente!" (using the feminine form of president) emphasizes her gender and appeals directly to the 52% of voters who are **women**. She has also infuriated old-line socialists by avoiding issues of substance or ideology in order to emphasize her personal style.

Her television ads feature her standing directly before the camera against a backdrop of blue skies, saying, "I am a woman, a mother of four children. I have my feet on the ground. I am practical. I am a free woman."

Plain-spoken and accessible, she oozes charisma and promotes a Pierre Trudeau-style of "participatory democracy," which relies heavily on encouraging voters to discuss what they want in hundreds of local debates and village and Internet forums.

Like Mr. Trudeau, she enjoys her celebrity and recently placed sixth on a French list of **women** with sex appeal (behind Angelina Jolie and Czech-born supermodel Adriana Karembeu, but ahead of Kate Moss, Naomi Campbell and Penelope Cruz).

But what she displays in freshness, she lacks in experience.

Her campaign has been plagued by stumbles and charges of amateurism that have caused party members to publicly question her competence to govern.

Last December, on a trip to Lebanon she blindly agreed with a **Hezbollah** politician's criticism of Israel and U.S. foreign policy. Weeks later, she appeared to endorse independence for Quebec during a visit by Andre Boisclair, the Parti Quebecois leader.

In an attempt to display her seriousness, Ms. Royal has published a best-selling book, Now, a compilation of interviews with the editor-in-chief of Elle magazine

But the book has been overshadowed by a scathing personal attack on Ms. Royal by one of her own advisors. In his own best-seller, Who Knows Madame Royal, economist Eric Beeson denounced her as an incompetent demagogue

Oui, non, peut-etre; Despite the hoopla surrounding the French presidential election, many voters remain undecided

"Segolene Royal must not become president of the republic," Mr. Beeson wrote.

"I don't want it for my country. I fear it for my children. She pretends to break taboos, but when she runs into resistance, she goes soft, retreats into a blur and explains nothing."

The attack was a gift to Mr. Sarkozy, who has been leading public opinion polls for more than a year.

A former interior minister with a reputation for adopting a hard line on law and order issues, Mr. Sarkozy also has two books on the best-seller lists -- Together, released recently, and

the earlier Testimony--in which he tries "to express what is in my heart and my convictions."

A blunt straightforward speaker with a reputation for being aggressive, Mr. Sarkozy promises capitalism with a human face.

He holds out the prospect of transforming France's economy and foreign policy, and promises a clean break with the now-unpopular Mr. Chirac.

"The specialty of the French Socialists has been to share wealth that does not exist," he writes in Testimony, saying the economy needs to start producing wealth, then use it to create more.

He is against the 35-hour work week and mandatory retirement at 60, and wants to encourage workers to become more productive by making overtime tax free.

In foreign policy, a field that is almost exclusively the responsibility of the French president, Mr. Sarkozy says he will break with France's traditional anti- American stance.

Early on in his campaign, he infuriated Mr. Chirac by meeting George W. Bush, the U.S. President, in Washington, where he also delivered a speech regretting the "arrogance" of past French foreign policy.

"I admire the social mobility of American society," he writes in Testimony.

"You can start with nothing and be exceptionally successful. You can fail and be allowed a second chance. Merit is rewarded. Society is less hidebound than in France."

Few Frenchmen have shown such admiration for the United States since Alexis de Tocqueville in the 19th century.

While critics accuse him of "Americanizing" French politics, Mr. Sarkozy has courted farright voters by undercutting the appeal of Mr. Le Pen's National Front and promising to create a Ministry of Immigration & National Identity.

He also wants to introduce immigration quotas for qualified applicants and says the influx of foreigners over past decades could alter France's national character.

"We have a gigantic problem with integration," he says.

"I am saying that the immigrants who come here have to sign up to the national identity. Is that shocking?"

All the other candidates, except Mr. Le Pen, have denounced Mr. Sarkozy, saying he is flirting with racism.

The veteran far-right leader faces an erosion of support because French politics have shifted to the right. While he still scores higher in opinion polls than in the past, his presidential rivals have hardened up their immigration and security policies and are reaching out to his vote base with appeals to French nationalism.

Ms. Royal has started to sing La Marseillaise at election rallies and urges supporters to keep a flag at home.

A worried Mr. Le Pen now tells voters, "Why buy the cheap copy, when you can get the original."

Oui, non, peut-etre; Despite the hoopla surrounding the French presidential election, many voters remain undecided

As far as Mr. Sarkozy is concerned, the key to becoming France's next president is to attract enough Le Pen voters that the 78-year-old former French paratrooper finishes the first round in third or fourth place.

Then, in the second round, against Ms. Royal, he will automatically win most of the farrightist's supporters.

That's the theory, but there are too many unresolved variables in play to know if it will work.

With new voters signing up in record numbers, 2.9 million more people will cast ballots than in 2002. Many are young people who have never voted before and many of those are disenchanted new immigrants who intensely dislike Mr. Le Pen and Mr. Sarkozy.

No one knows yet what their impact may be. But it could mark a sudden lurch away from the strict ideological divides of oldtime politics.

"It's a whole new ball game," says Mariette Sineau, a director of the CEVIPOF political research centre in Paris.

"None of the main candidates are an outgoing president or prime minister. They are younger and there is a woman. This is also the first time that we have not just two, but three candidates leading the field. This makes the outcome of the vote more uncertain."

Pgoodspeed@nationalpost.com

Graphic

Color Photo: Charles Platiau, Reuters; A man walks past posters for the French presidential campaign in Paris this week. If no candidate receives 50% of the April 22 vote, there will be a runoff between the top two finishers on May 6. ;

Load-Date: April 14, 2007

The deadly game of power politics in Lebanon in hyregoes in hyregoes in hyregoes

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

August 1, 2006 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. A8

Length: 190 words

Byline: Horatio Morgan, Vancouver Sun

Body

Many individuals are coming to terms with the Americans' -- particularly the George W. Bush administration's -- change in their traditional policy of diplomacy in the Middle East. This change is suspected in their apparent efforts to stall a ceasefire in the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict in Lebanon.

One may argue that this invigorated hard-line approach, which is now jointly adopted by the U.S. and Israel, is a necessary bold stance against terrorism. Others may even assert that Israel's apparent disproportionate display of its military capabilities should send a clear signal to countries such as Iran and Syria; consequently, they will think twice about confrontations with the U.S. or Israel in the future.

The merits of this hard-line approach cannot be settled after a few rounds of debate. However, whatever the reasons submitted for the unfolding power politics played out in this episode, one thing is sure: Innocent men, women and especially children are notably casualties in this game.

Therefore, in the international community, we probably need to ponder more deeply whether such a game is too costly to play.

Horatio Morgan

Burnaby

Graphic

Photo: Horatio Morgan

Load-Date: August 1, 2006

The deadly game of power politics in Lebanon in hyregoes in hyregoes in hyregoes

End of Document

Group calls for ceasefire in middle east

Bath Chronicle

August 12, 2006 Saturday

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Section: Pg. 17

Length: 199 words

Body

A Group committed to promoting greater understanding between people of different faiths in west Wiltshire is calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Middle East.

The West Wiltshire Interfaith Group, based in Bradford on Avon, said it wanted people of all faiths and none to take part in a "peaceful protest against the evils of armed warfare".

The group's central committee said it was deeply concerned that neither the Israeli government nor Hezbollah seemed to be interested in a ceasefire.

In a statement, the group said: "The people who are suffering are the innocent children, women and men caught up in the conflict. We hear that more than 1,000 civilians have already been killed and many more injured.

"This includes Christians, Jews and Muslims.

"We believe that a ceasefire cannot come quickly enough. The pain, anguish, fear and grief experienced by those trapped in the struggle will be felt for many years to come.

"We call on all people of faith, especially Muslim, Jew and Christian, to actively pray for an end of conflict, and for a journey of peace for all in the Middle East.

"We call on all people of no faith to actively join in a peaceful protest against the evils of armed warfare."

Load-Date: August 13, 2006

Game too costly

Ottawa Citizen

August 2, 2006 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A13

Length: 197 words

Byline: Horatio Morgan, The Ottawa Citizen

Body

Many individuals are coming to terms with the Bush administration's change in traditional U.S. diplomatic policy for the Middle East. This change is evident in the efforts of the U.S. to stall a ceasefire in the *Hezbollah*-Israeli conflict in Lebanon.

One may argue that this invigorated hard-line approach, which is now jointly adopted by the U.S. and Israel, is a necessary bold stance on terrorism. Others may even assert that Israel's apparent disproportionate display of its military capabilities should send a clear signal to countries such as Iran and Syria, so that they will think twice about future confrontations with the U.S. or Israel. The merits of this hard-line approach cannot be decided after a few rounds of debate.

However, whatever the reasons for the power politics being played out in this episode, one thing is sure: innocent men, *women* and especially children are notably casualties of this game. Therefore, in the international community, we need to ponder more deeply whether such a game is too costly to play. And we probably should not think too long before doing something, because many lives are already hanging in the balance.

Horatio Morgan,

Burnaby, B.C.

Load-Date: August 2, 2006

Top of the World

thespec.com

January 26, 2007 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: CANADA/WORLD; Pg. A04

Byline: The Hamilton Spectator

Graphic

Photo: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS , LEBANON An injured man leaves a crowded Beirut hospital following day-long rioting that subsided only when the Lebanese army imposed a curfew on the capital yesterday. Earlier, hundreds of government supporters and foes wielded rocks, Molotov cocktails and sometimes guns in street battles. Four people were killed and 150 wounded, many of them soldiers who at times stood helplessly between the two sides. The clashes offered a bitter contrast to the optimism of an international conference in Paris, where more than \$7.6-billion US was pledged to help Lebanon's economy recover from last summer's war with Israel. As the grants and loans were announced, bursts of gunfire echoed along the airport road, and columns of black smoke rose from burning cars in some of the worst clashes since Lebanon's 15-year civil war ended in 1990. The images reverberated across Beirut, anxious and uneasy since Dec. 1, 2006, when Hezbollah and its allies began their campaign to topple the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora with a mass protest in the downtown area. Many fear that only bloodshed will force a break in the deadlock between the government, supported by the United States and France, and an opposition led by Hezbollah, supported by Iran and Syria.; Photo: Daniel Munoz, Reuters , COLOMBIA Colombian police dog Agata, a golden Labrador, is still hard at work these days, despite a \$10,000 bounty on her head. A 24-hour guard monitors her food as part of precautions taken to protect Agata, one of Colombia's best drug-sniffing dogs. Police say they learned that a bounty was put on Agata's furry head after a string of detections she made in 2004. Colombia is the world's biggest producer of cocaine.; Photo: Sigit Pamungkas, Reuters , INDONESIA The U.S. navy has picked up signals from the flight data recorders of an Indonesian jetliner that vanished on New Year's Day with 102 people on board. But retrieving them from a depth of nearly 1,700 metres will likely be a difficult, expensive and lengthy operation. The Adam Air Boeing 737 went missing off the western coast of Sulawesi while flying from Indonesia's main island of Java. Searchers have found pieces of debris but no bodies.; Photo: Kyle Carter, Reuters , MISSISSIPPI A former sheriff's deputy pleaded not guilty to kidnapping charges in the deaths of two black hitch hikers, four decades after their bodies were found in the Mississippi River. James Ford Seale, 71, was one of two suspects initially arrested in 1964, but the FBI, consumed by a search for three civil rights workers, handed the case to local authorities. A justice of the peace, at that time, promptly threw out all charges.; Photo: Neil Jones, the Associated Press , WALES Gari Evans and a group of Welsh farmers have put their pictures on milk bottles in a desperate bid to find a date. They say social outlets are rare due to the long hours and isolation of farming. The novel approach to the singles' scene coincides with yesterday's celebration of St. Dwynwen's Day, the Welsh patron saint of lovers. Since the ads first began appearing, the dating website -- pishynwales.com -- has received 2,500 hits, about 10 times the usual daily traffic.; Photo: Sebastian Scheiner, the Associated Press , JERUSALEM Parliamentary Speaker Dalia Itzik, above, is Israel's acting president after the embattled incumbent took a leave of absence to fight sexual assault charges,

Top of the World

including rape. Moshe Katsav, 61, under intense pressure to resign, preserved his immunity to prosecution while in office by taking leave instead over the alleged abuse of women who worked for him.; Photo: Fred Chartrand, the Canadian Press , OTTAWA Critics are howling patronage after federal Fisheries Minister Loyola Hearn, left, announced that Loyola Sullivan, right, a former Newfoundland cabinet minister, will be Canada's new ambassador for fisheries conservation. Hearn said: "I can't be running around the world meeting with ministers every few days or as each issue appears."

Load-Date: January 26, 2007

End of Document

Score of his life

South China Morning Post

December 24, 2006 Sunday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 5

Length: 1613 words

Byline: Sean Thomas barely survived the excess of his early years, but he has clawed his way back, writes Antonella Gambotto-Burke

Body

ON PAGE 95 of author Erica Jong's 2006 memoir, *Seducing the Demon: Writing for My Life*, she elaborates on an anecdote from 1994's *Fear of Fifty*, in which she overcomes fierce disgust to bed an unnamed - and very married - poet.

"He wrote me the sexiest letters full of black garter belts and rosy rumps and black stockings and dirty poems and references to *The Story of O* ... His teeth were Englishly crooked, his shoulders were hunched and he smelled of mothballed tweed and cheap pipe tobacco ... He spoke of his son, who had been accused of rape 'by a rich Jewish girl, with a posh Hampstead house'."

Jong is, of course, referring to D.M. Thomas, poet and author of the 1981 Booker Prize-shortlisted best-seller, *The White Hotel*, and, indirectly, to his son, Sean Thomas. Such intrusions are the legacy of inherited literary celebrity.

Once accused of rape by a rich Jewish girl with a posh Hampstead house, Sean Thomas, now 43 and a new father, decided to avoid such surprises by documenting his own misdemeanours with a uniquely beguiling frankness. Millions of *Women* Are Waiting to Meet You is his fourth book and his first best-seller. It's also an addictively hilarious memoir in which the confessional journalist analyses the impact of his father's philandering and his own history of falling for *women* as tormented as Lisa Erdman, the part-Jewish protagonist of *The White Hotel*.

Thomas grudgingly accepts the professional association with his father. "When I was just starting as a writer," he says with a sigh, "they even put it on the back of my first novel, which really pissed me off. Because you want to make your own name, obviously. *The White Hotel* was a massive book, but it was 25 years ago, and he hasn't really written much in the last 10 years. It sounds bad, but I'm kind of grateful he's not as famous as he used to be."

Even though he names Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader* over *The White Hotel* as "the best Holocaust novel ever written", his rage towards his father has, he says, abated to a kind of affection. The second of two children to the poet's unhappy first marriage, Thomas always felt "slightly protective" of his mother as he felt his "dad was being a bit of a bastard", but after "a lot of trouble with drugs", the father and son are now much closer. "I just had to go down to Cornwall and try to get away from London and all my vices and, you know, problems," he says. "He took me in. He's good like that - it turned out my dad is quite a good dad; he was just off shagging when he was younger. But apart from that side of him, he's actually quite a decent bloke. He's still a bit of a bastard with the *women*, though."

Score of his life

The ambivalence he feels for his father, described in *Millions* as possessing a "distant, opaque charisma, the charm of a largely silent man", is reflected in a life of near-fatal emotional dislocations. Fundamentally detached and ill at ease in person, Thomas seems at odds with the warm, measured, and jovial voice of his memoir. "Self-destruction is actually the subject of my next book," he says. "I still don't know why I took drugs. I think partly the sheer boredom is one reason. I know that sounds like a pretty prosaic answer. I've never had therapy, but I went to NA [Narcotics Anonymous]. I went to a lot of meetings in my first 60 days, and that was a course of antibiotics for the soul."

When it's suggested he risked death by taking heroin not because he was bored but because he wanted to anaesthetise his anguish, he coughs. "Small-town England, you know," he replies quickly. "I was quite bright. I was frustrated and bored, and I got into drugs at an early age. You know - 14, 15. Drinking as well. And that, I'm sure, was partly boredom. Difficulties with women ... I think partly - probably anger at my parents as well, like at my dad, and my family situation. Escaping into drugs was an easy option."

In his mid-teens, he began to overhear his mother crying in her room, "alone and privately - something she had never done before". His drug abuse quickly followed.

His main regret? "That my smack abuse went on so long." He was addicted to heroin for 15 years. "It took me a long time to hit rock bottom, as they say. And it only happened in my late 30s. I finally did reach a place where I was absolutely lost. And then I went to NA, and cleaned up. I don't regret the wildness of my youth, because I had great fun. But I do regret wasting a lot of time in my 30s. What did the dissolution teach me? It taught me where to score in every city. I can't say it taught me a lot. I learned about the extremities of human pleasure, perhaps, and how far you can go before it gets painful."

Being in the world was often too difficult for Thomas, who preferred to feel "kind of pleasantly distanced. I was mixed up, and heroin and other drugs were just a way out of my own head." The reality was even darker. He was (falsely) named the father of a desperate prostitute's child. On other occasions, he was involved in near-fatal knife fights and kidnapped by Hezbollah in Lebanon. "They held me at gunpoint!" he says, chortling. "I was looking for danger and trouble, and I found it."

Thomas hit "rock bottom" during a televised newflash. "This was five or six years ago," he says. "They said a journalist had been shot in Saudi Arabia - and this thought flashed in my head: I wish someone would shoot me. A truly suicidal thought. Once you reach that stage, you're in big trouble. I had to get help."

Excess has been the hallmark of his life. In *The Cheek Perforation Dance* (2002), Thomas charted his relationship with - yes, the ubiquitous rich Jewish girl with the posh et cetera. This relationship is also touched upon in his memoir. ("She was also very posh. Viola lessons. Au pairs. Modern art.") The sex was also much to Thomas' taste - that is, emotionally deranged: "Ellie liked to be spanked. Vigorously. And to be handcuffed. She wasn't afraid of a belt, either. Or a gag. She liked to have sex in broom cupboards where we might be discovered ... There was an exact symmetry in our sexual interests, we shared the same aggressive sexual abandon." In many respects, this relationship is the lodestone of his adult emotional life.

His voice drops to a whisper. "That relationship was ... extreme, quite extreme. Dangerously passionate, I'd say. A mutual sort of consuming ardour." He pauses, remembering. "She's now quite well known. She's an academic and an economist who writes books. Very sober individual. She's not the girl I remember at all." His laughter is sudden and wild. "But I see her sometimes on TV, and I think, 'God, I remember when you and I did crack together!'"

The woman to whom he refers is the one who accused him of rape; as a result, Thomas was incarcerated for two months before he was acquitted at the Old Bailey. The jury took only an hour in its deliberation and was unanimous in its decision. Paradoxically, the whole debacle kick-started his career: he wrote a story about his experience for *GQ* magazine.

"I didn't have a good time in jail," he says quietly. "But what it proved to me was that I could cope with it. Maybe the seeds of my eventual self-rescue were sown then. Being in prison on a false rape charge is about as bad as it

Score of his life

gets - apart from terrible illness. I obviously got threatened with violence and that sort of stuff, but I dealt with it. I realised I had inner resilience and strength."

His former lover never apologised, never confessed, and hasn't spoken to him since. "The thing is," he says, "I've seen her. I didn't see her for 15 years. And that's quite unusual in London, where media circles are quite tight. My friends did all the time. I never did. Weird. Until a month before the publication of *The Cheek Perforation Dance*, the book about her and me. I saw her in a bookshop, and we just looked at each other. And, you know, I didn't know what to do - what do you say to somebody who put you through a false rape charge?"

He laughs. "And then she walked away, and I walked away. It was just ... it's over."

WRITER'S NOTES

Genre Memoir

Latest book Millions of Women Are Waiting to Meet You (Bloomsbury, \$176HK)

Age 43

Born Devon, England

Lives Fitzrovia, London

Family Partner and baby daughter

Other works Three novels: *Absent Fathers*; *Kissing England*; *The Cheek Perforation Dance*

Next project "Another memoir, about becoming a dad, and how it makes you look back at your life. The working title is *Babies Don't Ski*."

Other jobs "Shipbroker's receptionist. I was sacked by lunchtime."

What the papers say

"I can't remember reading a book that's made me laugh out loud as much as [Millions of Women]." - *The Independent*

Author's bookshelf

Ulysses by James Joyce

"Okay, he was a bit kinky regarding his wife's underwear, but Joyce's magnum opus is surely the greatest and most humane novel of the 20th century. And wow, can he write a polished sentence."

The Reader by Bernhard Schlink

"The best Holocaust novel ever written, this book packs an incredible emotional punch in about 150 pages."

Morvern Callar by Alan Warner

"One of the best-ever first novels by a Brit, a lyrically beautiful description of sex and drugs by the Scottish seaside."

Njáls Saga

"Written nearly a thousand years ago, this Icelandic epic has more blood and guts than a Hollywood slasher. Marvellously gruesome."

Score of his life

Hamlet by William Shakespeare

"Well, you have to include Shakespeare, don't you? The only play to ever make me cry."

The Collected Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins

"I once slept in Hopkins' bed at Oxford - a hundred years after he died. Surely the most luscious English poetry ever composed."

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End of Document

AJCongress Roiled by Wave of Job Cuts; Critics Charge Leader With Abandoning Group's Liberal Roots

The Forward

December 6, 2006

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Body

The American Jewish Congress, once a leading voice of grass-roots liberal activism, has experienced a wave of drastic personnel cuts, downsizing of key domestic programs, regional office closings, and the departure of the organization's president and half its board.

Leaders of the 88-year-old organization portray the developments as part of a well-designed plan to create a more nimble and effective operation. Critics, including former employees who were dismissed, counter that a budget crisis prompted some of the cuts. They accuse the organization of betraying its liberal roots and its commitment to democratic governance.

At the center of the controversy is the organization's chairman, businessman Jack Rosen, a major donor to President Bill Clinton in the 1990s who later embraced President Bush.

We're in a strong financial position; we have \$25 million in the bank, and we raise the money we need to conduct our operations, Rosen told the Forward.

We did not fire people because of money.... We just

can't have the same format and the same priorities that we had 20 years ago.

According to Rosen, the domestic causes traditionally embraced by AJCongress members such as fair housing, health care and civil rights are not the ones that concern most American Jews today. The organization, he said, needed to focus on defending Israel and on combating terrorism and international antisemitism, as well as on its outreach to Muslim moderates here and abroad and on lobbying for energy independence from Middle East oil.

Since the beginning of his first two-term stint as president of the organization, which ran from 1998 to 2004, Rosen has been accused of attempting to dismantle its grass-roots, chapter-based governing structure. Critics point to the creation in late 2004 of the Council for World Jewry, an AJCongress offshoot chaired by Rosen that deals solely with foreign policy issues. The council's most visible success

'It's not the same organization I loved and grew up with.'

was the establishment of a formal relationship with the Pakistani government, crowned by a dinner last year in honor of President Pervez Musharraf. Similar efforts are under way with Central Asian countries, as well as with Malaysia and Indonesia. Rosen recently returned from Libya, where he met with mercurial strongman Muammar Gadhafi. The council also has forged alliances with hawkish Jewish groups in France and in Russia.

AJCongress Roiled by Wave of Job Cuts Critics Charge Leader With Abandoning Group's Liberal Roots

Jack has repeatedly said he wants an organization modeled on the World Jewish Congress, with only a small staff [that would worry] about Israel and foreign policy issues, said one of several former and current AJCongress members and employees interviewed for this article. Most of those interviewed requested anonymity.

Rosen forcefully denied any plan to shrink or dismantle the organization. However, internal correspondence obtained by the Forward shows that drastic changes are being actively discussed, and that some of the leadership is concerned that publicly acknowledging the changes could be harmful.

A document titled Strategic Plan for Bringing AJCongress Into the 21st Century, authored by the organization's executive director, Neil Goldstein, advocated a new structure that would abandon the bottom-up policy-making one on which AJCongress was founded. Among the recommendations are the elimination of substantive committees and the marginalization of regional offices. The document, circulated in recent months, proposes that AJCongress focus on three areas: supporting Jewish communities worldwide through the Council for World Jewry; standing behind Israel and fighting terrorism, and defending the interests and political power of the Jewish community in America in the face of changing demographic trends.

We recognize that there is a split in our current membership between those whose interest primarily is toward parochial issues (ones that directly help the Jewish people) and those members who want to pursue a universalistic agenda of social justice issues, the document states. In a footnote, Goldstein added that care should be taken not to antagonize our traditional membership base to such an extent that it drastically cuts membership revenues, the size of our membership, and our potential reservoir for trust and estate income.

In an e-mail response to the Forward, Goldstein insisted that the paper merely represented his own musings and that nothing had been presented to or even discussed with the board.

Evidence obtained by the Forward shows that publicly spelling out the narrowing of the AJCongress's scope of activities,

as well as the evolution toward a smaller, and less accountable leadership structure, is creating unease among various people in the organization's leadership.

In recent years, local chapters in Boston, Los Angeles and Philadelphia were spun off AJCongress due to a combination of funding and policy disagreements. The L.A. chapter has since reopened with a more conservative leadership group. The Chicago office recently shut down, and the Seattle office could be next.

Lois Waldman, who co-chaired the organization's commission on law and social action and worked for years on civil rights and women's issues, told the Forward that she had essentially been fired as a result of the organization's decision to forswear almost all of its domestic agenda, including women's empowerment, combating anti-Israel divestment and launching a new interfaith initiative.

It's not the same organization I loved and grew up with, and it hurt a lot when it stopped being the Congress I cherished, said Theodore Mann, president from 1984 to 1988. Mann said that while the shift had begun before Rosen's arrival, the current chairman was certainly no Stephen Wise, referring to the legendary founder and longtime liberal leader of AJCongress.

Why the AJC has stopped pressing the domestic agenda, especially in the last six years when it was badly needed, is beyond me, Mann said. It probably reflects the political leanings of the current leadership.

Rosen called the perception that he was pushing to abandon the domestic agenda a real mistake, pointing to the group's continuing involvement in church-state issues as well as to its advocacy of energy independence in Congress and its outreach to moderate Muslims in America - the latter two being issues with a clear foreign policy dimension.

If I would have wanted to stop our domestic agenda, I could have done it, he said. We felt we needed to become more involved in political work and be more nimble to effectuate change.

AJCongress Roiled by Wave of Job Cuts Critics Charge Leader With Abandoning Group's Liberal Roots

Much of the current upheaval dates back to 2004, when Rosen completed his maximum two terms as president and was succeeded by Paul Miller, a former officer of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Rosen set about launching the Council for World Jewry as a spin-off organization. Shortly afterward, he was given the newly created title of AJCongress chairman.

Rosen said the council was created as a body that could attract foreign supporters - who are barred from sitting on the AJCongress board - as well as more conservative ones.

We felt we needed to create a body that could bring Jewish leaders from around the world to a well-honed program that is not focused on domestic issues they are not interested in and allows us to bring in some conservative voices who do not share the AJC's traditional focus, Rosen said.

In short order, however, tensions arose between Miller and the man who had brought him on board, executive director Goldstein. According to several sources who requested anonymity, Goldstein was upset by Miller's plan to bring in Alon Pinkas, Israel's outgoing consul general in New York, as the organization's top professional.

Alon was Paul's idea to put his stamp on the organization, and it turned out to be an embarrassment, a former AJCongress official said. The plan collapsed when Pinkas was forbidden by Israel from taking a local job in the city in which he served.

In response to the perceived snub, several sources said, Goldstein teamed up with Rosen against Miller, eventually prompting Miller and most of his board allies to leave AJCongress earlier this year, officially for personal reasons. They have since been replaced by people close to Rosen, sources said.

Rosen and Goldstein both denied any involvement in the Miller episode. He did not tell me why he left, Rosen said. Being president of a not-for-profit is sometimes difficult because you are not in full control; there are many public appearances, and some people just don't enjoy it.

Miller did not respond to several requests for comment.

A former general counsel with pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, Miller had been brought on board because of his fundraising abilities. His departure, announced to the board in January, and the departure of most of his moneyed allies on the board reportedly provoked a budget crisis, prompting Goldstein to slash payroll.

Goldstein said that the episode had an impact of about \$200,000 - out of a total annual budget of \$6 million. According to Goldstein, the organization already has made up the loss by finding new sources of revenue, and it is likely to end the year in the black.

I am cutting staff but that cut is not motivated by deficits, Goldstein wrote in an e-mail to the Forward. Rather, our board insists on our cutting ineffective, unproductive programs that could distract us from our main mission.

Rosen absolutely rejected the notion that the episode had hurt the organization's finances.

Most of the \$25 million in the bank evoked by Rosen comes from the sale of the organization's headquarters in founder Wise's former mansion on Manhattan's Upper East Side of Manhattan, which netted more than \$16 million.

The proceeds have been placed in a trust, and only the interest can be used for the operating budget unless the board votes to let the executive director draw from principal. Similar restrictions exist for two other trusts supporting the organization, set up by the estate of the Steinberg family (the Lillian and Martin Steinberg Trust) and aimed at social programs in America and in Israel.

Rosen stressed that it would be easy for him to get board approval to tap into the principal of the trust holding the revenue of the building sale.

We don't need money, he said. We just feel we need a new direction.

Graphic

IMAGE: Fired Up:Tens of thousands of Hezbollah supporters demonstrated this week against the government ofPrime Minister Fuad Siniora. For a full story on the protests, and their potential affect on the Middle Eastcrisis, please see page A5.; GETTY IMAGES

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Why Iran is a war too far

Sunday Herald Sun (Australia)

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FIRST Edition

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Byline: CORRELLI BARNETT

Body

The war posture that President Bush is adopting towards Iran is a terrifying concern for the entire world, writes Correlli Barnett

PRESIDENT Bush's recent pronouncements about Iran set off the distant sound of war drums beating, just as they did in 2002 during the long run-up to the catastrophic attack on Iraq.

Washington is doing its best to manipulate American opinion in favour of war, with its alarmist propaganda about the threat posed to the US by the present Iranian regime and its alleged intention to produce nuclear warheads for its missiles.

Remember all that stomach-churning stuff about Saddam's "weapons of mass destruction"? Weapons that never existed.

In the run-up to the war on Iraq, Bush also falsely claimed there were links between Saddam and al-Qaida.

Now he accuses the Iranians of supplying explosive devices to the Shia insurgents in Iraq in order to kill American soldiers. But when asked for evidence, the President gave only the lamest of replies -- saying the devices had been supplied by a section of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

Yet he had to admit that he didn't know whether President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had ordered their supply.

"What matters is that we are responding," he blustered.

Responding? But how? That raises another question: Is Bush simply using the Iranian nuclear program and the story about the Iranian supply of explosive devices as cover for a real purpose -- that of launching a massive attack intended to topple the present Iranian state?

The answer to that is truly terrifying. Because we know from recent Pentagon leaks that "Centcom" (the Central Command, responsible for US strategy and operations in the Middle East) is engaged in detailed military studies for a "shock-and-awe" aerial onslaught aimed at destroying not only Iran's nuclear facilities, but also her entire military infrastructure.

That is why there are now two attack-carrier task groups concentrated in the Persian Gulf, as well as stealth bombers in readiness in the US.

Why Iran is a war too far

To achieve its targets, the Pentagon would have to unleash waves of attacks by more than 100 aircraft on the 20 widely dispersed plants of the Iranian nuclear industry. Prolonged bombing of military bases, barracks and air-defence systems, many of them in or near great cities, would be needed. We saw it all before, in much smaller and less populated Iraq.

The loss of life among civilians would far exceed the 7000 slaughtered during the "shock and awe" blitz on Baghdad that heralded the invasion of Iraq. If the bombers struck an already "live" nuclear plant, the result would be another Chernobyl. In addition, such an onslaught would inevitably mean war.

And it would mean war with a nation of 70 million people -- 65 per cent of whom are under the age of 25 -- at a time when the combined might of American, British and other international armed forces have been unable to subdue a country with a population of no more than 27 million.

Iran is a mountainous country much bigger than Iraq or Afghanistan and extending from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, from Turkey to Afghanistan.

While the Iranian armed forces (including the 120,000 men of the Revolutionary Guards and the 200,000 in the Basij militia, all Islamic zealots) may be far inferior to the American forces in training and hi-tech weaponry, they fought a bloody war with Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army for six years -- proving that they are well able to take appalling attrition without buckling.

For them, every body bag contained a glorious martyr. No one should therefore underestimate Iran's capacity for prolonged resistance. War with Iran would be like Iraq plus Afghanistan multiplied by 10.

In a fresh demonstration of "asymmetrical warfare" (where the two sides are mismatched in their military capabilities), America's colossal firepower would be countered by guerilla ambush and terrorist bombings anywhere in the world where infuriated Muslims could inflict damage on the West.

Because of the connection between the Shias of Iran -- who make up 90 per cent of the population -- those of southern Iraq, and of **Hezbollah** in the Lebanon, the conflict would engulf the entire Middle East, from the Mediterranean coast to the borders of Pakistan and very probably sucking in the Sunnis of Saudi Arabia as well in reaction.

What's more, such a conflict would inflict terrible damage on the global economy because of its impact on oil supplies from the Persian Gulf.

It would be all too easy for Iranian suicide speedboats to make the narrow Straits of Hormuz too hazardous for the passage of the giant tankers on which the industrialised "First World" (now including China) depends. It would be all too tempting for the US Navy to try to clear that passage by force.

In short, an attack on Iran would effectively launch World War III.

Can Bush and his neo-con advisers really be contemplating such a war? And what would be the ultimate aim of this new war? More "regime change", as in Iraq?

It can't be emphasised too strongly that the present regime in Iran is not a one-man tyranny like Saddam's, as Bush seems to believe. There is more than one centre of power in Tehran, each serving to counter-balance the others.

Take President Ahmadinejad. His bellicose rhetoric may rattle American and Israeli nerves, but he does not control foreign policy. That is in the hands of the "Supreme Leader of the Revolution", at present Ayatollah Ali Khamenei -- who appoints the heads of the armed services as well as the judiciary.

But even the Supreme Leader has to share power with the "Council of Guardians", made up of six clerics and six lay jurists, and that has the right to veto any new law that it reckons violates Islamic Law.

Why Iran is a war too far

What's more, yet another body, "the Expediency Council" with 31 members, also enjoys a key place in government. It advises the Supreme Leader on national policy. It mediates disputes between the Council of Guardians and the Majlis, or Parliament. Under its current chairman, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, it is a voice for shrewd pragmatism rather than Islamic fanaticism.

And though the parliament is far from being the equivalent of a freely-elected western legislature, its debates voice criticism of government policy in an open way not seen in any other Middle-Eastern Islamic state.

Moreover, the dispersed nature of state power in Iran does not tell the whole story of a society that is far more open to change than, say, Saudi Arabia. The highly educated young -- including Ahmadinejad's children -- have access to the internet and, through that, to global news and culture.

Middle-class **women** enjoy professional careers and increasingly defy revolutionary edicts about the wearing of chadors and public association with men. Iranian filmmakers are recognised as among the best in the world.

In contrast, the poor, who were once Ahmadinejad's popular base, are more and more disenchanted because he has not delivered his promise of jobs and a richer life. That is why he has recently lost ground in local elections. Yes, elections.

SO Iran is no monolithic dictatorship exercising absolute control over its population. On the contrary, the position of the Islamic fundamentalists is increasingly under threat. Even within the structures of government, there is tension between them and the pragmatists who wish for better relations with the West.

Nothing suits the fundamentalists better than threats from "the Great Satan", America, because those threats serve only to consolidate patriotic Iranians behind the regime.

Iranians ask why their country should be denied nuclear weapons when Israel, Pakistan and India all have them in defiance of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

They note that across their border with Iraq, there stands an American army of 150,000 soldiers and a

powerful air force, while to the south are the American bases in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, plus two powerful carrier groups.

To the east, in Afghanistan, there is another big Western army, dominated by America, that is also building vast permanent bases (as in Iraq). In consequence, Iranians see themselves as virtually surrounded by hostile forces led by the US.

In that context the aggressive rhetoric of Bushite Washington is counter-productive. Bush, it appears, has learned nothing from the Iraq experience. As in 2002-3, his recipe for international relations remains the same: bullying confrontation.

First, work up fear and hatred of the chosen enemy with alarmist stories. Then deploy forces to coerce that enemy and smash him.

Resemblances between Bush's pre-war policy towards Iraq and now towards Iran are deeply alarming. We know what happened last time and we know next time it would be far, far, worse.

And yet, there is an alternative: a policy of patient, long-sighted engagement with Iran. That would save us all from the catastrophe of war. At the same time, it would encourage all those political and social forces in Iran seeking the gradual erosion of the legacy of the Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 fundamentalist Islamic revolution.

On the key question of Iran's nuclear programs, it is quite unreasonable of Washington to demand that Iran stop uranium enrichment before any negotiations can begin. No such demand was made of communist North Korea. So with Iran, too, Washington must be willing to sit down and negotiate.

Why Iran is a war too far

At the same time, Iran should be invited to join a conference of all the states in the Middle East to settle questions of regional security, including the nuclear issue -- and especially including the future of Iraq, which is of crucial concern to Iran and where she has a vital role to play because of the Shia connection.

Below this level of negotiation between governments, we in the West should be making every effort to foster informal cooperation with Iranians in the fields of education, science, medicine, the media, the theatre and film. And I mean genuine co-operation -- not the kind of deliberate subversion of the regime favoured by the Washington hawks.

Over time, engagement could gradually dissolve the mutual suspicions and tensions between Iran and the West and within the Middle East.

The alternative is too appalling for sane people to contemplate.

CORRELLI BARNETT is a fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge

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THE LONG WAR

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Byline: MYLINH SHATTAN, Special to The Tampa Tribune

Body

Changing Conditions In Iraq And Afghanistan

By MYLINH SHATTAN

Special to The Tampa Tribune

Command Chief Master Sgt. Curtis Brownhill is the senior enlisted leader and primary adviser to Gen. John Abizaid at U.S. Central Command. He oversees U.S. military interests and troops for 27 countries in the Middle Eastern theater of operations.

Meeting recently with The Tampa Tribune Editorial Board, Brownhill shared his experiences and thoughts on military strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq, troop morale and criticism of the war. He discussed the dynamics of today's battlefield.

Q: Talk about the differences between fighting an extremist ideology vs. a conventional war.

A: When you're in a conventional fight, you're up against a nation-state, a force-on-force kind of attrition battle. In this war, it's really about change - the need to change the conditions. Afghanistan and Iraq right now are fronts, but we look at this as a regional issue. The No. 1 threat is extremists getting their hands on WMD [weapons of mass destruction]. The U.S. and coalition forces are shields to allow the people to set up a stable government.

There are more Iraqis fighting right now than there are Americans. This is not the United States and the coalition squeezing all of that instability out of Baghdad; this is more Iraqis working with U.S. and coalition forces. So when somebody says, "Do we need more troops?" ... preferably, they'll come in the form of an Iraqi force or an army, not necessarily the United States. There are 164,000 Iraqis - a couple of divisions. They have the ability to assess, develop operations.

Q: What's your opinion of the media's role in this war?

A: The insurgency in Iraq is not as large as some people would believe it to be. As masters of manipulation, the media present stories to be much, much bigger than they really are. So there's a huge piece of news of a singular event, yet there are a thousand progress stories that aren't interesting enough [to be covered].

THE LONG WAR

Progress doesn't resonate in the media as much as blood and guts. It's kind of frustrating. I think the troops get frustrated.

Q: Sen. John McCain has called military actions in Iraq a "whack-a-mole" strategy. Can you comment?

A: I don't think it fits. Fourteen out of the 18 provinces are pretty calm. Consider Fallujah a year ago: a big battle and hot zone. Now it's stable. You're not fighting a nation-state here, but an enemy that lives in the shadows amongst the people. [Squeeze them out and] they "squirt" to somewhere else.

I think that the real key is not worrying about how many we kill or capture as a measure of success. Al-Qaida and the associated movements are a network. It's an ideology.

Look at what happened after we killed [Abu Musab] al-Zarqawi. That's the network coming down. Other heads will pop up, but not with the strength and network that Zarqawi had.

Q: What are your measures for success in Iraq?

A: There are lots of measures we use. One of those criteria is Iraqi security forces that can lead. They have innate knowledge of the area and threats when they're going from place to place; they understand other Iraqis. And there are 264,000 trained Iraqi security forces.

This government, these institutions, this army is just barely three years old. We have incredible expectations in the United States of what should be done and when it should be done by. ... We are helping to change conditions in this region so representative government institutions can come along. ... The Iraqi army's doing really well. The police have a ways to go.

Q: Bin Laden's still on the loose, opium trade in Afghanistan's at an all-time high and Iraqi violence surges. Would you define progress?

A: Let's take it one step at a time. People voted, a constitution was presented and the Iraqis ratified a constitution in a year. Those are things that are important.

Moderate countries have been watching and they have confidence to look at their own political reform. Look at the region as a whole. Women can vote in Kuwait. At one time, Syria pulled out its intel apparatus and its military forces with Hezbollah and Israel. Just for that to occur at one time, that was huge. You've got to measure progress about what's going on in the region as a whole.

Look at Iraq and Afghanistan, all the progress that's been made. Just a year or two ago, and now they have 260,000 trained Iraqis, a constitution that's law. Consider our own history - it took 12 some years to do that.

The schools are important; the hospitals are important; the infrastructure is important. Those are some pretty impressive things. The Iraqis went into harm's way, in many cases, to just vote.

As for Osama, he's relevant and hasn't fallen off our scope.

Q: What about the resurgence of violence in Afghanistan ?

A: We have really good reason to feel optimistic. There are 23 or 24 provincial reconstruction teams that work with Afghans to govern and set up infrastructure. Just putting in the ring road, one road that all could connect to - that was huge.

I can go on about the south right now, with the Taliban trying to emerge and a lot of fighting. A lot of work has to be done because that's the border area and al-Qaida. But Afghanistan has a good leader in [President Hamid] Karzai, who was appealing enough to lead the tribes. In five years, we've come a long way.

We haven't had another 9/11. We fight abroad so we don't have to here.

THE LONG WAR

Q: Why is the Horn of Africa, which includes eight nations in northeastern Africa, important?

A: Where [the extremists] lost in Afghanistan, they need to "squirt" to the Horn of Africa, a potentially unstable area where their ideology can get a foothold.

Most of our military objectives in HOA are in the form of civil affairs and training the indigenous forces.

It's the Marshall Plan upfront as opposed to combat operations as the preferred way of fighting.

Q: Do you need more troops?

A: It depends on the conditions and it depends on the environment. It's not an easy answer to say, "Yes, more means better." Sometimes, more means worse.

One of the worst things we can do is to maintain an overly large presence in this region. We always want to think smaller and effective, more than larger. Our posture for the future is going to be much, much smaller, but we will be there for years.

Q: How's troop morale?

A: I look at morale in a different light. I don't say, "Are you happy today?" If the work is worthy, the mission's understood, the end state is clear to them; if they have the faith and confidence in their leaders, they'll stay the course. Do some get out? Sure. Some serve 15 years and for some it's their career.

My personal view is it won't be the war itself; it won't be a troop issue. It will be how we handle them when they come home.

We have a military that is operating at a pretty high tempo. Kids out there are 18, 19, 20 years old and they're in their second, third deployments in this war, fighting hard. ... They're in tough situations in some of the crappiest places you could go.

Q: Should there be a limit to deployments?

A: We're fighting a World War II-level kind of war against an enemy - shadowy, extremist ideology - requiring long-term commitment, change in conditions, generational change. No service has the total amount of folks to do it; so we reach out to other services.

You've got to have faith in the commanders. They know their capabilities and ask for what they need. I work for one of the best ones in this nation, Gen. Abizaid.

The military's not going to win this war. The military will put up a shield. It's going to require instruments of national power, a state, a judicial system. It takes laws, access to their network. It requires funding.

Q: If the U.S. Treasury gave you \$10 billion tomorrow, how would you spend it?

A: On intelligence. Most important thing is an investment in intelligence. That's what you need to fight this war.

Q: What do you want to tell the public?

A: We can't lose our will, our confidence to stay engaged. Forces will continue and be more of a partnership, but it will take a long time to win. The troops get it.

But it's only as good as American confidence. I've been in 33 years, and none of it would be worth a damn without family. I've served under seven presidents, not all that I voted for.

When [troops] come home, embrace 'em, love 'em. They answered the call. They don't decide the politics.

We're sometimes a little naïve as Americans. We're comfortable and happy and don't recognize the threat.

THE LONG WAR

MyLinh Shattan is a Tribune correspondent. Keyword: Commentary, to read other Voices From The Front interviews and more on the media coverage of Iraq.

Photo credit: Tribune photo

Photo: "The military's not going to win this war," Chief Master Sgt. Curtis Brownhill says; rather, the confidence and will of the American people can make that happen.

Photo credit: Associated Press file photo

Photo: "When [troops] come home, embrace 'em , love 'em. They answered the call. They don't decide the politics," Chief Master Sgt. Curtis Brownhill says.

TBO.com Keyword: Commentary, to read other Voices From The Front interviews and more on the media coverage of Iraq.

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Notes

VOICES FROM THE FRONT

Graphic

PHOTO 2

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All the wrong moves

Weekend Australian

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All-round Country Edition

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Byline: SALLY NEIGHBOUR

Body

MATP

We know what doesn't work against terrorism, so why aren't we doing what does?

WITH US Vice-President Dick Cheney in Australia to honour this country's unswerving support for the global war on terror, it's timely to remember that this ill-conceived and misnamed war is going disastrously.

Despite a five-year manhunt, Osama bin Laden and his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri are still at large. Worse, they are regrouping and setting up new training camps in the tribal areas of Pakistan, according to intelligence sources cited by The New York Times.

Iraq, described by President George W. Bush as "the central front in our war on terror", has become, instead, "the cause celebre for jihadists shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and operatives", in the words of a 2006 US Intelligence Estimate.

The question of why the campaign is going so badly has been thrashed out by a group of terrorism experts from around the world. They met at a seminar at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University in December. The object of the exercise was to compare the political and legislative responses to terrorism in seven countries, to identify how best to combat it. (Australia, incidentally, was not one of the countries discussed. Apparently we are not seen as a crucial participant in this war, despite its prominence in our domestic political debate.) The countries discussed were the US, Britain, Egypt, Israel, Indonesia, Germany and Peru.

The starting point of the seminar was that, contrary to the political rhetoric -- such as Cheney's claim that "9/11 changed everything" -- terrorism is not new. It's been around for centuries and it's here to stay, in one form or another. The present wave of Islamist terrorism will be with us for at least a decade, probably a generation. To contain it -- because, also contrary to the rhetoric, destroying it is impossible -- we have to study it closely, understand how it functions, analyse its weaknesses and identify the strategies that work best against it, preferably without sacrificing the very freedoms and liberties that we're defending.

The seminar heard presentations on the Irish Republican Army, the Shining Path insurgency in Peru, Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiyah, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah in Lebanon and, of course, al-Qa'ida. It proved a huge subject to grapple with in just three days. The unofficial consensus at the end of the seminar was that the

All the wrong moves

experience of terrorism has been so broad and so varied that it's difficult to come to any overarching conclusions, with the exception of two, in the view of this participant.

One: Declaring war on terrorism doesn't work. Two: Draconian counter-terrorism measures have had limited success and can severely backfire by alienating the populations whose support is crucial to their success.

There are many reasons to conclude that a war on terrorism is bound to fail, all well documented by now. One is that terrorism is not a defined enemy. It's not an army or a state. It's an ideology and a strategy, and you can't fight a war -- at least not in conventional military terms -- against either of those.

Another is that terrorists like to see themselves as soldiers -- "holy warriors" in the case of the Islamists -- rather than as criminals. So declaring war on them rewards them with a kind of legitimacy and elevates their cause to that of an officially sanctioned conflict.

A third reason is that a full-blown military offensive is simply too blunt an instrument against what is effectively a form of psychological warfare, in that the fear that terrorism produces is far greater than the actual damage it can inflict. Effective counter-terrorism has to be much more scientific and precisely targeted than conventional war.

The failure of the war model was demonstrated in Northern Ireland where, in three decades, 30,000 British troops were unable to defeat the few hundred fighters of the IRA.

The failure of draconian countermeasures was illustrated in Peru during its 20-year struggle against the Maoist Shining Path, one of the most vicious terrorist movements in history. Sixty-two thousand people were killed, about half by the terrorists and half by the security forces pitted against them, a far greater toll than the one claimed by al-Qa'ida.

While Peru's war against the Shining Path was very different from the present war against al-Qa'ida, there are some parallels worth examining.

Like al-Qa'ida, the Shining Path adopted a strategy of deliberately provoking disproportionate responses by the state to alienate the population from the Government and fuel support for the rebels' cause. And like the US, the Peruvian Government adopted the war model of counterterrorism.

The result, in the words of Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was a policy of "indiscriminate use of force as a means of combating subversion". Systematic human rights violations were carried out in the name of the war on terror, including torture during interrogation, extrajudicial executions, disappearances and routine sexual violence against women.

It's worth noting that Peru was a democracy at the time and all this was done under the auspices of anti-terrorist legislation passed by the elected Congress. The police were given extensive new powers such as the right to detain people incommunicado and to interrogate suspects who were bound and blindfolded. A compliant judiciary provided a "strict and uncritical application" of the laws. To protect the judiciary, special military tribunals were set up to try terrorist crimes in secret, featuring "faceless courts" in which the identities of judges and other officials were kept hidden.

Also worth noting is the high degree of popular support for these measures, at least at the start. The public was willing to exchange democracy for security and to tolerate human rights violations to end the insurgency, a view echoed in many countries today. The conflict was manipulated over time to keep the increasingly dictatorial government of Alberto Fujimori in power and to crush his political opposition. Hundreds of innocent people were jailed. Detainees were frequently tortured to confess. Government-sanctioned death squads carried out assassinations, disappearances and massacres.

Eventually the Shining Path was defeated, not because these measures were successful but because of the capture of its leader, Abimael Guzman, and a public backlash against the viciousness of the terrorists.

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The authorities saw this happening and changed their own tactics in response, effectively siding with the populace by supporting and arming civilian resistance groups.

The strategy was described as "taking the water out of the fishbowl": leaving the insurgency without popular support. And it worked. (As opposed to the present US presence in Iraq, which has clearly added water to the al-Qa'ida fishbowl.)

Peru is still dealing with the traumatic and costly legacy of its war on terror. The faceless courts were eventually declared illegal and 700 terrorism cases had to be retried. The Government is still trying to extradite Fujimori from Chile to try him for human rights crimes.

The lesson from all this, according to Oscar Schiappa-Pietra, a former government adviser and professor of international law at Lima University, is that "the extra-legal approach (to counter-terrorism) is unsustainable".

Another instructive case study examined at Harvard concerns the use of racial or religious profiling; that is, targeting people for investigation on the basis of their ethnic or religious background, a practice widely adopted after September 11. In the case of Islamist terrorism, profiling seems logical enough, given that the terrorists are predominantly male, Muslim and of Middle Eastern background. But where it's been tried it's been spectacularly unsuccessful.

One such experiment was carried out in Germany, after the discovery of 9/11 ringleader Mohammed Atta's cell in Hamburg. The German police embarked on rasterfahndung, (dragnet investigations). These were done with strong public support. Sixty-one per cent of people in Germany, a country with 3.5 million Muslims, now say they value "security more than freedom" and are willing to give up individual rights to fight terrorism.

The German police combed data on eight million individuals, with attention on male students aged 18 to 40 originating from 26 Muslim countries. They compiled a "sleepers database" with 32,000 entries, which was finally whittled down to 1689 potential sleepers. But after a full year of investigation, not a single sleeper had been identified. The dragnet investigations were ultimately deemed illegal by Germany's Constitutional Court, which found there was no concrete danger to justify such an investigation. The database produced from this costly and laborious exercise had to be deleted.

This experience was mirrored in the US, where the Attorney-General's Department compiled a list of more than 5000 men, aged 18 to 33, who had entered the US since 2000 with student visas from countries in which "intelligence indicated an al-Qa'ida presence or activity".

Of these, 2261 were interviewed, a highly time and labour-intensive operation. At the end of it, fewer than 20 individuals were taken into custody, according to Philip Heymann from the Harvard Law School. Most of those were picked up for minor immigration violations, three on criminal charges, but none on terrorism-related offences. The US Justice Department has since declared that "racial profiling in law enforcement is not merely wrong but also ineffective". Its view is that profiling "clearly has a terrible cost, both to the individuals who suffer invidious discrimination and to the nation, whose goal of 'liberty and justice for all' recedes with every act of such discrimination".

The experience of terrorism across the world has shown that the greater the perceived threat to a society, the higher the popular support for extreme measures to counter it. In Israel, 53 per cent of people questioned in a worldwide BBC survey in 2006 supported the use of torture on terrorist suspects, the highest in any of the 25 countries surveyed. Three-quarters of them supported the targeted killing of suspected terrorist leaders, a tactic that has served only to inflame hostility throughout the Muslim world.

Another lesson that would be well learned by all governments engaged in the war on terror is that just because something is popular doesn't mean it's good policy or that it works.

All the wrong moves

Sally Neighbour is a senior reporter with The Australian and Four Corners and the author of *In the Shadow of Swords, On the Trail of Terrorism from Afghanistan to Australia* (HarperCollins, \$24.95). This article has been adapted from a paper Neighbour gave to the Sydney Institute.

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The Diary

The Australian (Australia)

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All-round Country Edition

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Byline: Amanda Meade

Body

MATP

The mind googles

JOURNALISTS have been criticised at times for using the Google search engine for research. But The Daily Telegraph's Michael Beach hit the jackpot when he decided on a hunch to check a name mentioned in a court last week. What he found resulted in the headline "The respected judge, the dead professor and a speeding fine" and a serious headache for former justice Marcus Richard Einfeld. Tele court reporter Viva Goldner had filed a story on Einfeld's court appearance to defend a parking fine. When Beach, who works on the backbench, got the copy he typed the name of Australian-born Florida professor Teresa Brennan into Google and discovered she had died in February 2003. Goldner then pursued Einfeld for an explanation as to why he had claimed Brennan was driving his car when he was caught speeding. If Beach had not done that search, the story may have died.

Love and bouquets

ANOTHER niche award has come across our desk. The Romance Writers of Australia have invented the inaugural ROMA (Romance Media Award), for the best media coverage of romance writing in Australia.

Assault on accuracy

THE Sydney Morning Herald reporter Stephen Gibbs appeared in court this week charged with common assault and possessing a prohibited weapon without a permit. Gibbsy has friends at News Limited and Fairfax, but that hasn't stopped the rival organisations stumbling in attempts to report the unfortunate incident. A colleague of Gibbsy rang The Daily Telegraph editor David Penberthy to complain that the Tele website was running an incorrect account that stated Gibbs was charged with possession of a prohibited firearm, when in fact he's charged with possession of a prohibited weapon. (Firearm is far more serious than weapon.) Penbo explained it was AAP copy and that he should talk to them, but it was corrected anyway. AAP issued an amendment. The amusing thing was that the next day the SMH ran the incorrect AAP copy.

Chance to crow

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FOR its part, the Tele chose to make fun of the fact Gibbs was photographed carrying a Telegraph. The headline was: "Gun Herald reporter has his day in court -- But at least he has good taste in newspapers." It never wastes an opportunity.

Return to form

DIARY hears Sandra Levy, former director of TV at the ABC, has finally found a gig back at Aunty. Apparently, she has been hired as a consultant to ABC2, a lovely irony since she was quite hostile to the establishment of the digital channel when she was at the public broadcaster. Levy had a short stint at Nine after being hired by Sam Chisholm. She left Nine shortly after Eddie McGuire was made chief executive six months ago and disappeared from view.

Let's twist again

LEVY got a mention during proceedings on Friday at the launch of Bryan Brown's Two Twisted at Liquidity in Sydney's Rozelle. McGuire thanked Levy and former drama head Posie Graeme-Evans for nurturing the project. Nine should be happy with the performance of Two Twisted on Monday at 9.35pm -- a national audience of 1.103million tuned in -- and for the generally favourable reviews.

Almost famous

TONIGHT Seven launches its big-ticket item for the back end of the year, Celebrity Survivor. Hosted by Ian "Dicko" Dickson, the program has a ludicrous premise, but that probably won't stop it working with audiences. A bunch of celebrities is dumped in Vanuatu for 25 days and left to fend for themselves. They are all alone, except for Dicko and a dozen producers and crew. In the shots where the cast are interviewed about the day's activities, some of the women looked suspiciously like they had been made up. Maybe it's just good lighting.

You may be wrong

DIARY has not heard a good word about Sunday night's premiere of You May be Right on Seven. Hosted by Todd McKenney, the panel show looked cheap and was not a patch on the ABC's Spicks and Specks on which it was based. On ABC radio in Sydney callers were outraged Seven had pinched the show from Aunty.

Early morning blues

AT its lowest point this year Nine's Today was pulling in just 170,000 viewers on average. So, as the numbers have started to climb back a little, Nine has decided to boast about it. In a press release this week, Nine trumpeted its return: "With a renewed focus on news and current affairs Today has experienced a healthy year-on-year audience increase of 11 per cent in Sydney and 5 per cent on the east coast." The release also claimed Today "was first to tell Australian television viewers about an impending Queensland state election". "The breaking news, as reported by National Nine News reporter Matt Dunstan, was broadcast exclusively on the program at 7.47am following the discovery of election leaflets in some Brisbane letterboxes." But Seven is having none of it. It claims Sunrise is up 25 per cent this year, having added 75,400 new viewers, and that Today has added just 700 new viewers across Australia. It also disputes Today broke the letterbox story as it was running on the radio all morning.

Not for nippers

NOTHING will damage a children's brand like the revelation a product poses a danger to the little ones. But ABC's Bob the Builder and Nine's Hi-5 have earned some bad publicity in Adelaide when items in the showbags to be sold at the Royal Adelaide Show had to be removed because they posed a risk to children. The Bob the Builder showbag contained a tool-belt holding nuts and bolts and the Hi-5 showbag had a musical instrument that -- when dropped -- broke easily into small parts, which also posed a choking risk.

Meet the people

AUSTRALIAN Story on the Road visits Melbourne next Thursday and gives the public a chance to meet the producers and guests from the highly successful 10-year-old program. In conjunction with the Australian Centre for

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the Moving Image's TV 50 exhibition, the award-winning ABC program has invited former subjects including Pauline Hanson and Sydney Olympic gold medallist Lauren Burns to talk to the public.

Hail and farewell

THE Australian continued to mourn the loss of James Hall this week, with everyone remembering what a nice man he was. Former Oz editor Campbell Reid sent this note to editor Michael Stutchbury: "I've just read Jim Hall's obit. Can you please pass on my shock and sorrow to everyone at the Oz. I think in amongst the jungle that journalism sometimes is Jim was the person whose nature and manners served to remind the rest of us that humanity and good humour didn't have to be surrendered in the name of great journalism." His wife, Sandra Hall, and children Cass and Alexis are having a service at Sydney's Eastern Suburbs Crematorium tomorrow at 3pm, followed by a wake at the Bellevue Hotel at 159 Hargrave St, Paddington from around 4pm. They would love Jim's friends to come to both or either.

Seed planted to grow projects using local talent

HUGH Jackman, already the darling of the public, has become a darling of the Australian television and film community. The star of The Boy from Oz threw a lavish but stylish industry party at The Rocks in Sydney this week to signal to the production community that he was offering them work. About 120 actors, directors, producers and media executives turned up on Tuesday night to hear about Seed Productions, which Jackman has formed with his wife, Deborra-lee Furness, and young New York-based producer John Palermo. The number of valets, waiters, publicists, photographers and toilet attendants almost outnumbered the VIP guests. The three Seed principals walked the white carpet and answered media questions before joining guests inside the sandstone building, which had been dressed in white furnishings for the event. (The only question Jackman very politely refused to answer was a left-field one from a young Who magazine reporter who asked him to talk about his fitness regime.) Famous faces were everywhere, from media moguls to actors: James Packer, director George Miller, actor-singer Justine Clarke, actor Joel Edgerton, producer Rory Callaghan, actor Barry Otto, and Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin. Seed's international TV productions will be offered first to Foxtel. Foxtel executive director of TV and marketing Brian Walsh was central to the planning of the event, which was organised in 10 days when he saw a window of opportunity in Jackman's schedule. "Under the stewardship of Hugh Jackman, Deborra-lee Furness and John Palermo, Seed will undoubtedly be a dynamic and prolific producer of content and I am delighted they have chosen Foxtel as their Australian television partner," Walsh said. Although comparisons have been made with Mel Gibson's failed production company, Icon, it should be remembered that Gibson didn't come to Australia for the launch or take the personal interest in it that Jackman and Furness have. "I've always believed in being proactive and luckily the chips have fallen for me," Jackman told Media's Michael Bodey in an interview before the launch. "You've gotta go out and make this happen. You can't be an Australian and sit back and wait for it, you can't wait for an American agent to pick you up, you've got to be proactive." Furness joked that Jackman would have to audition for her when she directs a Seed production for Foxtel. "We have to come to the party, too," Furness said. "As actors, you're so at the beck and call of producers. It's being grown-up and taking responsibility to use your power to do what you want to do."

Talking turkeys

Michael Pettigrew's genesis as accidental gamebreaker against the Western Bulldogs was triggered by rancour at losing close encounters of the Power kind.

Richard Earle in another over-the-top football analysis, The Advertiser, August 14.

Greenies feel towards farmers the way Hezbollah does towards Israel. No mercy, no compromise.

Perhaps, but the crucial difference would be in their decision to fire rockets. Sun-Herald columnist Miranda Devine uses a strange analogy, August 13.

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The Diary

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Muddle headed Mufti

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Byline: Natalie O'Brien

Body

MATP

Sheik Hilali is a man of controversy and contradictions, writes Natalie O'Brien

HE is revered by the Muslim community almost everywhere he goes in Sydney's southwestern suburbs, the nation's Arab heartland.

Sheik Taj Din al-Hilali, the 65-year-old spiritual leader of Muslims in Australia, is so popular he is never allowed to pay for a meal when he eats in Muslim restaurants. When others offer to pay for him, they are also politely refused. "He is the Mufti and we are happy to provide for him," says the owner of La Roche, a Lebanese restaurant in Lakemba.

The sheik -- often seen tearing around the streets in his white Ford Falcon and being mobbed by followers, including women -- has an enormous power base of supporters among the Muslim communities in Sydney.

He is renowned for his kindness, charity and support for women's movements. He helped establish the Muslim Women's Association and he runs classes for Muslim women every Thursday at Auburn.

Hilali offered to help Australian model Michelle Leslie, who was jailed in Bali for drug possession, after she converted to Islam. He also offered her support after she decided to return to the catwalk, modelling swimwear.

He has won praise for encouraging inter-faith dialogue and for keeping a lid on tensions in the Muslim community.

But the man known as the nation's most senior Muslim cleric has created enormous controversy in the 20 years since he was appointed the leader of Australia's Muslims, a position that carries the title of Mufti. His critics are as strident in their condemnation as his supporters are devoted.

He was pilloried this week for a sermon delivered at the Lakemba mosque during Ramadan, which compared women who don't wear hijab-style dress to meat left out for cats. "If one puts uncovered meat out in the street, or on the footpath, or in the garden, or in the park, or in the backyard, without a cover and then the cats come and eat it, is it the fault of the cat or the uncovered meat? The uncovered meat is the problem ... If she was in her room, in her house, wearing her hijab, being chaste, the disasters wouldn't have happened. The woman possesses the weapon of seduction and temptation," he said.

Muddle headed Mufti

Following a nationwide outcry, he issued a statement saying that any form of harassment of women is unacceptable. "I fully respect women. Any degrading conduct towards or disrespect to women is degrading conduct and disrespect for my mother, my sister, my wife and my daughter."

His 25-year-old daughter Asma al-Hilali defended him, saying "he has probably spent more time working for women's rights than for his own family. And he has upheld the values of all women, no matter what they wear." But it was too late. There were widespread calls for him to be stripped of his title and citizenship, and deported.

Hilali's leadership of Australia's Muslims has always been disputed by sections of the Islamic community.

He was appointed to the honorary position of Mufti with the support of the country's peak Islamic body, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, in 1989. But there is no formal hierarchical structure for the Muslim faith in Australia, although there have lately been moves to set up a board that registers Muslim leaders.

And there have always been some Muslim leaders who say he has no right to use the title of Mufti or to say he is Australia's most senior Muslim cleric.

Some Islamic leaders in Victoria do not recognise his claims to national leadership, and much of this can be sheeted home to the wide ethnic differences between Muslims across the country.

Hilali is Egyptian-born and most of his followers in Sydney are Lebanese. Yet in Victoria, many Muslims are of Turkish or Albanian background and disagree with some elements of Islam in the Arab world.

Controversy has dogged the university-educated sheik since his days in Egypt, where he was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. The brotherhood is one of the most influential Islamist movements in the world. It was founded in Egypt in 1928, and Egypt is still considered the centre of the movement. It promotes an Islamic state through non-violent means. But breakaway members of the group have gone on to establish terrorist groups, including al-Qa'ida.

Hilali arrived in Australia in 1982 and overstayed his tourist visa. He came to the attention of the authorities in 1988 when he gave an anti-Semitic lecture to a group of Muslim students at the University of Sydney. It was titled The Disposition of Jews in the Light of the Koran, and he was quoted as saying: "Judaism controls the world by secret movements [and] destructive doctrines and groups such as communism, libertinism, Freemasonry, Baha'ism, the Rotary clubs, the nationalistic and racist doctrines. The Jews try to control the world through sex, then sexual perversion, then the promotion of espionage, treason, and economic hoarding."

Following this speech, federal immigration minister Chris Hurford attempted to have him deported for inciting hatred and being against "Australian values". He survived the push and was granted permanent residency in 1990, and eventually citizenship.

Efforts to deport him failed because of the large support he had within the Islamic community in Sydney and from Labor politicians including, according to reports, Paul Keating when he was treasurer in the Hawke government.

Hilali, who now holds joint Australian and Egyptian citizenship, has since been regularly accused by Australian Jewish organisations of anti-Semitism, an accusation he denies.

Hilali was born in Egypt into what he says is an environment of knowledge and scholarship. "My father, my grandfather [and generations of forefathers] were scholars who were inheriting the teachings," he said in a radio interview. "My mother died when I was a child and the one who raised me was my aunt, who actually recited the whole Koran by heart. And she used to teach me. I learned to recite, to memorise the whole Koran, when I was 10 years old. She also taught me a lot of poetry, which I still remember."

After getting married in 1975, he and his wife Souhair travelled extensively, and their four children were born in Egypt, Lebanon and Australia. They settled in Sydney and led a quiet life for almost a decade before Hilali was arrested in 1999 on trip to Egypt after allegedly buying pharaonic antiquities from a smuggling ring for \$192,000.

Muddle headed Mufti

He was charged with smuggling antiquities. Egyptian prosecutors alleged Hilali had conspired with Egyptian priest Nassid Elias Michael and his son Bassem Michael to buy the artefacts. He was sentenced to one year's jail but the case was overturned on appeal.

Then, in 2003, he was stopped by police in Sydney and charged for driving an unregistered and uninsured vehicle. He was charged with assaulting and hindering police, which lead to reprisal attacks and public condemnation of the police action. Although charges of assaulting and hindering police and resisting arrest were later dropped, he was fined \$400.

In 2004 he created another furore with a speech he gave in a mosque in Lebanon. It was claimed he praised the September 11 attacks on the US as "God's work against the oppressors" and supported Arab martyrs and a holy war against Israel.

Hilali said the translation was out of context and that anyone who rejoiced in or supported "the 9/11 event knows nothing about the Islamic teachings". He denies he supports terrorism and has put out numerous statements condemning acts of terror.

Earlier this year Hilali split from AFIC, the group that supported him as the Mufti, saying he no longer wanted its "money or sympathy". Hilali warned the council to stop feuding. "I would like it to be known that for what is left of my life, I have taken the decision to take my stipend from God and will not accept a salary from any organisation, whether Islamic or otherwise," he said.

Hilali's split from AFIC came after the embattled group had to apologise for saying his \$40,000-a-year salary would be stopped because the council's accounts were frozen. They had suggested he apply for the dole.

Hilali warned the leaders of AFIC -- which had been ethnically divided since its April elections, when a group of Pakistanis took control from Fijian Indians -- that they should not squander the community's money on court brawls.

"There is no place in our society for these ethnic groupings that only produce grudges and personal score-settling," he said.

His split with AFIC did not affect his standing in the community and he continued to hold the position of Mufti.

A month ago he was dumped from John Howard's Muslim Community Reference Group after denying the Holocaust and calling it a "Zionist lie". He also referred to Israel as a "cancer".

Yesterday, Hilali was busy apologising for any offence caused by his remarks about immodestly dressed women and saying he had been misunderstood.

He said in a public statement that "women in our Australian society have the freedom and right to dress as they choose; the duty of man is to avert his glance or walk away".

Natalie O'Brien is a senior writer at The Australian.

AI-HILALI'S HISTORY

* 1941: Born in Egypt, the son of a scholar. His mother dies when he's a child and he's reared by an aunt. He studies Arabic and Islam at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo.

* 1975: Marries Egyptian woman Souhair. They have three daughters -- Shayma, Asma and Fatima -- and one son, Mohammed.

* 1960s: Becomes a member of the political body known as the Muslim Brotherhood, which claims to be non-violent but breakaway members have formed terrorist groups including al-Qa'ida.

* 1982: Travels to Australia, overstays his tourist visa and settles in Sydney.

Muddle headed Mufti

- * 1988: Gives an anti-Semitic lecture to a group of Muslim students at the University of Sydney, where he's quoted as saying: "The Jews try to control the world through sex, then sexual perversion, then the promotion of espionage, treason and economic hoarding."
- * 1989: Becomes known as the Mufti of Australia.
- * 1990: Is granted permanent residence and eventually citizenship.
- * 1999: Is arrested in Egypt after allegedly paying \$192,000 for Pharaonic antiquities from a smuggling ring. Wins on appeal.
- * 2004: Causes a public outcry over a sermon at a mosque in Sidon, Lebanon, where he alleges the September 11 bombings are God's work against oppressors. He says he is misquoted and anyone rejoicing in September 11 or supporting it knows nothing about Islam. During a tour of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Egypt, allegedly tells Arabic-language newspapers that Afghan Muslims discovered Australia before James Cook and many Aboriginal rituals resemble Islamic ones. He allegedly praises Hezbollah and warns John Howard will "pay the price" for banning the group.
- * 2006: Splits from the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils that appointed him Mufti.

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Six faces of subtle dissent

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Byline: Margaret Coker, SPECIAL TO THE STAR, Tehran

Body

Nukes and mullahs, hard-line Islamic theology and enmity for Israel.

That's the face of Iran that has become such cause for concern in the West, where the White House is pressing the United Nations to impose sanctions on the Islamic republic for defiantly pursuing its nuclear program.

But two weeks of interviews with a wide range of Iranians suggest that this ancient land is more a stewpot of dissent than a member of George W. Bush's "axis of evil."

Down the tree-lined streets of the capital, teenagers in tight pants bare their bling and UN resolutions aren't as important as one's sartorial views.

Along the shores of the Zayandeh River in the oasis city of Esfahan, weekend picnickers rank the acquisition of nuclear weapons far below their desire for jobs.

Across this vast country equal in size to Western Europe, the mood most often reflected is disenchantment with the Islamic government that 27 years ago came to power in a revolution that promised a new and better life.

Iran is the traditional homeland of the minority Shiite branch of Islam that honours the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad as his true successors. Sunnis, who comprise about 80 per cent of Muslims worldwide, believe a Muslim ruler need not prove descent from Muhammad as long as he gains the consent of the community of the faithful.

Shiites believe true peace and justice are possible only when the Imam Mahdi appears.

"We are waiting now for this world to end and the next to begin, just like Christians," says Masoud Pourseyed Aghaee, director of the Bright Future Institute in the holy city of Qom.

"To bring about the time of righteousness, we have to start with the hearts and minds of our young. The Mahdi's coming depends on the state of holiness and spirituality of our people.

"This transformation is not brought about overnight. It is not brought about in a clash with the West, or in a nuclear war. It's not brought from launching democracy, either, like your President Bush believes. It's brought about when people understand that the path of righteousness comes from religion."

Six faces of subtle dissent

Iran has a population of 68 million. The gap between the rulers and ruled has perhaps never been so great - and the time to listen to the voices of Iranians perhaps never so urgent.

Here's a look at a day in the life of contemporary Iran.

Sooraya Khalii, 68

Mellat Park,

Tehran, 6: 30 a.m.

In the sprawling, smoggy Iranian capital, matrons in the upper-class neighbourhood of Jordaan start the day with kicks, stretches and a subtle revolt against the powers that be.

Women's exercise groups, deemed scandalous just a few years ago, are now commonplace in Tehran's abundance of lush public parks.

The victory came thanks to unlikely heroes like Sooraya Khalalei, a steely-eyed grandmother who sprang to action when the Islamic government tried to ban women from top jobs and place them in roles out of the public eye.

"They used to come at us here in the park with machine guns in their hand," says Khalalei, speaking about the city police after the 1979 revolution that deposed the Shah's monarchy.

"They said we couldn't use the park, that we couldn't exercise. But we fought them. We fought back. We used the Islam card. We told them that exercise kept us healthy physically as well as spiritually. After a long time, 'the argument' worked."

Khalalei and two dozen other women stand under shady pine trees on the edge of an open square, where male exercisers also gather at dawn.

The women, dressed in long, loose shirts and headscarves, silently follow the instructions coming from the moustached group leader. Police are nowhere to be seen.

"We the people have to tell our government what to do. Otherwise, they will screw up our lives," Khalalei says.

Amir Adhami, 25

Fahaang Barbershop,

Tehran, 9: 15 a.m.

The roar of Tehran's notorious rush hour traffic dims only slightly when Amir Adhami puts on his white jacket and turns on his electric razor.

Adhami presides at the second chair at Culture Barbershop. With his carefully gelled pompadour, his mission is to bring a bit of secular style to the men in this middle-class neighbourhood.

"I've been working here since I was 15. It's something I've always wanted to do," says Adhami. "The people from around all this area know me, and they tell me that they wouldn't ever go anywhere else.

"It's a good living for someone like me. In my family, no one went to college. But I'm not complaining about that. If you work for the government, you might make \$500 per month. Here, a haircut costs about \$3, and I can easily make about \$1,200 a month working six days a week."

His income makes Adhami an attractive potential catch for a husband - but for now he is single by choice because, as he explains, he's not ready to leave the fun of bachelorhood behind.

Six faces of subtle dissent

"My friends and I have a lot of fun together. One will call at midnight and say let's go to the Caspian Sea. So, we jump in the car and we go for a couple of days.

That's not something you do when you are married."

The Soltani family

Zayandeh Park,

Esfahan, 10 a.m.

Sitting cross-legged on a picnic blanket on the banks of central Iran's Zayandeh River, Abdulrasoul Soltani and his family don't want to think about a possible nuclear confrontation with the West.

"How about a nap? Or some more tea? On a weekend, these are the things that interest us, nothing more," explains the 35-year-old bank employee.

Not that the father of two doesn't care about politics. His priorities, however, are not the topics that make headlines abroad.

"To me," says Soltani, "the government should focus more attention on the well-being of our families. It's very tough for families now in Iran.

"These days, unemployment is very high. These days, we worry about education, about moral values.

These problems can be taken care of when mothers can stay home with their children. In our family, that is the way we do it. But not everyone can.

"It's a shame our government spends time and money on issues like Hezbollah in Lebanon, when we have so many problems to solve here at home."

Azim Ahmadi, 18

Internet cafe,

Tehran, 1 p.m.

On a recent lunch break, Azim Ahmadi had some time alone with his girlfriend thanks to one of Iran's best dating ploys: computer tutoring.

Baktiari, a graduate student in mathematics, sat close to his pupil to teach her how to use Yahoo Instant Messenger. The intimacy is something her parents tolerate only at an Internet cafe because of the inherent payoff computers bring - access to the world outside Iran.

"Most people in Tehran have computers. Fewer people have Internet access in their homes, though. That's still expensive, but Internet cafes are everywhere," says Ahmadi.

"I spend about an hour each day online, chatting and doing research. When I chat with people from the United States and Canada, I am surprised about their ignorance. They either they have no idea about where my country is, or they ask stupid questions like if we are all riding around on camels."

Ahmadi says he feels free to share all his views online, even those critical of his government.

He's confident that young people in Iran can outwit the authorities' attempts to censor Internet sites deemed unfit for their political or religious views.

"Some people here are afraid the government is reading and listening while we chat," he says.

Six faces of subtle dissent

"I don't believe that, though it's true the government does censor many websites. I see that as a move of desperation. As we say, when someone is falling to the bottom of a well, they will grasp at anything to (stop) their fall. It's against their interests for us to get online. That's why I like to do it so much."

Morteza Ali Akbari, 21

Hafaziyeh Shrine,

Shiraz, 6 p.m.

Some Western pop stars might see themselves as poets, but not so in Iran, where poetry is revered as the highest form of art.

The shrine to Hafez, one of Iran's most famous poets, is one of the country's biggest attractions, drawing crowds of young and old to the intricate, glazed tile grave to read his 14th-century works and reflect on the message of individualism and anti-establishmentarianism.

"We studied Hafez from Grade 6 on. I had a music teacher who loved him and so I learned about him when I was even younger," says Morteza Ali Akbari, a Tehran native who has started university after finishing his compulsory army service.

"We Iranians love him because he is ours. He's not polluted by any outside influences. He writes in our language about us. His words touch us still today, even though they were written hundreds of years ago. Hafez tells us that the only truth in the world is the truth in our hearts."

Akbari thumps the book of collected works he has brought to the shrine.

"Hafez says it's not the law, it's not our government and it's not our fathers who can tell us right from wrong. God is within us and only when we look inside ourselves do we know what is right and what is wrong."

Amir Hesami, 26

House party,

Shiraz, midnight

From the stillness in the neighbourhood, there's no sign that anything on the other side of the tall terracotta wall is amiss.

Nothing to indicate that the kitchen is overflowing with bootleg Absolut vodka and cold cans of Heineken. Or that the living room is heaving with sweaty bodies gyrating as if they were in any strobe-lit disco.

For the students and young professionals inside, the only thing threatening the good time is the thought that the sense of freedom stops at the wall surrounding the two-storey house borrowed for the party.

"This is the kind of thing we all would do openly, if only we could," says Amir Hesami, an e-commerce executive who holds a British graduate degree in robotics. "The problem with this country is that you aren't free,"

"You are free to think what you like, but you can't act as you like.

"We all feel that the government no longer takes care of us. If you have some government connections, then maybe you can make it. The temptation is to leave - and leave for good, if you can. But I don't want to.

"What I'd like to see for my country is a change like they had in Ukraine," Hesami continues, referring to the non-violent democratic revolution that brought down the Ukrainian government two years ago.

"I sure don't want the U.S. to invade or change our government for us. We have to do it ourselves."

Cox News

Graphic

VAHID SALEMI ap Runway model presents a stylish take on Iranian traditional dress at a July fashion show in Tehran.

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It Took a War, but I Finally Moved In With My Husband

The New York Times

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Byline: By A. Z. COHN

A. Z. Cohn is a writer who lives in Israel.; E-mail: modernlove@nytimes.com

Body

WHEN war broke out in July between Israel and Hezbollah, I was happily married yet living in my own apartment in Ginot Shomron, in the hills of Samaria. My husband and his children lived barely a half-mile away, and although I loved spending time with them, I relished having my own place.

My previous marriage had ended, civilly but painfully, after 20 years, and I had wanted to avoid rushing into matrimony. And avoid it I did; it took seven years of deliberation before I agreed to marry Teddy.

When I finally felt it was time for us to commit in a public way, I still wasn't ready to give up my apartment and my independence. I knew we would each save thousands if we moved in together, but in this case money didn't talk: I clung to my personal fortress of solitude, poorer for it.

What did others think of our arrangement? Friends and neighbors seemed to view it with a combination of tolerance, frustration and amusement. Among relatives, Teddy's family was the most accepting. His previous marriage had ended badly, and I think they were simply grateful to see him happy and in loving hands.

Our children (seven between the two of us) were perhaps the most baffled as to why I would agree to marriage but not go the whole way and move in with Teddy. But they voiced no objections; after all, they didn't have to live with a stepparent or with half brothers and sisters. Despite our marriage, their lives were barely ruffled. And having us married but living apart was still much more stable in their view than having us unmarried and living apart.

But stability of any kind is what we lost when the war started. Within three days, my son and son-in-law were in Lebanon on the front lines. Another son and daughter-in-law who lived in Safed fled that beleaguered city the day after the first Katyusha rockets fell.

My 17-year-old daughter, who up to then had been enjoying a carefree summer vacation, started volunteering at a camp set up in the south for refugees from the north of Israel. My pregnant daughter and my granddaughter (wife and daughter of the son-in-law who was now on the front lines) remained in their home in a small town in the center of the country with friends -- all women whose husbands also had been called up as reservists.

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My family was scattered. Overnight we had become a microcosm of this small country -- one child in the army, one volunteering, one a refugee and one waiting for her husband to return from war. I was glued to the news day and night, sleeping minimally, crying periodically, working sporadically.

"Come over tonight," Teddy pleaded. "We'll watch the news. It's what you're doing anyway. We may as well do it together."

Yet even when he sweetened the deal ("I'll rub your feet"), I held firm. "No," I said. "I'll feel better at home." And I meant it.

A week into the war, a posting appeared on our local e-mail list asking if anyone had an empty apartment available: "We have friends from Safed that have a new baby and need a quiet place to be. Not sure how long they will be here. Thanks, Alina."

I DIDN'T know Alina or her friends. But I was sitting in a four-bedroom apartment, seemingly unlonely but most definitely alone, afraid for my children and for everyone else's children and possessed of an irrational need to "go it alone" while others, like this young family, were in alarmingly dire straits. My own isolation and eye-ringing worry, along with my husband's offers of comfort and sustenance, had failed to motivate me to move in with him. But this plea from a stranger I could not ignore.

I called Alina immediately, and later that afternoon the couple from Safed arrived, literally shellshocked, with their baby, who, it turned out, was born that very morning in Alina's apartment. They moved in, and then I moved out. Although their situation was bizarre enough, the fact that I was now going to be living under the same roof as my husband struck me as equally bizarre.

The war ground on. Eight days after my "guests" moved into my apartment, their son, Ariyeh, was circumcised, and the community embraced them with a feast and celebration. Hailing from California, the couple had immigrated to Israel a few months before. She, Chava, was an African-American originally from New York City. He, Naftali, was a sweet, placid young man in his late 20s.

They were living in an unfamiliar neighborhood, in a stranger's apartment, and had no family in the country and no idea about the condition of their own home, yet they were feeling blessed. They were blessed. They accepted the kindness of strangers with a combination of wonder, faith, equanimity and a heavy dose of West Coast mellowness.

And me? I was 50, a refugee of nothing more than an ill-fated marriage and a victim only of a misguided sense of self-sufficiency. In my husband's house, I watched the war unfold with one eye while with the other I watched myself evolve into a roommate. And while the former took up 90 percent of my consciousness, the latter definitely made an impact. Despite the dramatic events surrounding me, I was thinking: "Look, I'm doing it. I'm actually living with someone else."

In fact, Teddy was the one who bristled at the realities of our cohabitation. Did I have to leave that tissue on the table? Must I unplug the clock-radio in order to plug in my phone charger? I should not have been surprised; I was on his turf. Yet I was amused at his squirminess, and very quickly so was he.

The war passed ponderously: four weeks of irregular heartbeats, middle-of-the-night negotiations with God, and a hunger for any tiny scrap of information from or about my son and son-in-law. I fretted inwardly, keeping my anxiety to myself, but just having someone nearby to hold me or sit with me was a huge help.

Cellphones weren't allowed in Lebanon and my daughter didn't hear from her husband for weeks. The news was bleak and scary. My son came out every few days and called -- his photograph was even in the newspaper a few times; wearing a helmet and flak jacket, he looked nothing like the boy I had last seen a few days before the war started. People I knew or knew of were killed daily: soldier sons of friends as well as neighbors and civilians who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Every few days I would go over to my old apartment and visit Naftali and Chava and their baby, who was thriving in the love-filled cocoon his parents had created.

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My apartment had become their home and haven by virtue of their love for each other and for the baby and the fact that they had miraculously and instantly become a family. No seven years of deliberation for them.

While I was there I would grab an item or two -- pieces of myself -- and carry them over to my husband's place: clothes and shoes, bills and bank statements, books and knitting, makeup, cookbooks. The physical details of my life gradually made the move from one address to another, and emotional acceptance followed.

What I had resisted for years turned out to be as natural and easy as breathing; Teddy's house became our house. I was like everyone else; now I had a cocoon, too. My loved ones weren't safer but I took the lead from young Ariyeh and finally allowed myself to enjoy the fringe benefits of cohabiting -- comfort and company, succor and support -- that, until then, I had so often traded for solitude.

The big war ended as suddenly as it began, and exactly 59 minutes after the cease-fire, I received a text message from my daughter: "With God's help, Asaf is out of Lebanon and is on the way home."

I wept like I hadn't wept the entire month. I hadn't realized how tense I had been until I felt the pressure ease in the flood of tears, the release a physical, almost violent sensation. My son came out of Lebanon a few days later. And my house guests left immediately for Safed, grateful and gracious but in a hurry to get home.

A few days later, my in-laws arrived for the wedding of Teddy's son -- he was married a week after the war ended. And then I, too, returned home, moving myself back to the apartment I had treasured for the 10 years since my divorce. I gathered my belongings and arranged them anew in my home.

IN Teddy's house (yes, it was his again), I cleared off the night table that I had usurped, vacated the side of the bed that I had occupied and emptied the drawers that I had filled. I left it all as I had found it and found my apartment as I had left it, yet nothing was the same.

Teddy missed me and I missed him. We had lived together for a mere 3 weeks and, as a result, 10 years of conviction were undone. The once-peaceful solitude now felt like longing; the quiet had become emptiness; the "mine-ness" was simply the antithesis of "our-ness." I wasn't happy. The big war had ended, and so had my own personal battle.

What was it for again? Freedom? Autonomy? The right to be different? Regardless, although I had truly believed in the rightness of my way, I didn't need a United Nations-brokered cease-fire to know when it was time to give up the fight. I was ready.

And now, three months later, Teddy and I are living together happily. I continue to be alternately bewildered at this turn of events and stupefied by how long it took me to reach this point. The big war continues to reverberate with finger-pointing, name-calling and, as with any war, an aching sense of loss. But, thankfully, my own modest conflict has ended without turmoil.

And those parts of myself I so worried about losing -- my backbone, my uniqueness and my sense of space -- remain surprisingly intact.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Drawing (Drawing by David Chelsea)

It Took a War, but I Finally Moved In With My Husband

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Police in proper mess

Yorkshire Evening Post

August 16, 2006

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Body

On August 8, the heading on the Letters page read: "Our police have lost the plot" and the front page told us that the city's main police stations were going to adopt "shop hours" and were being closed for 14 hours per day.

This follows on from the story that Millgarth is to be sold for development. What on earth is going on?

There are thousands more police than ever before with millions more pounds of taxpayers' money, particularly council tax, being lavished on a service in which large parts of the public have very little faith.

I am not the only one who thinks that we are being short-changed and that pay and pensions take priority over protection and prevention.

When the sale of Millgarth goes through - and it will - we the public should be the beneficiaries.

We want a return to old-style, people-friendly, accessible, smaller police stations.

We have had enough of the monolithic fortresses built to protect the people inside them.

It is crying out for a local station to be built on the site of the old swimming baths in York Road and another on the empty site in Ashley Road. These would serve people in one of the most heavily populated areas of Leeds.

For goodness sake give us a police presence as it used to be, yet even then it may be too late.

Finally, anyone who believes that a small country such as England needs 43 different police forces is living in fantasyland, or sitting in a cushy job.

Get real!

ROY PEARSON, Brignall Garth, Leeds

Why not put stations into every supermarket as everything else seems to be in them these days.

PHILIP ASTON, Exeter Drive, Leeds

Do the police realise the repercussions of their stupid actions re the club at Belle Isle and the Pontefract police charging a driver for not enough windscreen water in his parked car.

These instances make the papers in the USA, and are forwarded on to me. How can the Chief Constable keep his position allowing things like this to happen? Do they not realise they have become a laughing stock worldwide. What have we done to deserve these people.

Police in proper mess

G Geapin, e-mail, Leeds

Why we must now unite to defeat bigotry

I have just visited my local post office which is run by a Muslim family.

This family have run this post office since I was a child, and as a 27-year-old woman I can honestly say that they are a lovely family who are always willing to help others.

As I approached the post office this morning I noticed a group of men, not young men, but fully grown 30- plus year old men, congregated outside the post office.

I was with my two-year-old daughter and in order to gain entry to the post office we had to push our way through the group of men whilst they were shouting racist abuse and threats.

Such as "You should all be ****ing put on a boat and blown up" "Watch your p*** children they could be next."

I know people are angry but does that give them the right to behave in such an aggressive manner to such an honest Muslim family?

And in front of young children?

I believe that it is always the minority of vigilantes who seem to be straight on the bandwagon creating hatred within our communities.

We are trying to raise our daughter to see the good in people no matter what creed or colour they may be.

How can we do this if she is met by racial hatred as soon as she leaves the front door?

And what of the message these men are sending to their own children, who will become the next generation of vigilantes no doubt?

I have a very close friend who just happens to be Muslim.

I do not see her for her colour or religion, just as a good person who was born in Britain and has as much right to live in a safe environment as I do.

She is just as horrified with the arrests made and the intelligence uncovered.

Now is a time when all groups of our communities should unite.

No matter what colour, what religion or creed and be the eyes and ears who aid to stop such atrocities!

Ms Coggill, Middleton, Leeds

Get a life, whingers

I am sure like many others I am fed up with the more righteous than thou save the planet preachers telling me what I should do in regard to my own transport.

Yes I am over 60 and yes I do have a bus pass, which I use when appropriate. I also have a life which most of these complainants do not seem to have. Both my wife and myself have a very active social life, which includes serving the community in no small part.

This entails travel at my expense in all weathers at all times of the year to areas not accessed by buses. What would A Shipman (Letters, August 11) like me to do, ride tandem with the wife or join him in watching Coronation Street on a night while I sup my cocoa? Get real all you whiners and look at life from other people's perspectives and not just judge the world on your own miserable existence.

Police in proper mess

J Parker, Ashwood, Leeds

Disgust at motorbike rant

I am writing to express my disgust at the article "On yer bike and buzz off" by Nigel Scott (YEP, August 12)

To say that he feels like "opening my car door at the wrong time" is an absolute disgrace and an insult to motorcyclists and cyclists who have been seriously injured or even killed by such actions.

I cannot believe you would publish such a inane sentence as this. To suggest that he would cause injury to someone just because they are getting through traffic faster than him is totally abhorrent, and I think an apology should be published.

I ride motorcycles and have encountered such drivers as Scott, who obviously don't like anyone getting somewhere before they do. Filtering through traffic, I believe, is not illegal !

If Scott is so fed up at being caught in traffic then maybe he should use public transport, and cut down the amount of cars on the road.

He also says that he doesn't see why bikes and cycles should escape traffic jams!

Well if he were to use his obviously undersized brain he would realise that's the whole point of using them round town!

Oh and the gag about female cyclists? Yeah very funny. YAWN !

Now grow up!

Stephen Clowes, South Parkway, Leeds

Has anyone seen a Deputy PM about?

Yet again Tony Blair shows his contempt for the British Electorate.

While there has been another threat to security he swans off on holiday, romping about in Barbados, leaving John Prescott in charge.

Meanwhile his pet Rottweiler John Reid has taken charge over this latest threat and has to deal with it.

Where is the Deputy Prime Minister? Nothing has been heard from him during this latest episode concerning the safety of this country. Why has he still got this job? Is he safely hidden away because he cannot deal with problems like this and is an embarrassment.

It is time for them to take responsibility for their chosen positions instead of abusing them.

Time is running out for them as the British Public will not stand for any more of their lack of public duty and respect for this country and the people who voted them in.

John Selby, Mickley Street, Selby

Do not forget 9/11

Why do people like the new head of the Muslim Council of Britain, Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, continue to cite the "invasion of Iraq" and our foreign policy, as the causes of terrorism.

This conscious decision to "forget" 9/11, and all the innocents who died then, is akin to those who deny the Holocaust.

Police in proper mess

Miles Redmond, King George Road, Leeds

Caution over streetlights

Dawn Chadwick, (Letters, August 12), makes a valid point regarding the erection of new street lights around Leeds.

The Garforth Residents' Association fully accept that where old street lights are in need of replacing so be it, as the security and safety benefits effective lighting provides cannot be underestimated.

However what is becoming very clear is that, as usual, the "consultation" process offered to residents by the council before such projects are undertaken leaves a lot to be desired.

Where an existing street light is being replaced with an upgraded light in the same location we do not feel there is a problem. Alternatively where extra lights are being added, as we believe is the situation in Great Preston, and the location of the existing lights is being altered, surely the residents concerned deserve to be consulted?

This would appear a common courtesy at the least.

If any other resident in the Garforth and Swillington ward has experienced a similar problem please contact us via the GRA website at www.garforthra.co.uk.

Mark Dobson, GRA Chair, Garforth, Leeds.

Rubbish spoils waterfront

May I congratulate our council for so successfully developing the Leeds Waterfront as an investment hotspot and area of local interest.

Sadly, the vista is marred by half-submerged shopping trolleys, defunct washing machines and waterlogged carpets, not to mention less permanent debris like floating bottles and planks of wood. Surely it would require very little outlay to clean up the urban section of the river, and then have, say, a bi-weekly clean up to remove the smaller flotsam and jetsam?

Martin Pickersgill, Arthington Grove, Leeds

Height of idiocy

The caption to your August 9 picture of the new British Library building near Boston Spa quoted a height of 130metres.

At 426feet high may we take it that this will be the tallest building in the Leeds area, or more hopefully someone got carried away with the noughts!

D Winter, e-mail, Leeds.

Trouble bruin

India is a country bursting with wonderful traits, none more than its great democratic traditions. But it sadly can provide few lessons on how to treat animals, and the fact that there are still over 600 dancing bears suffering on its streets is a cause for outrage.

ALED JONES, Mount Crescent,

Bridlington

Support Israel

Lebanon should not have allowed Hezbollah to use their country to attack Israel.

Police in proper mess

Consequently, Israel, who only wants peace, has had to eliminate these evil terrorists.

The use of children, who are taught to hate and be human shields, also suicide bombers, produces terrorists who only understand evil.

Wake up, world - you're their next target.

Israel is fighting this evil alone.

MRS P BROOKE, Oakdene Vale, Leeds

Confession

I was in Leeds on Wednesday August 9 and parked in a car park. As I was getting out a gust of wind blew the door and it marked a red car slightly. I don't know why, but I did not leave a note for the driver. I know I should have done and I am sorry.

If anyone thinks it might be their car they can text or ring me on this number: 07985 935620 stating where the car was parked, the time it was parked, where the mark is, the make and registration.

LA WILLIAMS, St Albans

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The dark side of multiculturalism (Part two of two): In the shadow of Sept. 11, it is time to confront the unsettling truth that radical multiculturalism creates tribes that could destroy the society that produced it

Ottawa Citizen

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Body

According to some observers, it is this self-hatred, and the doubt and uncertainty it engenders, that is at the root of West's hesitation to acknowledge the Islamist declaration of war. Italian philosopher Marcello Pera, for example, warns that the "winds of Munich" are blowing across Europe. He regards the opposition of European elites to the war in Iraq as a replay of the appeasement mentality that gripped Europeans in the 1930s and made them unwilling to confront Hitler and the Nazis until war was inevitable.

Pera attributes this self-hatred to the "guilt of the West" over the "horrors" of its past -- everything from colonialism and imperialism to Nazism and communism. Nonetheless, this self-loathing presents the greatest danger to the West in the conflict with Islamism, because it "weakens our cultural defences and prepares us for, or inclines us toward, surrender. Because it makes us believe that there is nothing for which fighting or risking is worthwhile." Thus, "the West is paralysed twice over. It is paralysed because it does not believe that there are good reasons to say that it is better than Islam. And it is paralysed because it believes that, if such reasons do indeed exist, then the West would have to fight Islam."

Obviously, war would not be necessary if there could be a reasonable and respectful dialogue between the West and Islam. But that would of necessity require the Islamists to "respect" western values, even if they don't wish to adopt them. But peaceful coexistence is exactly what the Islamists reject. As Hussein Massawi, a former *Hezbollah* warlord put it, "We are not fighting so that you will offer us something. We are fighting to eliminate you." Osama bin Laden has been equally warlike: "The rule to kill Americans and their allies -- civilians and military -- is a sacred duty for any Muslim," he said in February 1998.

They don't speak for all Muslims, of course. But even so, as recent events attest, a considerable number of Muslims are sympathetic to his views. In July 2005, a British poll indicated that of the approximately two million Muslims in Britain, about six per cent -- 120,000 people -- thought the London suicide bombings were justified, while another 24 per cent -- that's 480,000 -- sympathized with the killers. Moreover, 16 per cent -- 320,000 -- say they have no loyalty to Britain.

The dark side of multiculturalism (Part two of two): In the shadow of Sept. 11, it is time to confront the unsettling truth that radical multiculturalism create....

So, most Muslims aren't terrorists, but if the British polls are anything to go by, way too many are sympathetic to the terrorists' goals.

One Canadian sociologist estimates there are more than 300,000 Muslim "youth" in Canada. Even if only one per cent sympathize with Islamist terrorism, that's 3,000 whose views, potentially at least, are a threat to Canada's liberal democracy. Sociological surveys of Muslim students might suggest most are tolerant and open-minded, but that doesn't deny the reality that a tiny minority can, as it were, ruin things for everyone else.

Which raises a point made by Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington: "Muslims increasingly see America as their enemy. If that is a fate Americans cannot avoid, their only alternative is to accept it and to take measures necessary to cope with it." In other words, how long can a liberal democracy tolerate the presence of a substantial number of those who regard themselves as a distinct and potentially hostile body? Surely, if this group refuses to reciprocate the basic principles of liberal democracy and, indeed, declares jihad against those principles, then that group constitutes an enemy within.

As historian Victor Davis Hanson writes in a recent edition of City Journal, "The continued presence within our borders of so many who seek to destroy us suggests that we still haven't squarely faced the problem that Islamic radicalism poses to our domestic security." He's referring to the United States, but surely the idea applies equally well to other western countries, including Canada.

There's no guarantee another terrorist attack can be prevented. But you would think an all-out effort would be made to do so. So what should the nations of the West do? Suspending most legal immigration from Middle Eastern countries known to tolerate or even subsidize radical Islam, particularly when it calls for the destruction of the West, would be a sensible place to start. Another would be the institution of "profiling." It makes no sense in terms of security or economics to search the bags of a Glaswegian grandmother when you know that the most likely terrorist candidate is a young, Arabic-looking male. Most western countries already have laws against hate speech. Those laws should be extended to include radical Islamic doctrines that routinely denigrate westerners, Jews, women and gays. Those convicted of promoting Islamist hatred and of being involved in plotting terrorist actions should receive stiff prison sentences. Other countries should be told that their sponsorship or funding of charities, madrassas and mosques that become sources of Islamist promulgation will no longer be allowed. Finally, and perhaps most crucially, western nations need to foster a public culture that demonstrates to their citizens that Islamism is no less a threat than were fascism, Nazism and communism.

n n n

I found no "enemies" during my visit to Bay Ridge, no evidence of hostility beyond the broken window. After an afternoon's wandering I had a late lunch in the Damascus Gate restaurant on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 73rd Street. The Syrian woman who ran it served a delicious shawarma chicken wrap, thick with meat and stuffed with pickles and peppers. Afterward, I nursed a cup of Turkish coffee and I watched the passing traffic on the sidewalk. That's when I saw my second chaddor of the day.

Earlier, I'd visited Williamsburg area of Brooklyn with a friend who'd grown up in the area when it was populated largely by orthodox Jews. It still is, but in recent years there's been a big influx of Hispanics. My friend, Sally Heinemann, the former editor of Bridge News, pointed out how many of the Williamsburg streets -- Hewes, Lee, Rutledge, Penn, Heyward, etc. -- were named after the men who signed the American Declaration of Independence in 1776. For some reason, when I saw that second woman in the chaddor I thought of the orthodox Jewish women on the streets of Williamsburg. While they they were nowhere near as extreme in their dress as fundamentalist Muslim women, they, too, wore scarves and dressed modestly according to their faith. Suddenly, I thought I'd been offered a glimpse at the secret of America's success, and what threatens that success.

The American founders asked themselves: How can a democratic and multi-ethnic state be organized? What are the political principles necessary for reconciling competing interests? Canadians like to think our constitutional monarchy and our motto of peace, order and government provides for greater political stability than does the republican system of the United States with its motto of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. History, however,

The dark side of multiculturalism (Part two of two): In the shadow of Sept. 11, it is time to confront the unsettling truth that radical multiculturalism create....

suggests something different. For all its dynamism, the United States has been a remarkably stable country, at least since the Civil War. Where Canadians still puzzle over their identity, Americans long ago figured out who and what they were. While Canadians have tied themselves in knots over constitutional questions for 40 years, the United States got on with defeating the Soviet Union and expanding its commercial empire. All of which suggests the American founders did a pretty good job figuring out how to organize a democratic, multicultural state. There's no denying that the United States is one of the most stable nation-states in the world, as well as the most prosperous. So what is the secret?

Clearly, geography played a part. Having oceans on either side of you and non-threatening neighbours to the north and south does wonders for your sense of security. Likewise, vast resources and an enterprising and growing population played their part. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that the success of the United States as a multicultural, multi-ethnic democracy was bound up with its allegiance to a particular ideological claim, a notion that resides at the core of the American constitution, politics and culture -- the concept of freedom.

It is the devotion to individual freedom and the long commitment by generations of Americans to that concept that has provided the glue for the American national identity and allowed the United States to maintain itself as a democratic, multi-ethnic state. Everyone, regardless of race, creed or colour, has been expected to set their American identity over all other identities in exchange for living in a country that allows them to pursue their individual freedom (including religious freedom) to its rational limits. It is this ideological pillar that radical multiculturalism threatens to topple. If that pillar falls, if the American national identity fragments into tribalist attachments, well, arguably, so will the United States as a united nation-state.

Will Muslims in the United States accept the principle of freedom and all it implies in the same way as, say, orthodox Jews? Geneive Abdo says a new generation of American Muslims -- living in the shadow of the Sept. 11 attacks -- is less likely to embrace the nation's fabled melting pot of shared values and common culture. She links this phenomenon to the resurgence of Islam over the past several decades. But the Sept. 11 attacks have also made American Muslims feel isolated. "From schools to language to religion, American Muslims are becoming a people apart," Abdo concludes. "Despite contemporary public opinion -- or perhaps because of it -- Muslim Americans consider Islam their defining characteristic, beyond any national identity."

I was thinking about that question as my second chaddor-clad woman walked past. I'm pretty sure it wasn't the same woman I'd seen earlier. This one was slimmer. And she was talking on a cellphone through the black veil. I noticed something else, too, showing beneath the chaddor: she wore open-toed sandals and bright red toenails. In Saudi Arabia, where police strictly enforce religious dress codes, such a display would get a woman a harsh reprimand, if not worse. Here, in the United States, along Fifth Avenue in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn, I'd like to interpret that small bright flash of vanity as an expression of individual freedom, however minor.

Maybe, I thought, the melting pot can still work its alchemy.

Robert Sibley is a senior writer with the Citizen. In a concluding essay in tomorrow's paper he looks at the "virtues" the West must recover to prevail in the Age of Terror.

Load-Date: September 13, 2006

No Headline In Original

Canberra Times (Australia)

August 1, 2006 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. 12

Length: 860 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

Middle East crisis I have not ventured into comments on the latest Middle East conflict as the space is well and truly occupied by the usual protagonists.

I sympathise with the innocent of both sides who have suffered.

But I also understand the Hezbollah agenda, which is, in effect, one of genocide against Jews.

This was brought home to me with a picture of 8-10-year-old boys as members of the al-Mahdi scouts as they pledge to martyrdom in uniforms with stiff-arm salutes.

If one side is committed to genocide (as Hezbollah clearly is) and has backers in Iran and Syria, and I was their victim, I would resist them fiercely too.

M. Gordon, Flynn Nearly three weeks into this Middle East crisis we see Rice and Blair talking about having yet more important talks that would lay groundwork for peacekeeping. The conflict has escalated beyond the "who started it" phase to a bloody, notably one-sided war.

As one commentator drily observed, "what's needed here is some adult supervision". Alas, the adults have pulled up chairs to watch for a while from the kitchen window.

Ross Kelly, Monash Qana, or Cana, in South Lebanon is likely to be the Biblical town where, according to the Gospel of John, Jesus performed the miracle of turning water into wine at a wedding feast.

Last night, Qana was defiled, when neither water nor wine flowed, but the blood of 54 innocent civilians, 37 of them children, their lives extinguished by the Israeli bombs they sought refuge from at the basement of a residential apartment.

Will those avowedly Christian- minded leaders like Bush, Blair, and even Howard, now blink at the notion of an immediate ceasefire? If the Geneva Conventions (especially regarding the protection of civilians during times of war) and the UN Charter don't make much sense to them, how about some elementary New Testament morality and compassion?

S. Partoredjo, Kellyville, NSW Why has it taken the killing of 54 innocent people, including 37 children, in an Israeli missile strike ("Innocents slaughtered", July 31, p1), for the US to finally pull the plug on Israel and call for a

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ceasefire? The answer must surely lie in this being not just a war between Israel and Hezbollah, but a proxy war between the US and Iran.

The Iranian leader, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, sees war with the US as not only inevitable, but as a precursor to the Apocalypse.

He has made no secret of the fact that in tempting a clash with the West, he feels safe in the belief of the imminent return of the Hidden Imam.

Mr Ahmadinejad, however, is not alone.

His messianic views bear a striking resemblance with Jewish understanding of Israel's miraculous victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, which many Israelis see as a divine preparation for the coming of their own Jewish messiah.

Hopefully, the international community can rise above all of these religious fundamentalisms.

Otherwise, there is now the grave concern that the US and Iran, together with Israel, are about to embark on something far more diabolical than anything ever before imagined.

Reverend Dr Vincent Zankin, Rivett Robert Fisk can hardly contain his excitement that Israel might cop a bloody nose in the present conflict against the terrorist group Hezbollah. I note also that al-Qaeda is becoming more vocal, calling for a war against Israel and all their supporters (that includes us folks) - where does Robert and his left wing mates really stand on this?

I have never been able to fathom how the intellectual left keep aligning themselves with monsters - they managed to do it in the fight against communism and were roundly discredited; now they seem to be making the same mistakes in the fight against terrorism.

I can understand them not supporting the Americans or the Israelis, but it is a huge leap to quietly barrack for terrorists.

Apart from putting those arrogant Israelis back in their box what do these terrorists offer? - freedom? prosperity?

tolerance? - clearly, none of the above, so can someone tell me what is the attraction?

H. Ronald, Jerrabomberra, NSW Consider the following account: "The events that made a direct impression on me were during and after 1982, when America allowed the Israelis to invade Lebanon...

"I still remember those distressing scenes: blood, torn limbs, women and children massacred.

"All over the place, houses were being destroyed and tower blocks were collapsing, crushing their residents, while bombs rained down mercilessly on our homes...

"As I looked at those destroyed towers in Lebanon, it occurred to me to punish the oppressor in kind by destroying towers in America, so that it would have a taste of its own medicine..."

(London Review of Books, March 9, 2006) This is what Osama bin Laden said about how he became motivated to undertake the 9/11 atrocity.

If Israel is unmoved by moral objections to its current activities in Lebanon, or the American or our own government to their support for them, it might surely be worth their considering the matter pragmatically.

Do these current actions not, again, risk giving rise to reactions like those of bin Laden, and thus to the fostering of the very terrorism that they regularly denounce? Jeremy Shearmur, Wamboin, NSW

Load-Date: July 31, 2006

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End of Document

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

AN ATTACK ON IRAN WILL TRIGGER WORLD WAR III; From one of the world's leading military historians, a chilling prediction...

Daily Mail (London)

February 24, 2007 Saturday

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Section: ED IRE; Pg. 18

Length: 1990 words

Byline: CORRELLI BARNETT

Body

PRESIDENT BUSH'S recent pronouncements about Iran set off the distant sound of war drums beating, just as they did in 2002 during the long run-up to the catastrophic attack on Iraq.

We hear those drums in Bush's assurances that there are no plans for armed action against Iran - just as, back in 2002, he and his acolyte, Tony Blair, falsely claimed that no military decision had been made to invade Iraq.

And we hear the drums in the bullying tone of Washington's present diplomacy towards Iran - again, so reminiscent of the way that Bush, aided by Donald Rumsfeld and with the connivance of Mr Blair, stoked up an international crisis with Saddam Hussein in order to justify an invasion.

Washington is doing its best to manipulate American opinion in favour of war, with its alarmist propaganda about the threat posed to the U.S. by the present Iranian regime and its alleged intention to produce nuclear warheads for its missiles.

Remember all that stomach-churning stuff about Saddam's 'weapons of mass destruction'? Weapons which never existed.

In the run-up to the war on Iraq, Bush also falsely claimed there were links between Saddam and Al Qaeda. Now he accuses the Iranians of supplying explosive devices to the Shia insurgents in Iraq in order to kill American soldiers.

But when asked for evidence, the President, with an uneasily sheepish grin worthy of a schoolboy making excuses for cutting football practice, gave only the lamest of replies - saying the devices had been supplied by a section of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

Yet he had to admit that he didn't know whether President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had ordered their supply.

'What matters,' he blustered, 'is that we are responding.' 'Responding?'

But how? That raises another question: is Bush simply using the Iranian nuclear programme and the story about the Iranian supply of explosive devices as cover for a real purpose - that of launching a massive attack on Iran intended to topple the present Iranian state?

The answer to this is truly terrifying. Because we know from recent Pentagon leaks that 'Centcom' (the Central Command, responsible for U.S.

AN ATTACK ON IRAN WILL TRIGGER WORLD WAR III From one of the world's leading military historians, a chilling prediction...

strategy and operations in the Middle East) are engaged in detailed military studies for a 'shock-and-awe' aerial onslaught aimed at destroying not only Iran's nuclear facilities but also her entire military infrastructure.

That is why there are now two attack-carrier task groups concentrated in the Persian Gulf, as well as Stealth bombers in readiness in the U.S..

To achieve its targets, the Pentagon would have to unleash waves of attacks by more than 100 aircraft on the 20 widely dispersed plants of the Iranian nuclear industry.

Prolonged bombing of military bases, barracks, and air-defence systems, many of them in or near great cities, would be needed. We saw it all before in the much smaller and less populated country of Iraq.

The loss of life among civilians would far exceed the 7,000 slaughtered during the 'shockandawe' blitz on Baghdad which heralded the invasion of Iraq. If the bombers struck an already 'live' nuclear plant, the result would be another Chernobyl. In addition, such an onslaught would inevitably mean war.

And it would mean war with a nation of 70 million people - 65 per cent of whom are under the age of 25 - at a time when the combined might of American and Coalition armed forces have been unable to subdue a country with a population of no more than 27 million.

Geographically, Iran is a mountainous country much larger than Iraq or Afghanistan, and extending from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, from Turkey to Afghanistan.

While the Iranian armed forces (including the 120,000 men of the Revolutionary Guards and the 200,000 in the Basij militia, all Islamic zealots) may be far inferior to the American forces in training and hightech weaponry, they fought a bloody war with Saddam Hussein for six years - proving that they are well able to take appalling attrition without buckling.

For them, every body-bag contained a glorious martyr.

No one should therefore underestimate Iran's capacity for prolonged resistance. War with Iran would be like Iraq plus Afghanistan multiplied by ten.

In a fresh demonstration of 'asymmetrical warfare' (where the two sides are mismatched in their military capabilities), America's colossal firepower would be countered by guerilla ambush and terrorist bombings anywhere in the world where infuriated Muslims could inflict damage on the West.

Remember the Madrid train bombings? Remember London in July 2005? They would be commonplace.

BECAUSE of the connection between the Shias of Iran - who make up 90 per cent of the population - those of southern Iraq, and of ***Hezbollah*** in the Lebanon, the conflict would engulf the entire Middle East, from the Mediterranean coast to the borders of Pakistan, and very probably sucking in the Sunnis of Saudi Arabia as well in reaction.

What's more, such a conflict would inflict terrible damage on the global economy because of its impact on oil supplies from the Persian Gulf.

It would be all too easy for Iranian suicide speedboats to make the narrow Straits of Hormuz too hazardous for the passage of the giant tankers on which the industrialised 'First World' (now including China) depends. It would be all too tempting for the U.S.

Navy to try to clear that passage by force.

In short, an attack on Iran would effectively launch World War III.

AN ATTACK ON IRAN WILL TRIGGER WORLD WAR III From one of the world's leading military historians, a chilling prediction...

Can Bush and his neo- con advisers really be contemplating such a war? And what would be the ultimate aim of this new war? More 'regime change', as in Iraq?

But it can't be emphasised too strongly that the present regime in Iran is not a one-man tyranny like Saddam's, as Bush seems to believe. There is more than one centre of power in Tehran, each serving to counterbalance the others.

Take President Ahmadinejad.

His bellicose rhetoric (so much like Bush's in reverse) may rattle American and Israeli nerves, but he does not control foreign policy.

That is in the hands of the 'Supreme Leader of the Revolution', at present Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. It is he who appoints the heads of the armed services as well as the judiciary.

But even the Supreme Leader has to share power with the 'Council of Guardians', made up of six clerics and six lay jurists, and this has the right to veto any new law which it reckons violates Islamic Law.

What's more, yet another body, 'the Expediency Council' with 31 members, also enjoys a key place in government. It advises the Supreme Leader on national policy. It mediates disputes between the Council of Guardians and the Majlis, or Parliament. Under its current chairman, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, it is a voice for shrewd pragmatism rather than Islamic fanaticism.

And although the parliament is far from being the equivalent of a freely-elected western legislature, its debates voice criticism of government policy in an open way not seen in any other Middle-Eastern Islamic state.

Moreover, the dispersed nature of state power in Iran does not tell the whole story of a society that is far more open to change than, say, Saudi Arabia. The highly educated young - including Ahmadinejad's own children - have access to the internet, and, through this, to global news and culture.

Middle- class women enjoy professional careers and increasingly defy revolutionary edicts about the wearing of chadors and public association with men.

Iranian filmmakers are recognised as among the best in the world.

In contrast, the poor, who were once Ahmadinejad's popular base, are more and more disenchanted because he has not delivered his promise of jobs and a richer life. This is why he has recently lost ground in local elections. Yes, elections.

So Iran is no monolithic dictatorship exercising absolute control over its population. On the contrary, the position of the Islamic fundamentalists is increasingly under threat. Even within the structures of government, there is tension between them and the pragmatists who wish for better relations with the West.

Nothing suits the fundamentalists better than threats from 'the Great Satan', America, because these threats serve only to consolidate patriotic Iranians behind the regime.

Iranians ask why their country should be denied nuclear weapons when Israel, Pakistan and India all have them in defiance of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

THEY note that across their border with Iraq, there stands an American army of 150,000 soldiers and a powerful air force, while to the south are the American bases in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, plus two powerful carrier groups.

To the east, in Afghanistan, there is another large western army dominated by America, who are also building vast permanent bases (just as in Iraq). In consequence, Iranians see themselves as virtually surrounded by hostile forces led by the U.S..

AN ATTACK ON IRAN WILL TRIGGER WORLD WAR III From one of the world's leading military historians, a chilling prediction...

It is in this context that the aggressive rhetoric of Bushite Washington is so counterproductive. Bush, it appears, has learned nothing from the Iraq experience. Just as in 2002-3, his recipe for international relations remains the same: bullying confrontation. First of all, work up fear and hatred of the chosen enemy by alarmist stories about hostile threats. Then ostentatiously deploy the armed forces in order to coerce that enemy, and, if need be, smash him.

These resemblances between Bush's pre-war policy towards Iraq and now towards Iran are deeply alarming - because we know what happened last time, and we know that next time it would be far, far, worse.

And yet, there is an alternative: a policy of patient, longsighted engagement with Iran. This would save us all from the catastrophe of war. At the same time, it would encourage all those political and social forces in Iran seeking the gradual erosion of the legacy of the Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 fundamentalist Islamic revolution.

ON THE key question of Iran's nuclear programmes, it is quite unreasonable of Washington to demand that Iran stop uranium enrichment before any negotiations can begin. No such demand was made of communist North Korea, where a deal over its civil and military nuclear programme has just been satisfactorily concluded. So with Iran, too, Washington must be willing to sit down and negotiate.

At the same time, Iran should be invited to join a conference of all the states in the Middle East to settle questions of regional security, including the nuclear issue - and especially including the future of Iraq, which is of crucial concern to Iran and where she has a vital role to play because of the Shia connection.

Below this level of negotiation between governments, we in the West should be making every effort to foster informal cooperation with Iranians in the fields of education, science, medicine, the media, the theatre and film.

And I mean genuine cooperation - not the kind of deliberate subversion of the regime favoured by the Washington hawks.

What's more, the West could play a major constructive role in developing the Iranian economy, to the immense mutual profit of both sides. For example, the capital equipment of the Iranian oilfields is old-fashioned and clapped-out, with the result that production is a fraction of what it was under the Shah and could be again.

At the present time, Chinese and Indian engineering firms are looking for contracts to rebuild and re-equip, but their technology is itself backward compared with what the West could offer. Here is a tremendous opportunity to be seized - but one which conflict could only destroy.

In such a policy of engagement with Iran, Western governments could, and should, play a leading part. It would provide a heaven-sent opportunity for us to fashion a fair and farsighted foreign policy independent of Washington's neocons.

Over time, engagement could gradually dissolve the mutual suspicions and tensions between Iran and the West, and within the Middle East itself. The alternative is too appalling for sane people to contemplate.

CORRELLI BARNETT is a fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge University.

Load-Date: February 25, 2007

We can't sit on fence in fight against crime

Daily Mail (London)

August 3, 2006 Thursday

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Section: ED IRE; Pg. 62

Length: 1979 words

Body

THERE is a fundamental principle and choice in life for all of us, in any land. You are either with the drug gang, or with the drug squad. To sit on the fence is to leave the field to the criminals.

And when our armed detectives are forced to confront gangsters holding innocent people hostage, and fire on the criminal target, but a hostage is injured or killed either by Garda or gang shots, then both the moral and legal responsibility lies wholly with the criminal. Our gardai do not become murderers in that context, but remain our armed defenders against the organised murderers.

Equally, when the Israelis fire on gangs holding kidnapped Israeli soldiers and Lebanese civilians hostage, the moral and legal responsibility lies exclusively with those gangs.

That clear responsibility cannot shift depending merely on the number of hostages hit in the process.

Or on whether single, aimed shots or heavier weapons have to be used against criminals. Or on whether the defenders of democracy and freedom are wearing green military or blue police uniforms. Or on the location on the globe of the incident.

In no such case can terms like 'atrocities' accurately describe the reality.

That means 'extremely wicked', and both the intentions of the security forces to overcome the enemy, and their general mandate to carry arms for our defence, mean that such emotive language is irresponsible and an incitement that can only aid the common enemy.

A terrible tragedy does not become an 'atrocities' simply because it involves many victims.

Those truths are as valid in a north Co. Dublin armed post office robbery as they are in south Lebanon.

Morality is not created after the event by counting heads, but is determined in advance by reflecting on relevant moral principles and intentions, such as I have indicated.

The drug gangs cannot be equated with our drug squad, nor Hezbollah kidnappers with the defence forces mandated to eliminate those gangs and rescue the kidnap victims.

TOM CAREY, Ranelagh, Dublin 6.

Guarded response

We can't sit on fence in fight against crime

NO WONDER Detective Sergeant John White, accused of planting a shotgun at a traveller camp but vindicated by a court last week, wants to suppress the publication of reports into his case.

We know from experience that An Garda Slochna is culturally incapable of admitting its mistakes and resorts to the worst kind of petty vindictiveness in attempting to justify unjustifiable positions.

In the case of John Carthy, the young man who, according to the Barr Report, was unnecessarily shot dead in the Abbeylara siege, the Garda's own internal report attempted to justify the shooting by claiming, among other things, that Mr Carthy was not as good a handballer as he was made out to be.

EAMON BRADY, Cavan town.

Not clear for takeoff

FINGAL County Council has continued to allow houses to be built in Dublin Airport's 'red zone' - the exclusion zone for the longpromised new runway.

Now, the Dublin Airport Authority has written to 19 homeowners asking them to 'voluntarily' vacate their newly-built homes. At the same time, the DAA has been highly critical of Fingal, claiming that plans for the new runway have been on the drawing board since the Seventies.

Er - perhaps that's why Fingal continued to grant planning permission for new houses in the red zone. After all, if the runway has been planned for more than 30 years with no sign of materialising, it's a case of the boy crying wolf.

If Fingal County Council, or its predecessor Dublin County Council, had started refusing planning permission way back in the days of elephant flares and tank tops, hundreds of families would have been denied 30 years of peaceful enjoyment of their properties.

Just because something is on the drawing board does not mean it is ever going to happen, especially in our haphazard little country. For all Fingal knew, the new runway might have eventually been built in Portlaoise (which, by the way, is precisely where it should be built).

By now, an entire generation has grown up in the Dublin Airport red zone without ever seeing as much as a bulldozer, let alone a jet.

GRINNE CUNNINGHAM, Santry, Dublin.

The catch with fish

NEWSPAPER articles extolling the virtues of fish - we seem to read them every single day - are all very well. The benefits of Omega 3, 6 and 9 oils for bone-joint and cardiovascular health, and even as brain food, are well-established.

But all of these articles overlook one crucial point: the world is rapidly running out of fish, with many popular species - including cod, wild salmon, hake and various members of the herring family (sardines, for example) - on the brink of extinction. Put simply, the world is already consuming far more fish than we are able to farm or can afford to catch. Existing wild stocks are unable to replenish themselves at the current level of harvesting.

The fish industry itself is irresponsibly reticent and even downright misleading about the situation. Nowadays, your 'Donegal catch', though landed and processed in Ireland, is almost certain to have been caught in Sierra Leone, where the EU rents Atlantic fishing quotas - its own stocks having been virtually exhausted.

Articles that recommend fish without advising the need to purchase only from renewable sources - for example, farmed salmon or trout - merely drive the gross overdemand for fish that already exists.

JANE YOUNG, Glanmire, Cork.

We can't sit on fence in fight against crime

Immigration warning

PAUL GRIFFIN seems to think that the Irish are indebted to migrant workers (Letters). While it's the case most of the time that people come to make a better life for themselves, we also have a duty to provide for our own indigenous people.

What happens when Irish people are out of work, cannot get state benefits or housing, or are the victims of racism or contempt by immigrants?

We Irish should take a very long hard look at our neighbours in Europe - particularly Britain and France. There are countless immigration problems stemming from the fact that these lands did not control their borders properly.

Now the indigenous people feel an isolation from their own governments who seem to bend over backwards to accommodate peoples who sometimes have very little respect for their adopted state. Take the example recently of the immigrants from Afghanistan who holed themselves up in a Dublin cathedral.

And they got the sympathy of the people and escaped unpunished for this vile act. It's about time the likes of Paul Griffin pulled the wool out of his eyes.

If you could look at Ireland 100 years from now, how many of our descendants will be truly Irish, or will we be ethnically and culturally cleansed? Will we still be a bastion

Immigration warning PAUL GRIFFIN seems to think that the Irish are indebted to migrant workers (Letters). While it's the case most of the time that people come to make a better life for themselves, we also have a duty to provide for our own indigenous people.

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If you could look at Ireland 100 years from now, how many of our descendants will be truly Irish, or will we be ethnically and culturally cleansed? Will we still be a bastion of white Christianity or a politically correct unstable state ruled by the immigrants' children?

It's time to wake up, Mr Ahern - we cannot absorb such mass immigration that the likes of Britain and France can.

MARTIN McHUGH, Dublin.

Murder, not abortion

I READ with horror and disgust about Abortion: The Legacy (Mail).

Perhaps a more appropriate headline would have been Abortion: The Culture of Death or Abortion: The Killing Fields.

The article also included photographs of nine women wearing T-shirts proclaiming to the world, 'I had an abortion'. I would have thought that these women would be ashamed of this dastardly deed and try to hide it.

We can't sit on fence in fight against crime

Surely they should have also included the following sad facts: 'I am a murderess, I killed my own baby. I participated in the slaughter of the innocents.' I still cannot understand how any loving mother could carry out such a horrific act against her own body.

It beggars belief.

I hope and pray that these women will be able to meet Almighty God on Judgment Day with a clear conscience.

Abortion is an abomination. As the late Mother Teresa said: 'The greatest destroyer of peace today is the crime against the innocent unborn child.'

JOHN BRENNAN, Kilkenny.

Forgotten counties

WHY does RT never broadcast programmes about Cavan or Monaghan? Donegal and Cork seem to monopolise the TV screens and the airwaves. In fact, every second programme on TV is about Donegal. Apart from Donegal, the only counties ever mentioned are the Munster counties - with an occasional reference to Galway.

Cavan and Monaghan are the forgotten counties. No factory or industry is directed there and, according to TV and radio, we do not exist. Yet we pay our television licence the same as Donegal and Cork.

I often think we would have done a lot better if we had been included in Northern Ireland, at least we would have got some consideration there. I would like to ask RT to kindly do a series of programmes about Cavan and Monaghan.

I was born in Cavan and very many Cavan people to whom I have spoken have voiced the same sentiments.

KIERAN SMYTH, Kildare Town, Co. Kildare.

Circuses can be cruel

IF ONLY people who go to see the circus would spare a thought for the miserable life the animals have.

Forced to do acts to entertain the public, with cruelty involved in their training.

Most zoos and wildlife parks take proper care of the animals so they have some sort of 'natural' life in captivity.

In Britain lots of the circuses phased out animal acts as people became more aware of what goes on behind the scenes.

So please give some thought before you decide to take your children to a circus. Let's have circuses by all means, but without the animal acts.

Name and address supplied.

Fruitful inquiry?

WE'RE told that Scottish horticulturalists Cameron and Moira Thomson have made barren land bloom with outsized fruit by spreading a special mixture on their garden terraces (Mail).

It's made from fine rock dust hauled from a nearby quarry and compost made from green waste by Dundee City Council. Is this rock dust for sale to the public in Ireland (north or south of the border)?

DENIS JACKMAN, Wexford.

What do YOU think?

We can't sit on fence in fight against crime

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POINT Straight to the

OF COURSE children's dislike for greens is genetic (Mail)!

Where does a Brussels sprout get its foul taste if not from mammy and daddy Brussels sprout?

DAVE McCANN, Dundalk, Co. Louth.

SO SHELL plans to move its Corrib gas pipeline 200m further away from the Rossport houses.

Why couldn't it have done that in the first place? And will the company now refund the state the cost of keeping the Rossport Five in jail all that time?

MARK CONNOLLY, Castlebar, Co. Mayo.

HOWcan we be sure that Paul McKenna didn't just hypnotise the judge in his recent libel case against the Mirror?

RITA McDONNELL, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

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Body

"Every dogma has its day."

- Abraham Rotstein

"America! America! God mend thine ev'ry flaw;

Confirm thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law! (italics added)

- Katharine Lee Bates, "America The Beautiful" (1893)

Whether or not the Republicans lose control of one or both houses of the U.S. Congress on Tuesday, the neo-conservative vision that has guided American foreign policy since 2001 has run its course. The neo-cons' grand design lies in ruins, having accomplished nothing other than to shrink America's stature in the world.

The great unwinding of the American "benign global hegemony" first heralded by neo-cons William Kristol and Robert Kagan in 1996 will commence after the election, when America's political leadership will abandon Iraq and the neo-cons.

The neo-cons' starting point, of course, was the Americanization of Iraq - the "easy win" that would trigger rogue states from the Middle East to the Korean peninsula to fall in line with American values of capitalism, democracy and pro-Israel policies.

But the Iraq conflict has proved unwinnable. And as handmaidens to a \$300-billion (U.S.) catastrophe in Iraq that has cost the lives of at least 400,000 Iraqis and almost 3,000 American soldiers, and which ranks as the worst American foreign-policy disaster since Vietnam, the neo-cons have irretrievably lost their credibility.

By Christmas or soon thereafter, a White House that has run out of options on Iraq will begin to cut and run, pronouncing favourably on an exit plan that is now in the final stages of completion by a team led by James Baker, former U.S. secretary of state and a close friend of the Bush family, and Lee Hamilton, a respected former congressman and Democrat who co-chaired the 9/11 Commission.

Having already scrapped his Iraq mantra of "stay the course" late last month, U.S. President George W. Bush will adopt the most substantive points of the Baker-Hamilton blueprint for extricating America from the Iraq quagmire with as much dignity as possible. Baker, despised by the neo-cons for his nuanced, diplomatic approach to geopolitics, has already indicated that the options under consideration by his team are all variations of withdrawal.

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The only questions are how rapidly the Americans will leave, and which honeyed words the Bush administration will use in trying to dress up failure as success.

Withdrawal from Iraq can't come a moment too soon for a Republican Party paying a heavy price for allowing itself to be hijacked by one of the most naive world views to come down the pike since Henry Ford chartered a shipload of peace activists and set sail for Europe in 1915. There isn't a Republican drawing breath, war hawk John McCain included, who wants to campaign in 2008 on a diplomatic and military horror show produced and directed by a Republican White House and a GOP-controlled Congress.

How long it takes for the neo-cons' influence to shrivel up completely is a matter of speculation, of course. Their clubhouse, the American Enterprise Institute, isn't in trouble with its landlord yet. William Kristol, son of neo-con godhead Irving Kristol and "Dan Quayle's brain" as chief-of-staff to the former vice-president, remains editor of Rupert Murdoch's Weekly Standard, the club's newsletter, and a ubiquitous talking head despite his role as the galvanizing force of a bankrupt theology.

And barring regime change at The Wall Street Journal, space will continue to be found on its extremist editorial pages for the hectoring of neo-cons Paul Wolfowitz, David Frum, Richard Perle, Doug Feith, Max Boot, Charles Krauthammer, Elliott Abrams, Ken Adelman, James Woolsey, Michael Ledeen, Christopher Hitchens and neo-con-sympathizers Michael Ignatieff, Naill Ferguson and Margaret MacMillan.

But the neo-cons got a taste of things to come when Kristol appeared on a National Public Radio panel in late July with Gen. William Odom (ret.). Kristol, the first and probably last magazine editor to help spearhead American foreign policy, was arguing for a hard line against Hezbollah in the midst of another U.S. foreign-policy debacle, the civilian deaths and \$3.6-billion (U.S.) worth of property damage the Israeli Defence Forces managed to inflict on Lebanon with White House encouragement. When it was his turn to speak, Odom was beside himself:

"Mr. Kristol certainly wants to make (Lebanon) our war," Odom said. "He's the man with remarkable moral clarity. He tends to forget the clarity he had on getting us into the mess in Mesopotamia. I think if you look at his record, you'd wonder why anybody would allow him to speak publicly anymore."

Among Republicans, the knives are out for their former neo-conservative comrades in arms, including Donald Rumsfeld, the U.S. secretary who was one of the original signatories, in 1997, of the neo-cons' founding playbook, Kristol's Project for the New American Century, along with fellow travellers Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, Lewis Libby, and a dozen or so other future members of the Bush II administration. There's no novelty in the recent calls for the removal of Rumsfeld, described recently by The Economist as "responsible for having needlessly alienated more former friends of the United States than any other instrument since the invention of the B-52 bomber." Nothing new except that Republicans candidates have joined the dump-Rumsfeld chorus, and party regulars seldom embarrass their leader in the midst of an election campaign by openly questioning the composition of his cabinet. That's how desperate Republicans are for at least the impression of change.

Rumsfeld, erstwhile chief salesman for the artificial sweetener Aspartame, holds one geopolitical idea, and one that is wrong - that wars can be won with technological wizardry alone. Hence Rumsfeld's under-deployment of troops that doomed the neo-cons' Iraq reinvention mission from the start. About which Rumsfeld is witheringly unapologetic. That's a trait shared with most of Rummy's fellow neo-cons, and which once came off as admirably principled conviction. It now strikes the 60 per cent of American poll respondents who disagree with the conduct of the war in Iraq as rank stupidity.

"The principal sin of the neo-conservatives is overbearing arrogance," says David Keene, chairman of the American Conservative Union. Like his counterparts at the Cato Institute, the Club for Growth, and other conservative think tanks preoccupied with tax cuts and fiscal probity, Keene is unhappy that his agenda has been turned on its head since 2001 by a fiscally ruinous neo-con revival of an old idea - that of American foreign-policy "exceptionalism."

Under the influence of neo-cons like Cheney, who has privately said that deficits don't matter, America has endured six years of runaway spending by a GOP-controlled Congress and a near-doubling in the congressionally approved debt ceiling since Bill Clinton left office, to \$9 trillion (U.S.).

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Of the ongoing disaster in Iraq, neo-con agitator David Frum gamely argued recently that, "The war has to be seen through the prism of Hurricane Katrina," alluding to the incompetence that earned Bush the distinction of being the first president to lose a great American city through sheer passivity. "Conservatives will support a tough war if they are confident in the war's management."

Frum echoes Michael Ignatieff, who, like many liberal hawks on Iraq in 2002-03, has since taken refuge in the proposition that no one could have foreseen that "the Americans in Iraq would make every mistake possible." Could not, that is, have foreseen that an Iraq occupation might be botched by a nation with the Bay of Pigs, Vietnam and the Iran-Contra scandal on its record; that by choice lacks the peacekeeping and other skills associated with successful occupations; and is led by a chief executive who arrived at the presidency with a declared aversion to nation-building. "We'll let our friends be the peacekeepers," candidate Bush said in a Houston speech on Sept. 16, 2000, "and the great country called America will be the pacemakers [sic]."

Let it not be said the neo-cons are without a legacy, despite the brief zenith of their influence.

Long after the days of "The smoking gun might come in the form of a mushroom cloud," "Shock and awe," "Mission accomplished" and "Bring 'em on" are mercifully past, historians will chronicle an early 21st-century America so distracted from its real enemy that Osama bin Laden and even the perpetrators of the 2001 anthrax attacks against Congressional leaders are still at large.

An America, too, whose diplomatic influence has cratered, due not only to the unilateral belligerence with which America went to war in Iraq, but also the incompetence subsequently exposed in almost every particular of its Iraq occupation: intelligence breakdowns; acrimonious relations between the civilian and military U.S. occupation leadership; rampant theft by contractors; and the failure to provide Iraqis with security, power, fresh water and other essentials even now, 43 months after the invasion. The resulting diplomatic void has been filled by China and Russia, now resisting U.S. calls for their imposition of sanctions against North Korea and Iran, respectively.

There also is the blighting of America's self-image as a champion of human rights, with U.S.-sanctioned torture of terrorist suspects Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Canadian citizen Maher Arar, and countless other detainees at Guantanamo Bay, at the network of covert CIA detention centres across Europe and the Middle East, and at Saddam Hussein's notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, reopened by U.S. forces to warehouse thousands of Iraqi citizens roused from their homes in random sweeps. Bush's repeated lie that "America does not do torture" merely compounds the current distrust of the United States.

And there is the discredited state of American conservatism, which has allowed neo-cons to trade away its electoral trump cards of perceived superiority over Democrats in foreign policy, national security and balancing the books. Infighting between the secular neo-cons and the GOP base of fiscal hawks and evangelical Christians will intensify after the expected Republican losses on Tuesday. And that will likely thwart Bush counsellor Karl Rove's ambition to make the GOP the permanent U.S. governing party.

Finally, there are the consequences of America's certain failure in Iraq.

Apart from the crisis of the boat-people evacuees, the fall of Saigon was not cataclysmic. Having achieved its goal of being left alone, Vietnam now peddles its wares at Wal-Mart and extends a warm greeting to American corporate investors.

The aftermath for Iraq, located in the world's most volatile region, will be a different story. Lacking the cultural homogeneity of Vietnam, Iraq may eat itself alive as at least a dozen ethnic enclaves nursing centuries-old grievances struggle for dominance or self-preservation. The chaos could infect neighbours, as Kurdish nationalists lay a more assertive claim to Kurdish regions of Turkey and Iran, and Shiites aligned with Tehran battle Shia factions loyal to Iraq.

Repeated U.S. State Department warnings about the obvious parallel between the humanitarian crisis in the Balkans after the death of strongman Josip Broz Tito and the break-up of Yugoslavia and the potential for anarchy

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after the removal of Saddam Hussein were brushed aside by Cheney, Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld, the central actors pushing for Saddam's rushed downfall.

Lifting the lid on that cauldron might eventually have been advisable. The aging Saddam wasn't going to rule forever. But doing so after rejecting elaborate plans from the State Department and other branches of the administration for a peaceful, multilateral occupation of Iraq amounts to something of a war crime. Rather than pacify the Middle East, as they intended, the neo-cons have managed to further destabilize it.

The chief hope now for Iraq is that, after 87 years of existence, Iraqi nationalism is a sufficiently potent force to prevail over sectarian rivalry, and that a respected central government emerges to secure the peace, rebuild a social and transportation infrastructure ravaged by three wars since 1980, and ensure an equitable distribution of oil wealth among 28.8 million Iraqis. And that a truly multilateral coalition emerges to help make those things happen.

For the purposes of this essay, neo-conservatism refers not to domestic policy; nor is it a global concept. Strictly speaking, "neo-conservatism" is a distinctly U.S. phenomenon calling for the projection of U.S. values worldwide, premised in an American belief in its moral authority that reaches back to the Founding Fathers. In the words of pamphleteer Thomas Paine, arguably the first neo-con: "The cause of America is in great measure the cause of all mankind."

By the time Katharine Lee Bates, a teacher at Wellesley, the women's liberal arts college near Boston, was inspired by a train trip through the Great Plains to write her ode to America, her young nation already had deployed military forces to more than 30 countries, including neighbouring Canada and far-flung Egypt, the Philippines, Uruguay and Formosa.

The smug moral superiority of which Canadians are accused on occasions when they dissent from U.S. foreign policy has nothing on Americans' self-regard as upholders of supreme moral authority in the world. As President William McKinley explained, in justifying the occupation of the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico and other spoils of war captured from the Spanish at the dawn of the 20th century, "there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died."

In the latest iteration of American exceptionalism, manifested by today's neo-cons, "American hegemony is the only reliable defence against a breakdown of peace and international order." So wrote Kristol and Kagan in their seminal 1996 essay in Foreign Affairs magazine.

Or, more crudely, "We need to be more assertive and stop letting all these two-bit dictators and rogue regimes push us around and stop being a patsy for our so-called allies, especially in Saudi Arabia," said neo-con Max Boot, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, just prior to the Iraq invasion.

Or, more crudely still, "Every 10 years or so, the United States needs to pick up some small, crappy, little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business," said neo-con Michael Ledeen in an American Enterprise Institute forum.

While Kristol's Weekly Standard endorsed the worldly war hero John McCain for the presidency in 2000, the neo-cons were far luckier in the selection, by five justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, of George W. Bush, an empty vessel who knew less about the conventions of foreign policy than his well-travelled father had forgotten.

"Bush had a poor memory for facts and figures," Frum recalled following his abrupt departure from Bush's speechwriting shop after his authorship of "axis of hatred" (later modified to "axis of evil" by chief speechwriter Michael Gerson) was revealed to a wide network of friends by a spouse untutored in the cardinal rule of speechwriting (anonymity). "Fire a question at (Bush) about the specifics of his administration's policies," Frum said, "and he often appeared uncertain. Nobody would ever enrol him in a quiz show."

A delighted Richard Perle, a 30-year veteran of the Pentagon and a foreign-policy adviser on Bush's 2000-01 transition team, was equally blunt: "The first time I met Bush," he said, "two things became clear. One, he didn't

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know very much. The other was that he had the confidence to ask questions that revealed he didn't know very much."

That ignorance has been the neo-cons' undoing. Their vision might have survived the failure of its first test - in Afghanistan, where a resurgent Taliban is now spreading its influence in the south - but not the spectacular encore in Iraq, where an Iraqi middle class that initially welcomed Saddam's fall is now contemptuous of American occupiers who cannot provide them with more than two-and-a-half hours of electricity per day or end the sectarian firefights that keep many Iraqis from venturing to work or school.

Factual ignorance is a recurring neo-con theme, such as when aides to the new president were surprised to discover that the former Texas governor did not know the difference between Medicare and Medicaid, two of America's three largest government programs. Later, as planning for the Iraq invasion was getting underway, it would have to be explained to the decider-in-chief that Iraq was culturally divided among groups known as Shia, Sunni and Kurds.

Dick Cheney, whose knowledge of arms-control policy is limited to his belief that it is a form of appeasement, was tapping long-dormant brain cells in August 2002 when he asserted that, "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction." Wolfowitz, a defence-policy veteran with no background in global oil production, should similarly have been asked on what authority he claimed, days before the invasion in March 2003, that Iraq's oil revenues would pay for the neo-cons' Iraq rehabilitation project. "We're dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction, and relatively soon," Wolfowitz said at that time.

Any expert in global oil politics could have informed the administration (and a credulous media) that after more than a decade of sanctions and Saddam's own neglect of Iraq's petroleum wealth (the dictator pumped enough oil to finance his army and 19 mansions, and not much more), Iraq's oil infrastructure was held together with reconditioned parts of 1950s vintage and was almost as degraded as Saddam's military prowess. Even assuming the absence of postwar insurgents who persistently targeted Iraq's oil wellheads and pipelines, billions of foreign dollars and at least a decade's time would have been required to modernize Iraqi oil and gas production to the point where it could meaningfully contribute to the rebuilding of Iraq - the world's largest oil-reserves holder where motorists must queue for imported gasoline.

As national security advisor in the new administration, future secretary of state Condoleezza Rice also suffered a knowledge deficit in matters most directly affecting her job. Richard Clarke, chief White House counter-terrorism advisor and a holdover from the Clinton administration, was taken aback in early 2001 to learn that Rice had never heard of Al Qaeda.

The former Stanford University provost is a student of Russian affairs, not a policy area of over-arching value when America's chief concern is violent expressions of Islamic fundamentalism. Given Rice's paucity of Middle East expertise, she was easily overpowered by Cheney, Wolfowitz, Libby, and other administration neo-cons who disdained both the CIA and the State Department as being, in their view, woefully behind the curve on Middle East political dynamics.

That's the context in which Rice, in her daily briefing of Bush aboard Air Force One en route to Crawford, Tex. on Aug. 6, 2001, counselled her boss not to read too much into that day's CIA report, entitled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in U.S." It's why the president's national-security gatekeeper filtered out dozens of reports from the CIA and elsewhere in the administration throughout the spring and summer of that fateful year warning of a sudden spike in Al Qaeda activity.

On his last day in office, in the traditional meeting between retiring and incoming presidents, Clinton identified Al Qaeda to Bush as America's most pressing foreign-policy challenge. Yet later that same month, January 2001, Rice themed the first National Security Council meeting of the Bush presidency on the topic of "how Iraq is destabilizing the [Middle East] region." It was, to be sure, a Lewis Carroll moment, given that Iran and Saudi Arabia were widely known to be the region's leading exporters of terror. (The former bankrolls Hezbollah; the latter is homeland to bin Laden and 15 of the 19 hijackers of 9/11, who derived their astonishingly modest \$500,000 in Sept. 11 costs largely from Saudi backers.) Saddam, meanwhile, was a conspicuously weak pan-Arab laughingstock, having been bested

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in his eight-year war with Iran in the 1980s and by the U.S.-led coalition that drove him out of Kuwait in the Gulf War.

David Frum has said more than once that if Bush had not promptly launched a conventional war in the aftermath of 9/11, the president would have been ridden out of D.C. on a rail - a view shared by doves and hawks alike. ("Declare war on somebody! It doesn't matter what country," was Kagan's reaction to 9/11.) But it's not true. The job called for old-fashioned detective work. America's only unalloyed victory since 9/11 the dispersal of Al Qaeda's network with the capture of many of its leaders - resulted from methodical intelligence gathering, and especially from the collaboration of American intel experts and a 155-year-old enterprise known as Western Union, whose interception of financial transactions by Al Qaeda and other terrorist operatives mapped the identity, location, and planned activities of entire networks of terrorist cells.

Come Wednesday, a Democratic-controlled House or Senate invested with subpoena power might begin, finally, to learn if the Bush administration was simply asleep at the switch prior to 9/11, or whether it deliberately chose to ignore a terrorist threat it didn't understand in favour of Iraq, a conventional target that suited its neo-conservative agenda.

Some supporters got off the neo-conservative bus earlier than others. The entire staff of liberal hawks at The New Republic endorsed John Kerry in 2004 and agonized in print over their misplaced faith in both Bush and the neo-con agenda. And that grand old man of American conservatism, William F. Buckley, conceded in an interview the same year with his long-time nemesis The New York Times that, "With the benefit of minute hindsight, Saddam Hussein wasn't the kind of extraterrestrial menace that was assumed by the administration one year ago. If I knew then what I know now about what kind of situation we would be in, I would have opposed the war."

In his new book, *After the Neocons*, apostate Francis (The End of History) Fukuyama, another original signer of Kristol's Project for a New American Century manifesto, publicly turned in his neo-con membership card. He was prompted to do so, he reports, after listening to a 2004 speech by Charles Krauthammer, the McGill-educated syndicated columnist and probably the last trained psychiatrist who will ever be mistaken by media peers as being invested with foreign-policy gravitas. In that speech, the irrepressible Iraq War shill described the mounting chaos in Iraq as a nearly unqualified success. Neo-conservatism, Fukuyama concluded, "has evolved into something I can no longer support."

As in Somalia, Haiti, Angola, the Philippines and Vietnam, where about four million Vietnamese died during the French and American military interventions of 1954-1975, the United States in Iraq will leave behind a mess. That has too often been the American way (the U.S.'s post-WWII occupations of Germany, Italy and Japan notably excepted): Invade. Make a bad situation worse. Leave. All with the best of intentions.

Harry Truman's foreign policy was unquestionably robust. Yet the Missourian understood that even a superpower benefits from self-restraint. Addressing the UN's founding convention in San Francisco in 1945, Truman said: "We all have to recognize - no matter how great our strength - that we must deny ourselves the licence to do always as we please."

No reasonable person would urge a return to the U.S. isolationism that characterized the GOP as recently as the 1990s. When not under the sway of a Robert McNamara or Dick Cheney, America is indeed the "indispensable nation" of Bill Clinton's description. And Clinton proved it more than once by ending a Balkans genocide after years of dawdling by European powers, bailing out Mexico after a short-lived peso crisis, and brokering peace in Northern Ireland and East Timor.

It's possible that, after its humbling in Iraq, America will retreat into itself instead of rejoining the community of nations and the pursuit of truly consensual solutions to the crises of global injustice, impoverishment and environmental degradation.

In that case, the neo-cons will have earned their place in one of the inner circles of hell.

Graphic

HELMİY AL AZAWI reuters Another day, another attack: a doctor treats a wounded Iraqi civilian near Baghdad last Wednesday. HELMIY AL AZAWI reuters Another day, another attack: a doctor treats a wounded Iraqi civilian near Baghdad last Wednesday.

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THE END OF THE NEO-CONS Undone by their ignorance

The Toronto Star

November 5, 2006 Sunday

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Body

"Every dogma has its day."

- Abraham Rotstein

"America! America! God mend thine ev'ry flaw;

Confirm thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law! (italics added)

- Katharine Lee Bates, "America The Beautiful" (1893)

Whether or not the Republicans lose control of one or both houses of the U.S. Congress on Tuesday, the neo-conservative vision that has guided American foreign policy since 2001 has run its course. The neo-cons' grand design lies in ruins, having accomplished nothing other than to shrink America's stature in the world.

The great unwinding of the American "benign global hegemony" first heralded by neo-cons William Kristol and Robert Kagan in 1996 will commence after the election, when America's political leadership will abandon Iraq and the neo-cons.

The neo-cons' starting point, of course, was the Americanization of Iraq - the "easy win" that would trigger rogue states from the Middle East to the Korean peninsula to fall in line with American values of capitalism, democracy and pro-Israel policies.

But the Iraq conflict has proved unwinnable. And as handmaidens to a \$300-billion (U.S.) catastrophe in Iraq that has cost the lives of at least 400,000 Iraqis and almost 3,000 American soldiers, and which ranks as the worst American foreign-policy disaster since Vietnam, the neo-cons have irretrievably lost their credibility.

By Christmas or soon thereafter, a White House that has run out of options on Iraq will begin to cut and run, pronouncing favourably on an exit plan that is now in the final stages of completion by a team led by James Baker, former U.S. secretary of state and a close friend of the Bush family, and Lee Hamilton, a respected former congressman and Democrat who co-chaired the 9/11 Commission.

Having already scrapped his Iraq mantra of "stay the course" late last month, U.S. President George W. Bush will adopt the most substantive points of the Baker-Hamilton blueprint for extricating America from the Iraq quagmire with as much dignity as possible. Baker, despised by the neo-cons for his nuanced, diplomatic approach to geopolitics, has already indicated that the options under consideration by his team are all variations of withdrawal.

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The only questions are how rapidly the Americans will leave, and which honeyed words the Bush administration will use in trying to dress up failure as success.

Withdrawal from Iraq can't come a moment too soon for a Republican Party paying a heavy price for allowing itself to be hijacked by one of the most naive world views to come down the pike since Henry Ford chartered a shipload of peace activists and set sail for Europe in 1915. There isn't a Republican drawing breath, war hawk John McCain included, who wants to campaign in 2008 on a diplomatic and military horror show produced and directed by a Republican White House and a GOP-controlled Congress.

How long it takes for the neo-cons' influence to shrivel up completely is a matter of speculation, of course. Their clubhouse, the American Enterprise Institute, isn't in trouble with its landlord yet. William Kristol, son of neo-con godhead Irving Kristol and "Dan Quayle's brain" as chief-of-staff to the former vice-president, remains editor of Rupert Murdoch's Weekly Standard, the club's newsletter, and a ubiquitous talking head despite his role as the galvanizing force of a bankrupt theology.

And barring regime change at The Wall Street Journal, space will continue to be found on its extremist editorial pages for the hectoring of neo-cons Paul Wolfowitz, David Frum, Richard Perle, Doug Feith, Max Boot, Charles Krauthammer, Elliott Abrams, Ken Adelman, James Woolsey, Michael Ledeen, Christopher Hitchens and neo-con-sympathizers Michael Ignatieff, Naill Ferguson and Margaret MacMillan.

But the neo-cons got a taste of things to come when Kristol appeared on a National Public Radio panel in late July with Gen. William Odom (ret.). Kristol, the first and probably last magazine editor to help spearhead American foreign policy, was arguing for a hard line against Hezbollah in the midst of another U.S. foreign-policy debacle, the civilian deaths and \$3.6-billion (U.S.) worth of property damage the Israeli Defence Forces managed to inflict on Lebanon with White House encouragement. When it was his turn to speak, Odom was beside himself:

"Mr. Kristol certainly wants to make (Lebanon) our war," Odom said. "He's the man with remarkable moral clarity. He tends to forget the clarity he had on getting us into the mess in Mesopotamia. I think if you look at his record, you'd wonder why anybody would allow him to speak publicly anymore."

Among Republicans, the knives are out for their former neo-conservative comrades in arms, including Donald Rumsfeld, the U.S. secretary who was one of the original signatories, in 1997, of the neo-cons' founding playbook, Kristol's Project for the New American Century, along with fellow travellers Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, Lewis Libby, and a dozen or so other future members of the Bush II administration. There's no novelty in the recent calls for the removal of Rumsfeld, described recently by The Economist as "responsible for having needlessly alienated more former friends of the United States than any other instrument since the invention of the B-52 bomber." Nothing new except that Republicans candidates have joined the dump-Rumsfeld chorus, and party regulars seldom embarrass their leader in the midst of an election campaign by openly questioning the composition of his cabinet. That's how desperate Republicans are for at least the impression of change.

Rumsfeld, erstwhile chief salesman for the artificial sweetener Aspartame, holds one geopolitical idea, and one that is wrong - that wars can be won with technological wizardry alone. Hence Rumsfeld's under-deployment of troops that doomed the neo-cons' Iraq reinvention mission from the start. About which Rumsfeld is witheringly unapologetic. That's a trait shared with most of Rummy's fellow neo-cons, and which once came off as admirably principled conviction. It now strikes the 60 per cent of American poll respondents who disagree with the conduct of the war in Iraq as rank stupidity.

"The principal sin of the neo-conservatives is overbearing arrogance," says David Keene, chairman of the American Conservative Union. Like his counterparts at the Cato Institute, the Club for Growth, and other conservative think tanks preoccupied with tax cuts and fiscal probity, Keene is unhappy that his agenda has been turned on its head since 2001 by a fiscally ruinous neo-con revival of an old idea - that of American foreign-policy "exceptionalism."

Under the influence of neo-cons like Cheney, who has privately said that deficits don't matter, America has endured six years of runaway spending by a GOP-controlled Congress and a near-doubling in the congressionally approved debt ceiling since Bill Clinton left office, to \$9 trillion (U.S.).

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Of the ongoing disaster in Iraq, neo-con agitator David Frum gamely argued recently that, "The war has to be seen through the prism of Hurricane Katrina," alluding to the incompetence that earned Bush the distinction of being the first president to lose a great American city through sheer passivity. "Conservatives will support a tough war if they are confident in the war's management."

Frum echoes Michael Ignatieff, who, like many liberal hawks on Iraq in 2002-03, has since taken refuge in the proposition that no one could have foreseen that "the Americans in Iraq would make every mistake possible." Could not, that is, have foreseen that an Iraq occupation might be botched by a nation with the Bay of Pigs, Vietnam and the Iran-Contra scandal on its record; that by choice lacks the peacekeeping and other skills associated with successful occupations; and is led by a chief executive who arrived at the presidency with a declared aversion to nation-building. "We'll let our friends be the peacekeepers," candidate Bush said in a Houston speech on Sept. 16, 2000, "and the great country called America will be the pacemakers [sic]."

Let it not be said the neo-cons are without a legacy, despite the brief zenith of their influence.

Long after the days of "The smoking gun might come in the form of a mushroom cloud," "Shock and awe," "Mission accomplished" and "Bring 'em on" are mercifully past, historians will chronicle an early 21st-century America so distracted from its real enemy that Osama bin Laden and even the perpetrators of the 2001 anthrax attacks against Congressional leaders are still at large.

An America, too, whose diplomatic influence has cratered, due not only to the unilateral belligerence with which America went to war in Iraq, but also the incompetence subsequently exposed in almost every particular of its Iraq occupation: intelligence breakdowns; acrimonious relations between the civilian and military U.S. occupation leadership; rampant theft by contractors; and the failure to provide Iraqis with security, power, fresh water and other essentials even now, 43 months after the invasion. The resulting diplomatic void has been filled by China and Russia, now resisting U.S. calls for their imposition of sanctions against North Korea and Iran, respectively.

There also is the blighting of America's self-image as a champion of human rights, with U.S.-sanctioned torture of terrorist suspects Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Canadian citizen Maher Arar, and countless other detainees at Guantanamo Bay, at the network of covert CIA detention centres across Europe and the Middle East, and at Saddam Hussein's notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, reopened by U.S. forces to warehouse thousands of Iraqi citizens roused from their homes in random sweeps. Bush's repeated lie that "America does not do torture" merely compounds the current distrust of the United States.

And there is the discredited state of American conservatism, which has allowed neo-cons to trade away its electoral trump cards of perceived superiority over Democrats in foreign policy, national security and balancing the books. Infighting between the secular neo-cons and the GOP base of fiscal hawks and evangelical Christians will intensify after the expected Republican losses on Tuesday. And that will likely thwart Bush counsellor Karl Rove's ambition to make the GOP the permanent U.S. governing party.

Finally, there are the consequences of America's certain failure in Iraq.

Apart from the crisis of the boat-people evacuees, the fall of Saigon was not cataclysmic. Having achieved its goal of being left alone, Vietnam now peddles its wares at Wal-Mart and extends a warm greeting to American corporate investors.

The aftermath for Iraq, located in the world's most volatile region, will be a different story. Lacking the cultural homogeneity of Vietnam, Iraq may eat itself alive as at least a dozen ethnic enclaves nursing centuries-old grievances struggle for dominance or self-preservation. The chaos could infect neighbours, as Kurdish nationalists lay a more assertive claim to Kurdish regions of Turkey and Iran, and Shiites aligned with Tehran battle Shia factions loyal to Iraq.

Repeated U.S. State Department warnings about the obvious parallel between the humanitarian crisis in the Balkans after the death of strongman Josip Broz Tito and the break-up of Yugoslavia and the potential for anarchy

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after the removal of Saddam Hussein were brushed aside by Cheney, Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld, the central actors pushing for Saddam's rushed downfall.

Lifting the lid on that cauldron might eventually have been advisable. The aging Saddam wasn't going to rule forever. But doing so after rejecting elaborate plans from the State Department and other branches of the administration for a peaceful, multilateral occupation of Iraq amounts to something of a war crime. Rather than pacify the Middle East, as they intended, the neo-cons have managed to further destabilize it.

The chief hope now for Iraq is that, after 87 years of existence, Iraqi nationalism is a sufficiently potent force to prevail over sectarian rivalry, and that a respected central government emerges to secure the peace, rebuild a social and transportation infrastructure ravaged by three wars since 1980, and ensure an equitable distribution of oil wealth among 28.8 million Iraqis. And that a truly multilateral coalition emerges to help make those things happen.

For the purposes of this essay, neo-conservatism refers not to domestic policy; nor is it a global concept. Strictly speaking, "neo-conservatism" is a distinctly U.S. phenomenon calling for the projection of U.S. values worldwide, premised in an American belief in its moral authority that reaches back to the Founding Fathers. In the words of pamphleteer Thomas Paine, arguably the first neo-con: "The cause of America is in great measure the cause of all mankind."

By the time Katharine Lee Bates, a teacher at Wellesley, the women's liberal arts college near Boston, was inspired by a train trip through the Great Plains to write her ode to America, her young nation already had deployed military forces to more than 30 countries, including neighbouring Canada and far-flung Egypt, the Philippines, Uruguay and Formosa.

The smug moral superiority of which Canadians are accused on occasions when they dissent from U.S. foreign policy has nothing on Americans' self-regard as upholders of supreme moral authority in the world. As President William McKinley explained, in justifying the occupation of the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico and other spoils of war captured from the Spanish at the dawn of the 20th century, "there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died."

In the latest iteration of American exceptionalism, manifested by today's neo-cons, "American hegemony is the only reliable defence against a breakdown of peace and international order." So wrote Kristol and Kagan in their seminal 1996 essay in Foreign Affairs magazine.

Or, more crudely, "We need to be more assertive and stop letting all these two-bit dictators and rogue regimes push us around and stop being a patsy for our so-called allies, especially in Saudi Arabia," said neo-con Max Boot, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, just prior to the Iraq invasion.

Or, more crudely still, "Every 10 years or so, the United States needs to pick up some small, crappy, little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business," said neo-con Michael Ledeen in an American Enterprise Institute forum.

While Kristol's Weekly Standard endorsed the worldly war hero John McCain for the presidency in 2000, the neo-cons were far luckier in the selection, by five justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, of George W. Bush, an empty vessel who knew less about the conventions of foreign policy than his well-travelled father had forgotten.

"Bush had a poor memory for facts and figures," Frum recalled following his abrupt departure from Bush's speechwriting shop after his authorship of "axis of hatred" (later modified to "axis of evil" by chief speechwriter Michael Gerson) was revealed to a wide network of friends by a spouse untutored in the cardinal rule of speechwriting (anonymity). "Fire a question at (Bush) about the specifics of his administration's policies," Frum said, "and he often appeared uncertain. Nobody would ever enrol him in a quiz show."

A delighted Richard Perle, a 30-year veteran of the Pentagon and a foreign-policy adviser on Bush's 2000-01 transition team, was equally blunt: "The first time I met Bush," he said, "two things became clear. One, he didn't

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know very much. The other was that he had the confidence to ask questions that revealed he didn't know very much."

That ignorance has been the neo-cons' undoing. Their vision might have survived the failure of its first test - in Afghanistan, where a resurgent Taliban is now spreading its influence in the south - but not the spectacular encore in Iraq, where an Iraqi middle class that initially welcomed Saddam's fall is now contemptuous of American occupiers who cannot provide them with more than two-and-a-half hours of electricity per day or end the sectarian firefights that keep many Iraqis from venturing to work or school.

Factual ignorance is a recurring neo-con theme, such as when aides to the new president were surprised to discover that the former Texas governor did not know the difference between Medicare and Medicaid, two of America's three largest government programs. Later, as planning for the Iraq invasion was getting underway, it would have to be explained to the decider-in-chief that Iraq was culturally divided among groups known as Shia, Sunni and Kurds.

Dick Cheney, whose knowledge of arms-control policy is limited to his belief that it is a form of appeasement, was tapping long-dormant brain cells in August 2002 when he asserted that, "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction." Wolfowitz, a defence-policy veteran with no background in global oil production, should similarly have been asked on what authority he claimed, days before the invasion in March 2003, that Iraq's oil revenues would pay for the neo-cons' Iraq rehabilitation project. "We're dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction, and relatively soon," Wolfowitz said at that time.

Any expert in global oil politics could have informed the administration (and a credulous media) that after more than a decade of sanctions and Saddam's own neglect of Iraq's petroleum wealth (the dictator pumped enough oil to finance his army and 19 mansions, and not much more), Iraq's oil infrastructure was held together with reconditioned parts of 1950s vintage and was almost as degraded as Saddam's military prowess. Even assuming the absence of postwar insurgents who persistently targeted Iraq's oil wellheads and pipelines, billions of foreign dollars and at least a decade's time would have been required to modernize Iraqi oil and gas production to the point where it could meaningfully contribute to the rebuilding of Iraq - the world's largest oil-reserves holder where motorists must queue for imported gasoline.

As national security advisor in the new administration, future secretary of state Condoleezza Rice also suffered a knowledge deficit in matters most directly affecting her job. Richard Clarke, chief White House counter-terrorism advisor and a holdover from the Clinton administration, was taken aback in early 2001 to learn that Rice had never heard of Al Qaeda.

The former Stanford University provost is a student of Russian affairs, not a policy area of over-arching value when America's chief concern is violent expressions of Islamic fundamentalism. Given Rice's paucity of Middle East expertise, she was easily overpowered by Cheney, Wolfowitz, Libby, and other administration neo-cons who disdained both the CIA and the State Department as being, in their view, woefully behind the curve on Middle East political dynamics.

That's the context in which Rice, in her daily briefing of Bush aboard Air Force One en route to Crawford, Tex. on Aug. 6, 2001, counselled her boss not to read too much into that day's CIA report, entitled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in U.S." It's why the president's national-security gatekeeper filtered out dozens of reports from the CIA and elsewhere in the administration throughout the spring and summer of that fateful year warning of a sudden spike in Al Qaeda activity.

On his last day in office, in the traditional meeting between retiring and incoming presidents, Clinton identified Al Qaeda to Bush as America's most pressing foreign-policy challenge. Yet later that same month, January 2001, Rice themed the first National Security Council meeting of the Bush presidency on the topic of "how Iraq is destabilizing the [Middle East] region." It was, to be sure, a Lewis Carroll moment, given that Iran and Saudi Arabia were widely known to be the region's leading exporters of terror. (The former bankrolls Hezbollah; the latter is homeland to bin Laden and 15 of the 19 hijackers of 9/11, who derived their astonishingly modest \$500,000 in Sept. 11 costs largely from Saudi backers.) Saddam, meanwhile, was a conspicuously weak pan-Arab laughingstock, having been bested

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in his eight-year war with Iran in the 1980s and by the U.S.-led coalition that drove him out of Kuwait in the Gulf War.

David Frum has said more than once that if Bush had not promptly launched a conventional war in the aftermath of 9/11, the president would have been ridden out of D.C. on a rail - a view shared by doves and hawks alike. ("Declare war on somebody! It doesn't matter what country," was Kagan's reaction to 9/11.) But it's not true. The job called for old-fashioned detective work. America's only unalloyed victory since 9/11 the dispersal of Al Qaeda's network with the capture of many of its leaders - resulted from methodical intelligence gathering, and especially from the collaboration of American intel experts and a 155-year-old enterprise known as Western Union, whose interception of financial transactions by Al Qaeda and other terrorist operatives mapped the identity, location, and planned activities of entire networks of terrorist cells.

Come Wednesday, a Democratic-controlled House or Senate invested with subpoena power might begin, finally, to learn if the Bush administration was simply asleep at the switch prior to 9/11, or whether it deliberately chose to ignore a terrorist threat it didn't understand in favour of Iraq, a conventional target that suited its neo-conservative apparatchiks.

Some supporters got off the neo-conservative bus earlier than others. The entire staff of liberal hawks at The New Republic endorsed John Kerry in 2004 and agonized in print over their misplaced faith in both Bush and the neo-con agenda. And that grand old man of American conservatism, William F. Buckley, conceded in an interview the same year with his long-time nemesis The New York Times that, "With the benefit of minute hindsight, Saddam Hussein wasn't the kind of extraterrestrial menace that was assumed by the administration one year ago. If I knew then what I know now about what kind of situation we would be in, I would have opposed the war."

In his new book, *After the Neocons*, apostate Francis (The End of History) Fukuyama, another original signer of Kristol's Project for a New American Century manifesto, publicly turned in his neo-con membership card. He was prompted to do so, he reports, after listening to a 2004 speech by Charles Krauthammer, the McGill-educated syndicated columnist and probably the last trained psychiatrist who will ever be mistaken by media peers as being invested with foreign-policy gravitas. In that speech, the irrepressible Iraq War shill described the mounting chaos in Iraq as a nearly unqualified success. Neo-conservatism, Fukuyama concluded, "has evolved into something I can no longer support."

As in Somalia, Haiti, Angola, the Philippines and Vietnam, where about four million Vietnamese died during the French and American military interventions of 1954-1975, the United States in Iraq will leave behind a mess. That has too often been the American way (the U.S.'s post-WWII occupations of Germany, Italy and Japan notably excepted): Invade. Make a bad situation worse. Leave. All with the best of intentions.

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Graphic

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Body

QUESTION:

Israel's killing of 54 Lebanese civilians, including 37 children, in a single airstrike has brought criticism from within and outside the Arab world. What are your views of the conflict?

Israel's WMD

IT seems as if the weapons of mass destruction which George Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard could not find in the Middle East were really there. Israel had them all, including a host of nuclear weapons, most with "Made in USA" stamped on them.

I was disgusted to see Jewish children writing messages of hate on the huge cannon shells which were being fired indiscriminately into Lebanon.

It is no wonder that the Israelis are so hated in the region when they drive their armoured Caterpillar D9 dozers across the borders of their neighbours and raze the houses of mostly innocent people, while their troops shoot innocent women, children and men working in the fields.

How would we feel if that happened in our country? I think even the most peace-loving of us would want to retaliate in some way.

The United States, which appears to be controlled by a pro-Israeli lobby, seems hell-bent on controlling the buildup of arms in other countries in the vicinity of Israel.

* JAMES CALDERWOOD,

Port Lincoln.

Kind people

I THINK people are basically the same the world over. That is, reasonably respectful and kindly disposed towards those around them.

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Four months ago, while at a bus stop in Jerusalem, I got talking with an Israeli woman. When I told her I was from Australia, she said her parents lived in the northern city of Haifa (now besieged by Hezbollah), and I would be welcome to visit and stay with them for a few days if I liked.

Although I wasn't able to take up the offer, my point is that it would be a pity if the average Israeli citizen was seen in the same light as the country's impatient and impulsive military leaders.

* ROGER SIMPSON,

Vista.

Real problem

IT is regrettable that more countries (and the United Nations) do not have the courage and resolve of Israel to deal with terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah and Hamas.

If that were the case, maybe we would not live in fear of events such as 9/11, Bali, London, Madrid and Beslan.

I sincerely hope the rest of the world can wake up some time soon and not be misguided by propaganda of the terrorist groups and their self-interested sponsors.

The events mentioned above have a common theme. Can you guess? The problem is not Israel.

* GIOVANNI ZOANETTI,

North Adelaide.

No viable solution

ISRAEL continues to receive much condemnation and yet no viable offer of an alternative solution for the way it tackles terrorism in its own backyard.

Placing disproportionate blame on Israel continues to be the popular path to take, including by some (who should know better) seeking to establish their left-wing credentials.

Many have called for an unconditional ceasefire, but this would only be a prelude to the next war, since militarised groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas have vowed to annihilate Israel, even if any occupation of land were to end.

Unfortunately, Israel's critics seem unable to distinguish between those who deliberately target innocent civilians and those who inadvertently kill civilians in the process of trying to prevent more terrorist attacks. While both acts are wrong, they are not morally equivalent and to not distinguish between the two is to live in a world of moral nihilism.

Israel is damned if it does and will be destroyed if it doesn't.

* SERGEI SAVENKOFF,

Parkside.

Innocent victims

THE horror now being inflicted on the innocent people of Lebanon cannot be called "self-defence", not when one bomb dropped on one house can wipe out more than 54 civilians, 37 of them children.

Let us not forget that the entire casualty toll for Israel is 51 and only 18 of them are civilians.

While we whine about the price of bloody bananas, interest rate rises and whether or not eggs are really free-range, people, just like us, are being murdered by other people with no discernible cause or motive.

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* MARILYN SHEPHERD,
Kensington.

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[Feedback letters @theage.com.au](mailto:Feedback.letters@theage.com.au)

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Body

WORKCHOICES

PM stuck in the past

I DON'T know who John Howard thinks he is convincing ("Labor would have us down tools and return to IR strife", 29/3) when he effuses about IR laws which he bizarrely describes as "reforms".

The fact of the matter is that Mr Howard is fighting his idea of 1970s-style unions years after the world has moved on. He shows a lot of hide in describing the new jobs in the economy since the introduction of WorkChoices as being "created", as if 263,700 jobs would really be going undone had he not given the employer the power to unfairly dismiss workers.

It would be funny, if the issue weren't so serious, the way Mr Howard quotes the Business Council's approval of legislation which gives them the power to reduce wages and conditions. As for "Labor's doomsday predictions", what they predicted was what has happened: abuse of employees. Of course most employers need their workers. So the abuses have been piecemeal. Some abattoir workers here. A young woman sacked in Richmond for refusing an AWA and, as Gary Pinchen said in your paper ("New weapons in the workplace revolution", 26/3), an increase in sacking of pregnant women. These things are doomsday for the people they happen to - though not for our teflon-coated, conscience-free PM.

Floyd Kermode, Northcote

Useless unions

I AM amazed that some writers are treating the Howard Government's industrial laws as an impediment to its re-election later this year. The writers, like the union leaders, treat a job as a worker's right.

Let's get it straight: jobs are not property, but a contract. No business in a free society enjoys guaranteed profits. So it follows that workers' jobs are secure only to the extent of a company's success.

People contract to work and the employer contracts to pay them. The unions contribute nothing. The layabout union leaders cream off a commission from the wages of the workers. Should their activities raise wages, the consumers eventually pay for it and other workers lose jobs, or the company and all of its jobs are transferred overseas.

The unions then vociferously complain of the injustice caused by their activities. It is interesting to note that the Labor Party is dominated by ex-union leaders. Everybody knows who they are - mostly unemployable militant academics who have never done a real day's work in their lives.

Ronald Kitching, Frenchville, Qld

Real BBQ stopper

THE day after the anniversary of WorkChoices, John Roskam (Opinion, 28/3) claims that the State Government has contributed to the downfall of neighbourliness through its bureaucracy. He says "government regulations are a chief cause of the decline in the sense of community in our neighbourhood". Does he not think that poorer wages and conditions may have something to do with the decline in neighbourliness? How are people meant to join voluntary organisations if they are working harder than before to ensure a basic standard of living for their families? The lack of choices for workers under WorkChoices has far greater implications for neighbourliness and community than not allowing voluntary groups to make their own choices about sausage sizzles and cake stalls.

Matthew Rose, Collingwood

Thin jobs, fat cats

WORKCHOICES may well be creating more employment, but they're all thinner jobs created by fatter cats. From high up things look rosy as bluebloods gain, and from underneath things look grim as blue collars lose. One party is arguing about the work climate and the other about the work weather, two different things. It's a vote-balancing act until the next election.

David Marriott, Melbourne

Who will benefit from anti-logging payout?

THE Prime Minister's unrelenting belief is that it doesn't matter if Australia contributes to poisoning the atmosphere or the country is ravaged by climate change as long as Australians have jobs.

Out of guilt or as a political ploy, he has decided to throw 200 million taxpayer dollars at impoverished countries to stop them deforesting. Such an idea was slammed by the previous Malaysian prime minister as a Western notion to hamper the growth of developing countries. Rightly so; they are as concerned about jobs as we are.

If Mr Howard is the realist he claims to be, he would understand that the nations he is targeting have a high rate of illiteracy - their people know little and care even less about global warming. The idea of dangling millions before officials of dubious integrity is unlikely to catch on, because the success of this scheme cannot be guaranteed. If reports are any indication, vast amounts of tsunami dollars have yet to reach the victims. What assurance does the Australian taxpayer have that this wild scheme will produce results?

Pat Abrahams, Nunawading

A necessary step

IT HAS been disappointing to hear the Howard-bashing in response to the Prime Minister's announcement of \$200 million to be spent on tackling illegal and unsustainable logging in our region.

According to the International Tropical Timber Organisation, of 206.7 million hectares of permanent forest estate in the Asia Pacific region in 2005, only 19.5 million hectares were being sustainably managed. Our partner churches in places such as the Philippines and Indonesia identify illegal logging as a serious issue.

At the same time, we agree that the Australian Government should restrict timber and wood product imports to Australia to those that are certified, where feasible. Also, the necessary and welcome action on unsustainable logging in the region does not relieve the Government of the need to take serious action in reducing Australia's

contribution to dangerous climate change. Finally, we share concerns about regulation of logging in some places in Australia, especially Tasmania. However, this is a state government as much as a federal government issue.

Dr Mark Zirnsak, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting Church in Australia

Hicks our concern

CONTRARY to what Alan Smith has implied (Opinion, 29/3), teenagers these days do know about the plight of David Hicks. Funnily enough, we've also torn ourselves away from cyberspace and homework long enough to know that the public imagination was seized by the "Bring David Hicks Home" campaign, as well it should be. It's a matter of concern for all Australian citizens, whether 16 like me or 53 like my parents, that our Federal Government is willing to abandon us all in favour of good relations with George Bush.

Erica Hei-Yuan Chan, Kew

Not welcome here

THERE is an old saying that is understood by most Australians and one that has stood the test of time: you can judge a person by the company he keeps.

David Hicks saw fit to happily associate himself with a proscribed terrorist organisation - Afghanistan's infamous Taliban - and has seen fit to freely admit that he provided material support to that group. I, for one, do not support his return to this country to serve out any (additional) sentence he may be given. He is a menace to this society and the values it espouses.

Hicks should serve out his time in the country where he was apprehended - Afghanistan - and where his paymasters, the Taliban, carried out their barbarous acts. And good riddance to bad rubbish.

Michael J. Gamble, Belmont

Two types of detention

WE'VE seen on TV how the Iranians are treating the Britons they seized. Just for comparison it would be interesting to see how the Americans are treating the Iranians they seized in their military raid on that country's consulate in Arbil in January. What do you reckon . . . orange overalls, chains, isolation, heat and cold and continuous lighting and loud music until they "confess" they are helping the "terrorists"?

Gordon Drennan, Burton, SA

Diplomacy the way

"MARGARET Thatcher would never have stood for this intimidation by Iran!" So read an email message from a colleague in Britain. "Well, thank God that she is no longer in office," I replied.

Whether the abduction of the royal marines and sailors was planned in Tehran or the action of over-zealous Iranian militants, the diplomatic language coming out of London is the only way to resolve the matter and bring the 15 personnel home soon ("Blair turns up pressure as Iran digs in on sailors", The Age, 30/3).

Surely few would have forgotten the reaction of the Israeli Government, and its consequences, following the abduction of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah last July. Sadly, nine months later the families of the abducted soldiers still wait patiently for their safe return.

Here, I believe, is a lesson for the British Government: that even if our enemy has wronged us, our response should be measured and in keeping with the code of behaviour of a civilised society. Confrontation and defiance, not diplomacy, is what Iran's regime thrives on. Our aim, surely, should be the reverse. Otherwise there is nothing to differentiate us from them.

S. Nona, Burradoo, NSW

Not the AFL's game

THIS whole AFL drug testing issue bothers me. What started as an attempt to rid the game of cheaters has turned into a way of playing Big Brother and enforcing laws that have nothing to do with football.

If an AFL player decides to hit the clubs after a game and take a tablet, then he should run the same risk as everyone else. He might get caught by the police, it might injure his health, it might affect his work etc. If it does affect his work that will soon become obvious and the club is within its rights to punish him. That's fair enough. If it doesn't then it should have nothing to do with the AFL.

What's next? I can just see the AFL holding a press conference to explain its new decision to set up video cameras in all players' cars to ensure they obey all the road rules. Oh what a day it'll be when they catch their first AFL player for failing to use his indicator for long enough before changing lanes.

The AFL should concentrate on football and leave the police work to the professionals.

Damien Evans, St Kilda East

Measuring 4WDs

CATHERINE Deveny, in her rant against 4WDs ("Listen up, you selfish and ignorant people. Stop driving 4WDs", 28/3), wrote of "the arrogance of the space they take up on the road" and suggested they "try a station wagon, roof racks or a little inconvenience". Now while I also think 4WDs are not polite, I am a bit of a pedant. A typical mum's taxi 4WD takes up less road space than a typical station wagon. A bit of poking around in drive.com will find that a Pajero is 17 centimetres shorter and one centimetre wider than a Falcon station wagon, and a Prado is 22 centimetres shorter and six centimetres wider than a Commodore wagon. The diesel-engined versions of these 4WDs have a fuel consumption of about 11 litres per 100 kilometres, the same as the Commodore and somewhat less than the Falcon.

There is no doubt that many people find 4WDs annoying in the city. They are hard to see around in traffic and (my special annoyance) when they are parked beside you as you back out of parking spaces. While there are many good reasons why 4WDs are not appropriate for urban use, size is not one of them.

Jim Maunder, Mont Albert North

Water confession

WELL, to hell with it. I confess. On Sunday, I decided to wash my car and duly filled my six-litre bucket for the task. However, I am mindful of stage 3 water restrictions, which stipulate that I can only use a bucket of water to wash the windows, mirrors and lights of my car. This I duly did and after completing the task, was left with a conundrum. I still had something like 5.5 litres of water left in the bucket, but stage 3 restrictions won't allow me to use this to wash the remainder of my car.

What to do? Throw the remaining water out, use it on the garden, store it with a lid over it for next week's wash or share it among my neighbours who might have also been thinking about washing their cars but hadn't yet poured a bucket for the task?

I pondered the problem and then made a decision, albeit one that I am racked with guilt over - hence my confession today.

I decided to use the remaining water to wash the rest of my car, which I did while furtively looking over my shoulder to see if some nosey neighbour was about to dob me in to the authorities or whether some wandering water policeman would catch me in the act, issue me with a ticket and duly cut my household supply to a trickling two litres per minute for the next week or so as punishment for my profligacy.

After I had completed the task there was something like four litres remaining in the bucket, which I then poured onto my pot plants in the car port. There. I have come clean and I wait for the trickle torture to begin!

Rod Smyrk, Sunbury

Graphic

CARTOON BY TANDBERG

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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, Clothholme 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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letters to the editor

Weekend Australian

November 11, 2006 Saturday

All-round Country Edition

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Body

MATP

MOST TALKED ABOUT

BUSH, HOWARD AND IRAQ

It's inevitable that the US President will change policy

ACCORDING to John Howard, there is no fundamental change in US policy on Iraq ("Rumsfeld's head rolls as Bush admits 'thumping' loss", 10/11). The Prime Minister says he knows that for a fact. In Rumsfeld-speak, does this qualify as a known known or an unknown known?

Mr Howard is probably the only leader left in the coalition of the willing who still believes that strategic change is not necessary to resolve the horrendous mess in Iraq. By holding to this untenable viewpoint, he demonstrates he is as stubborn and ignorant of the real world as Donald Rumsfeld was during his tenure as US defence secretary.

Because of the crushing defeat of the Republicans by the Democrats in Congress, in the coming weeks and months even George W. Bush will gradually change his policy on Iraq. The President knows that if he does not, the result will be total civil war across the country, increasing US casualties and another thrashing for the Republicans in 2008. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, knows the dangers, which is why he wants all British troops out as soon as possible.

Richard Slater

Berowra Heights, NSW

JOHN Howard tells us that to withdraw from Iraq would hand a victory to the terrorists. He, George W. Bush and Tony Blair handed the terrorists their victory when they invaded Iraq and removed Saddam Hussein. Iraq was, and remains, the biggest blunder. Unfortunately, we are now stuck with it. To withdraw would be a bigger blunder.

Stuart Houghton

Hobart, Tas

letters to the editor

AFTER reading their letters (10/11), I can only infer that Howard Hutchins and Bill Anderson arrogantly presume to blame everyone else for the problems of Iraq bar the actual architects of the invasion.

Hutchins also states a few furphies of his own when he claims the US should not be blamed for Saddam Hussein when it's a matter of public record that they supported and supplied him with weapons, intelligence and economic aid during the entire period he was in power from July 1979 to the first Gulf War in 1990. Indeed we have news footage of Donald Rumsfeld going to Iraq to meet him, shake his hand and offer him the US's friendship and support against Iran.

It's also well demonstrated that the US military downplays the killing of Iraqis by its forces and doesn't even bother counting the dead. If people wish to be apologists for this ghastly war, then they should at least do so from a position based on fact.

Mohammed Alfakhrany

Gladesville, NSW

FOLLOWING the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre, the US had the sympathy and potential support of most of the world. The Bush administration managed to convert much of this goodwill into a contempt approaching hatred of the US.

Hopefully the new direction the US takes in the wake of the mid-term elections will see this nation, our most important ally, regain some much-needed respect and its place as a true world leader.

Peter Lane

Margaret River, WA

I HOPE the Australian electorate sees the results of the US mid-terms as a challenge. The American people showed a willingness to vote on issues bigger than their incomes and mortgages. They rejected George W. Bush's assertion that he had provided a strong economy and cast their ballots based on the war in Iraq, government arrogance and dismay at the culture of fear sown by the current White House. These issues are replicated here in Australia. If you add AWB, David Hicks, the new IR laws and the sale of Telstra to the list, there are arguably more reasons to vote for change at our next federal poll than there were in the US this week.

John Clover

North Adelaide, SA

AMIDST all the back-slapping by the anti-Bush brigade, gleeful at the loss of the Republican control of Congress, your editorial ("A regime change at the Pentagon", 10/11) reminds us of what a dangerous vacuum there would be in the world if the US was to retreat into isolationism. And which nation would fill that void? There are many that would race to fill the role of hegemon. But the question is, are those nations the ones we in the West want as friends? As allies? Indeed, be careful what you wish for.

A. Khat

Ryde, NSW

JOHN Howard's statement that he knows "for a fact" there is no fundamental change in US policy on Iraq following the mid-term elections, reminds me of Billy McMahon's very public faux pas when informed that Richard Nixon was going to China: "He wouldn't do that without telling me."

David Yabsley

Cairns, Qld

letters to the editor

GREG Sheridan, to illustrate how good a friend Donald Rumsfeld was to Australia, says he was heroic for flying 22 hours to get to Adelaide ("Don't read too much into it", 10/11). I beg to differ. Thousands of people take such flights every day of the year. And what about Australian troops in Iraq, and other parts of the world, who leave their families and put their lives in danger to fight wars for careless, abrasive men like Donald Rumsfeld? Are they less heroic? I think not.

Haydn Sennitt

Strathfield, NSW

Judges in Magill case need

time in the 'real world'

FORGIVE my complete ignorance, but isn't a marriage a legally binding union? With that, there is a duty of care, disclosure and a kind of contractual agreement that the union is sacrosanct?

The High Court judges in the case involving "duped father" Liam Magill ("Secret infidelity approved by court", 10/11), if not all arbitrators, should spend a couple of "gap years" in the real world.

As a layperson, I can think of a swag of reasons why disproved paternity should be just cause for non-payment of child support. For the cheating partner, how about theft by deception and breach of contract, just for starters? The rights of the child to know its biological heritage? Parents using innocent spouses in such a way are despicable.

This issue needs to be revisited. Fraud of this nature -- child support by deception for someone else's child -- is one very serious chink in the family-values mantra chanted by John Howard. Can we have some sanity and probity for all Australians, please?

Darrell Morrison

Portland, Vic

WHY worry that allowing homosexuals to marry detracts from the sanctity and meaning of marriage? After the High Court decision in the Magill case, there's not much meaning left. As a wife, I'm free to have flings, get knocked up, and then tell lies to my husband. The court stands behind my right to have no obligations, no honesty, and no penalty.

Legally, is there anything a woman is obliged to do within a marriage?

Joanne Nova

Ballajura, WA

I WAS shocked one day when I was told by a senior counsel, who later became a judge, that the lay concept of fairness and equality played no part in the law, which was all about applying common law and enacted law to the case before the court and that was that. Fairness, as lay people understood it, had absolutely nothing to do with the matter. So if some unlucky bunny ends up paying for the upbringing of a couple of cuckoos in the nest, tough titty, old feller, you've been robbed but nothing will be done about it.

Alan Logan

Ringwood, Vic

Lacking Viagra's power

letters to the editor

ONE wonders if Gardasil protected against penile and prostate cancer, instead of cervical cancer, it would have been listed, no questions asked, on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme faster than you can say "Viagra" ("Vaccine subsidy if price is right", 10/11).

Meg Walsh

Banyo, Qld

TOO little is made of primary prevention of cervical cancer. The human papilloma virus is clearly associated with this cancer, and the virus is largely transmitted by sexual interactions. It would make more sense, and be a lot cheaper, if young people practised safer sex. Public health messages need to be louder and clearer on this.

Trevor Kerr

Blackburn, Vic

WHEN it comes to self-serving political advertising, the Government can squander hundreds of millions of dollars. But if it's for a world-leading vaccine to eradicate cervical cancer, it has to carefully count its pennies to protect the taxpayer but not women.

Garry Bickley

Elizabeth Downs, SA

Two visions for our future

I WELCOME Noel Pearson's contribution to the debate on the impact of market fundamentalism on Australian life ("Menace of a material world view", Inquirer, 4-5/11).

Pearson argues that my contribution may be ill-timed because there's such a strong constituency today in support of market principles. What I've argued is that the problem with market fundamentalism is that it places markets first and human beings last.

Social democrats come from the tradition which has always said that the disciplines of the market can be maintained in tension with the principles of social justice.

Pro-market social democrats come from a tradition which is shaped by Adam Smith, John Maynard Keynes and, in Australia's own case, by economists such as Nugget Coombs. This tradition has always accepted market disciplines but equally recognised the impact of market failure, public goods (such as education, health and the environment) as well as the role of the enabling state in producing a decent society.

For these reasons, social democrats' long-standing tradition of social justice has always been compatible with the disciplines of the modern market. In fact, a properly functioning market economy requires these social justice principles to be properly applied.

The alternative vision for Australia's future is an unrestrained capitalism produced by the sort of market fundamentalism that we see alive in Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and Margaret Thatcher. Remember, it was Thatcher who said that there was no such thing as society.

I believe that Australians are ready for a full debate between these two visions for our future. Australians want a strong economy. But they also want a strong economy tempered by the dictates of a just society.

Kevin Rudd

Parliament House, Canberra

Stick to the facts

letters to the editor

MATT Price's article about my Senate estimates appearance ("Aunty and co face Neo-Connie's wrath", Inquirer, 4-5/11) was full of errors and misrepresentations.

For example, Price selectively took one of the many instances I put to SBS about the way it uses soft, friendly language for those on the Left. If he had reported me in context, he would have noted my concern, for example, that an SBS TV joint venture described David Hicks as a "freedom fighter".

The ABC has conceded that various Middle Eastern groups are indeed terrorist groups and the questions reflected our concern that the ABC reporters' descriptions don't reflect that fact. If Price detected a tone of exasperation at estimates, it might have been when SBS declared that it wouldn't allow its reporters to label such groups as Jemaah Islamiah terrorist because SBS wants to remain linguistically neutral. The Government has officially listed **Hezbollah** and Hamas as terrorist organisations and he should know that.

Price also misrepresented me when he wrote that I accused the ABC of "sympathising with terrorists". I was quoting the ABC's own news and current affairs rule book, a fact Mark Scott acknowledged. There were many more misrepresentations but your space limits prevent me listing them. My skin is thick enough to cop the over-the-top attack on me, but please, Matt Price, stick to the facts.

Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells

Parliament House, Canberra

FIRST BYTE

letters@theaustralian.com.au

You forget, David Durrant (First Byte, 10/11), that our cricketers, and footballers of various codes, get paid vast amounts of money, and are therefore bigger than the game itself.

Ron Stone

Highgate Hill, Qld

David Stone (First Byte, 9/11), take Martin Washer's \$1000 bet. Then put \$300 on a drawn series (current odds \$8), and \$300 on England winning the series (\$6). Your worst result will be a \$200 profit.

Luke Tannock

White Gum Valley, WA

Please, C. Dicker (First Byte, 10/11), stop suggesting rich entertainers such as Bono apply for positions at our national entertainment centre (aka Parliament House). The place already has a leading song-and-dance man who is ably backed by a well-versed chorus.

Col Shephard

Yamba, NSW

It's dollars to doughnuts that John Howard is kicking himself he hasn't already handed over to Peter Costello now that a new wind is blowing through Washington. Time to smell the roses, Prime Minister?

David William Hall

Southport, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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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On your bike, Nigel

Yorkshire Evening Post

August 17, 2006

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Length: 2012 words

Body

Nigel Scott's provocative, if amusing Jeremy Clarkson-esque article 'On your bikes and buzz off' (YEP, August 12) clearly seems to show him prone to grumpy giddiness when freed from the constraints of his regular Business column!

Proof also of the need to duck for cover whenever you read an opening gambit such as "I like to think I'm a fairly tolerant sort of chap but..."!

As a confirmed cycle commuter, but not one inclined to sport the stereotypically lurid lycra seemingly fixated upon by Scott, it's great to see that the car driving majority are beginning to take notice of a trend which has seen cycle journeys rise by 15 per cent this year in the UK.

This growing number of cyclists are gradually playing an important part in helping to make the UK roads more bike-friendly and are doing more than anyone to ease the city's chronic congestion so evidently stressful to Scott and others.

While many would justifiably argue for more segregated cycle paths, greater respect by motorists for cyclists (and vice versa perhaps?) is much more vital to improving safety and increasing cycling uptake. To this end Leeds City Council's Travelwise department can supply a very helpful 'Give Cyclists Room' car sticker upon request.

Comments such as "it takes all your self-control to avoid swatting them" and wishing to open a car door on to bikers /cyclists could well be interpreted as an incitement to road rage. Is Scott prepared to face the consequences of being quoted as an apologist in the event of any future serious injury?

The incidence of badly behaving cyclists on roads is totally disproportionate to those involving motor vehicles.

Andy Brown, Gledhow Lane, Leeds

I find Nigel Scott's attitude deeply offensive especially as the YEP's front page featured the needless death of a young woman who was tragically killed and the rider seriously injured when the motorcycle they were riding was collided with a car.

How anyone can even contemplate deliberately opening a car door to willfully cause injury to anyone be it pedestrian, cyclist or motorcyclist beggars belief and shows a worrying attitude towards the well being of his fellow road users.

Has it not occurred to Mr Scott that the source of his frustration is due to heavy traffic caused by vehicles such as his own and not the cyclist or motorcyclist making good progress through the congestion?

On your bike, Nigel

Everyone has a right to decide how they travel around, and if Mr Scott chooses to sit in heavy traffic in a big tin box on four wheels which occupies the same amount of space as six motorcycles or ten cycles in heavy traffic, then more fool him.

His final remark on his hope of being stuck at the rear of a **female** cyclist admiring her behind shows just what an intelligent chap he really is.

Mr Scott would do well to join his local Advanced Driving Group where his attitude and driving skills would be immeasurably improved.

Judith Packham, Wakefield

I didn't like the attitude of Nigel Scott. We don't want to crawl into the city centre but have to because of so many cars like his: and as for his dislike of garish multi-coloured lycra suits - would he prefer us all in black, so he can run us down at night, saying 'I didn't see them'?

So, Nigel, in yer car and buzz off.

G WAKEFIELD, Button Hill, Leeds

The YEP publishes an article about a cab driver wiping out the life of an innocent young girl, then Nigel Scott has the audacity to say he often felt like opening his car door on a passing motorcycle rider. Maybe it was written tongue in cheek, but to me it was irresponsible journalism.

Let's have less bike bashing and more tolerance to all road users.

a s riley, e-mail

Get ready for the the exam knockers

Soon we shall be receiving important examination results and I predict that equally soon we shall have the annual backlash from Tory and Lib Dem spokespeople telling us that:

1. The Examination Boards mark too easily.
2. Standards have slipped and exam papers aren't what they used to be.
3. Statisticians are wrongly interpreting the results and they are not what they are made out to be.
4. Teachers could do better.
5. Students could do better.
6. Employers complain that students aren't up to it.
7. If the sun shone more often the exam results would be even better.

I hope that most fair-minded people will ignore this ritualistic abuse of the fantastic efforts, work rate, dedication and professionalism shown by students, teachers and all staff at schools and colleges, parents and carers and support agencies.

At the time of writing I do not know whether we have maintained or even managed to improve the level of results. What I do know is that we should praise efforts made over a sustained period in young people's lives and we should champion their best endeavours. So here is a heartfelt "well done"" to everyone who has taken exams this year; I hope you achieved what you set out to do - and if you did not then don't despair. There are always other ways of reaching your target in the future.

Coun Peter Gruen, Shadow Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Leeds City Council.

On your bike, Nigel

Ministers in a mess

There is a Government minister called Hewitt

Hired to improve the NHS not undo it

With Leeds hospitals in debt and no targets met

The best year ever - who knew it!

There is a Government minister called Reid

Hired to be tough on illegal immigration with speed

Police mergers cause uproar, ID cards to cost more

"Not fit for purpose?" - agreed!

There is a Deputy Prime Minister called Prescott

Health, schools, crime - he's watching it all rot

Busy playing croquet, look after our country no way!

Overpaid, under worked, lost the plot!

In No 10 there's a Prime Minister called Blair

You wouldn't know as he's hardly ever there

Running Britain from Barbados while the world is in chaos

He'll hand over to Brown without care!

Elizabeth Hill, Kirkstall, Leeds

Downside of cheap flights

What a mess our Government and other politicians are in over global warming and the means to combat it.

The leader of the Liberal Democrats, when asked recently what should be done to reduce the greenhouse effect on climate change, said among other things that people should use energy-saving light bulbs.

He then admitted that he did not use them himself because his own ordinary light bulbs have not burned out!

Why should I buy them at £6 each, instead of £1 for ordinary ones, when he does not? I think it's all a big con trick.

On the same day in the Yorkshire Evening Post, our local airline is selling tickets to a new destination, Krakow in Poland, at £20 single. This will surely only make the greenhouse effect much worse.

So what is the Government doing about this - nothing.

The only thing that could be done about this would be to put the cost of such flights up very considerably.

PAUL NEWLAND, Barwick, Leeds

Too many street lights? Not here

On your bike, Nigel

In reply to Dawn L Chadwick's outburst about street lighting (Letters, August 12), she should consider herself lucky she has any street lights at all!

My work involves doing two trips per night between Leeds and Bradford in an HGV. I turn off the M621 and use the link road to the Armley gyratory, where there are several lights not working on the by-pass and on the gyratory itself. I then carry on my way to Bradford on the ring road (Stanningley by-pass).

On a long left hand bend there is a long section of road where the street lights have not worked for at least two months.

This is not so bad until the return trip to Leeds, where I sometimes have to use full beam to pick out the kerbs and center lines. This on a stretch of road where there are a lot of accidents and fatalities!

I only hope the rest of the street lighting in Leeds is better maintained than this section, otherwise it's not a case of being shown in a bad light, but more a case of the council keeping us in the dark!

George King, Wakefield

Israel under attack over plight of Palestinians

I have seen many letters over the past few weeks discussing the crisis in Lebanon, with many justifying Israel's actions by talking about the three kidnapped soldiers held prisoner in Lebanon and Gaza.

However none of these feel it necessary to mention the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian prisoners held, illegally, under degrading conditions, with no representation and without trial by Israel. There are many in Israel itself and, even though Israel has pulled out of Gaza, there is no free travel with ports blocked and airports closed leaving it little more than a self-governed prison camp. Then all of the Palestinians living in constant oppression in the west bank, yet more illegally occupied land.

Has any one considered the water situation in Israel? Is it just a coincidence that all the occupied lands supply the majority of the water to Israel enabling there citizens to have more that five times the daily amount of fresh water than the Palestinians from whose land it comes. Is it any wonder that these oppressed people are still more than a little bit put out by Israel?

Ivan Kovacs, e-mail

I As a lifelong reader of the Yorkshire Evening Post, the tone of John Thorpe's piece entitled 'It's no mystery' (August 10) shows his complete ignorance of the situation.

Israel is at war to defend its very existence. Hezbollah and its backers have openly stated for years that they intend to wipe Israel off the map. In war innocents will die - on both sides. No one wants this, but it is a consequence of war. Military commanders have the unenviable task of making decisions that will cost the lives of combatants and non-combatants. Britain did not flinch when bombing Dresden, nor the USA in dropping atomic bombs on Japanese cities, when the leaders of those countries believed these actions would hasten the end of the war and stop even greater bloodshed.

Israel does not need Mr Thorpe's sympathy. I just want him to get real!

COLIN GLASS, e-mail

Borrowing by the book

Why should people be disgusted at having to pay fines for late library books, like Emma Rose (Letters, August 12)?

The books are free to borrow and cost money to buy, so it's only fair to return them at the agreed date.

It's simple enough to make notes in a diary or on a calendar as a reminder.

On your bike, Nigel

She is lucky to not have paid the fines because most people pay.

I think it is petty that she is halving the books her children can get. Also, why should these charges reduce the family's use when they weren't paid?

Many parents set a poor example to their children.

A HAGUE, Bellbrooke Grove, Leeds

I I cannot believe that people need to be taught how to use the library. How anyone can let their children get eight books each and then keep hold of them way past the return date is beyond belief.

When I get my books home I note on my kitchen calendar the date and number to be returned. It is quite simple! If I can't get my books back on time it just takes a simple phone call to renew them.

Catherine Feltell, Leeds 16

Puzzled over councillor's cash

I have to admit to being confused. Like any fair-minded person I fully appreciate that councillors in Leeds must take an allowance for the work they do in their respective wards - but that is where my confusion comes in.

As a person who attends many community events in my ward I see an awful lot of Councillors Tom Murray and Andrea Harrison who are always helpful and approachable. I see very little of Coun Mark Phillips and when I do it is usually not a particularly impressive experience! Why therefore does he claim nearly £4,000 per year more than his two, far more active, ward colleagues?

Dave Richards, Garforth

We need more council houses

It's nice of Coun Andrew Carter to try to provide cheaper homes for people who can't afford them (YEP, August 10) but the council already has too many fingers in the pie.

It would make more sense to make more council houses for people who can't afford to buy, rather than reducing them by demolition or selling off to housing associations, and to increase to six years or more the time you must keep a council house after buying it, as three years allows much abuse.

Also who would get the cheaper homes? Not ordinary working class people, I'll bet.

G WAKEFIELD, Button Hill, Leeds

Load-Date: August 17, 2006

Bloggers of the world, unite; THE ESSAY

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

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First Edition

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Byline: Antony Loewenstein

Body

The internet is revolutionising the way we get news and views.

DURING THE 2006 Lebanon war, Israelis connected with Lebanese through blogs, despite the Lebanese Government forbidding its citizens from contact with the Jewish state. An Israeli blogger told The Washington Post that thanks to the blogosphere, "we came to realise how alike we were culturally, as secularised, Westernised residents of Beirut and Tel Aviv". I recall reading blog missives from Hezbollah supporters decrying the brutality of Israeli air strikes on Lebanese civilians. Equally moving were posts about scared Israeli citizens in northern Israel fearing random missiles in their living rooms. The immediacy and personality of many blog posts left much Western journalism for dead: new technology had given voice to individuals who were not just dropping into a war zone for their 15 minutes of fame.

In non-democratic nations, blogs are often the only form of independent opinion and regularly incur the wrath of government censors. For example, Farsi has become the 10th most popular language for blogs and there are now more than 700,000 active blogs in Iran, many discussing sensitive issues such as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (an irregular blogger), the country's nuclear program, Holocaust denial and US interference in the Middle East. It is principally through Iranian blogs that one is able to gauge the conflicting levels of Iranian society, far from the often one-dimensional portrayals in the Western media. One Iranian friend, now living in Canada, tells me that many Iranians were outraged at the recent Holocaust conference and blogged that their taxes shouldn't have contributed to an event that further isolated the Islamic regime from the rest of the world (kamangir.wordpress.com/2006/12/11/the-recipe-for-an-anti-holocaust-conference).

In Western nations, blogging has grown in popularity as public trust in the mainstream media has declined. Much of what passes for debate in the Australian press can be called "corkscrew journalism", a term that originated in the 1940 film *The Philadelphia Story*, directed by George Cukor. According to Fred Halliday, professor of international relations at the London School of Economics, the phrase is defined as "instant comment, bereft of research or originality, leading to a cycle of equally vacuous, staged polemics between columnists who have been saying the same thing for the past decade or more".

Doesn't this sound like most of Australia's leading commentators? Endless point-scoring and ill-informed rants against "elites", the "Left" and the "Right" are constant features of mainstream punditry. It's no wonder the major newspapers are in terminal circulation decline.

Bloggers of the world, unite THE ESSAY

The arrogance of the commentariat was on full display in August when the New York Times columnist David Brooks said on American TV: "One of the things I've found in life is that politicians are a lot more sincere than us journalists and we are more sincere than the people that read and watch us." Could there be a better argument for his early retirement? If Brooks was unaware of how the general public viewed the media - worse than the dodgiest real estate agent - he'd been spending too much time with political insiders in Washington, DC.

In late 2005 and 2006, Roy Morgan polling found that more than three-quarters of Australians agreed that "media organisations are more interested in making money than in informing society". A similar number believed that the media weren't objective enough and remained too close to politicians. A tiny percentage of citizens turned to blogs first for information (though this figure is steadily increasing).

Of course, accusations of insularity could be levelled at the blogosphere. The growing polarisation of the political sphere in the US has resulted in often ferocious and partisan discussion on matters of war and peace. September 11 was the catalyst for any number of instant "war on terror" experts. "We are not the mainstream media, and we are here," wrote the popular blogger Juan Cole (www.juancole.com) in April 2005. "Get used to it."

Although the growth of blogging has certainly increased divisions in the US political system - it's not unusual to read hardline bloggers calling for the lynching of "liberal" newspaper editors - it's also provided an unknown number of citizens the chance to express their opinions and contribute to an ever-growing media democracy. Only a few years ago, it was virtually impossible to get a "non-expert" voice heard and published. While much of the blogosphere is filled with meaningless drivel (not unlike the mainstream press), the finest analysis easily rivals the most astute members of the mainstream commentariat. The last years have seen a steady influx of bloggers being hired by the mainstream media for this very reason.

If anything, the finest bloggers are much more transparent about their biases. Many mainstream journalists and columnists convince themselves and readers that they are simply disinterested and objective observers of events, without political affiliations or motives. In reality, of course, they are often political hacks with an axe to grind. Bloggers are no different, but they will acknowledge past associations and inherent biases. Such moves increase reader respect and contribute to the development of a democratic media ideal. It does, of course, take time to find blogs that you trust, whose sources are impeccable and traceable.

The violence of emotion on display in the blogosphere is sometimes akin to being punched in the head at a World Wrestling Federation final and then going back the next day for more. It's a blood sport with a surprisingly addictive personality. This probably explains why a July 2006 study by Pew Internet, an American research project, found that 39 per cent of US internet users, or about 57 million adults, read blogs (a huge increase from the previous year) and about 12 million maintained their own blog. Interestingly, most bloggers surveyed did not consider their blog as journalism.

Right-wing bloggers are mostly pro-war and Islamophobic while leftists are anti-war and pro-human-rights. While the "Right" urges jihad against "appeasers, traitors and liberals", the "Left" wages war against anybody who encourages conflict against designated (usually Muslim) enemies.

If this all sounds infantile, it often is. One of America's leading conservative bloggers, Michelle Malkin - her site is read by more than 100,000 people daily - wrote in late 2005 that The New York Times, a favourite punching bag of the Right, "crusaded tirelessly this year for the cut-and-run, troop-undermining, Bush-bashing, reality-denying cause". In Malkin's world view, shared by many of her persuasion, the mainstream media's primary role is to unquestioningly support the Bush administration in all its war policies. "So, which side is The New York Times on?" she asked, knowing full well what her readers would answer. The clear assumption was that in exposing government mismanagement, illegality or incompetence, journalists and editors were aiding the enemy. The shrillness of her commentary increased as the US became increasingly bogged down in Iraq. It therefore wasn't the US that was at fault for its military defeat, it was the "liberal" media.

Tim Blair, one of Australia's much-read bloggers (and self-described journalist), is equally incapable of explaining any issue without a requisite put-down, smart-arse comment or personal smear.

Bloggers of the world, unite THE ESSAY

Some bloggers on the left and right have become unashamed partisan hacks, spruiking for one side of politics or the other - sometimes for money and, perhaps even stranger, often not - and the political elite is listening. A growing number of US politicians now write their own blogs in an attempt to connect with a disinterested populace. In June 2006, Las Vegas hosted a conference led by Markos Moulitsas, the svengali behind America's most popular blog, Daily Kos. Any number of politicians prostituted themselves just to get close to the new media king.

In Australia, the Democrat Senator Andrew Bartlett runs the country's finest politician's blog (www.andrewbartlett.com/blog), writing about parliamentary deliberations and the often-tortuous political process. He told Crikey last September that he wanted his blog to "talk about the substance of issues, rather than feed the notion of politics as sport or something mysterious involving artful strategists using tactics beyond the comprehension of all but the cleverest analysts". He noted that "the comments I get on my blog from people across the political spectrum are usually of a much higher standard than what I have to listen to in the Senate chamber".

In the early days of the internet revolution, newspapers were already being consigned to the rubbish bin. Today, as Arianna Huffington, the "queen of the blogosphere" (www.huffingtonpost.com), recently observed, "the argument that the old media will simply die off is becoming obsolete. Honestly, there is room for both of us. Both are here to stay."

Even with ever greater budget cuts, big media still has the financial clout to sustain foreign correspondents and investigative journalism. With notable exceptions, new media has yet to find its utopian (let alone workable) business model. In many ways, though, it doesn't need to compete with broadsheet titles. Its role can be critic, commentator, researcher or shit-stirrer. The best blogs are by people who believe, like the finest non-fiction writers, that political and ideological risk is the mainstay of provocative dialogue.

When Time magazine announced "You" as its 2006 person of the year - managing editor Richard Stengel breathlessly wrote that "user-generated content is transforming art and politics and commerce" - much of the blogosphere reacted with bemusement; we all wondered how long it would take old media to realise the days of sermon-on-the-mount pronouncements were coming to an end. Media commentator Jeff Jarvis applauded the choice because "it was the conceit of mass media that they could pick one person who mattered for the world and that we would listen".

He was right, of course. One of the successes of this information explosion has been that journalists and editors have had to accept that their credibility is on the line unless they adapt, communicate and provide transparency in their methodology to readers. Why should we trust them because they have a fancy title before their name? More journalists should write blogs to demystify the craft, explain how sources are found and editorial decisions made (what stays in an article and what gets trashed).

The Australian media have a long way to go in this area principally because - and I've heard this from any number of prominent reporters - they don't think they have to explain themselves to anybody, let alone a faceless public. But it's this increasingly active public that has already decided such arrogance should be punished (by not buying the product). A recent article in The Guardian wondered if in 10 years all newspapers would be free because "even the wealthy no longer invariably see why they should have to pay for news, entertainment or material to pass the time on a tiresome journey".

As a blog addict, I've long believed that the blogging age signifies both the democratisation of information and a unique opportunity to include a growing number of citizens in the democratic process. A wider range of views, diverse and mostly free, can only further challenge the mainstream's stranglehold on "serious" content. During the writing of my book, My Israel Question, any number of readers of my blog provided invaluable information about the Middle East that I would simply never have discovered on my own. It was participatory journalism in action.

For some, blogging is more than an optional extra, it's a way of staying sane. A ***female*** Iraqi blogger ([firstwordfirstwalkfirstiniraq .blogspot.com](http://firstwordfirstwalkfirstiniraq.blogspot.com)) tells me that "as Arab Muslims, we have been stereotyped a lot, and I believe that bloggers have kind of proved those stereotypes are nothing but myths. On the other hand, blogging has also helped us, Arabs, abandon our paranoid attitudes and stereotypical views of Westerners." Such online discussions contribute more to cross-cultural understanding than any other technology in history.

Bloggers of the world, unite THE ESSAY

Perhaps the future of online consumption is South Korea, the most net-savvy nation in the world. Seven out of 10 Koreans go online, online newspapers have more readers than their dying paper cousins and 20,000 internet cafes sustain a broadband-hungry youth. Citizen journalism has exploded, with the most popular site, OhmyNews, attracting more than 700,000 daily visitors. In South Korea, blogs are not merely a way to communicate, they're an essential part of life.

Simon Kelner, the editor of The Independent in Britain, believes that "in a world where everyone has a blog, there will be a premium on sober analysis, skilled editing and authoritative comment". He's probably right, but it's too soon to tell whether the next generation will agree.

Antony Loewenstein is a freelance journalist, blogger and author of My Israel Question (Melbourne University Publishing).

Graphic

Illustration: John Shakespeare

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Attack Iran and spark world war

Sunday Mail (South Australia)

March 4, 2007 Sunday

State Edition

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Byline: CORRELLI BARNETT

Body

As US Vice President Dick Cheney hinted last week of an American strike at Iran's nuclear facilities, leading British military historian CORRELLI BARNETT warned of the horrendous consequences of such an attack

PRESIDENT George W. Bush's recent pronouncements about Iran set off the distant sound of war drums beating, just as they did in 2002 during the long run-up to the catastrophic attack on Iraq.

We hear those drums in Bush's assurances that there are no plans for armed action against Iran - just as, back in 2002, he and his acolyte, Tony Blair, falsely claimed no military decision had been made to invade Iraq.

And we hear the drums in the bullying tone of Washington's present diplomacy towards Iran - again, so reminiscent of the way that Bush, aided by Donald Rumsfeld and with the connivance of Blair, stoked an international crisis with Saddam Hussein in order to justify an invasion.

Washington is doing its best to manipulate American opinion in favour of war, with its alarmist propaganda about the threat posed to the US by the present Iranian regime and its alleged intention to produce nuclear warheads for its missiles.

Remember all that stomach-churning stuff about Saddam's "weapons of mass destruction"? Weapons which never existed.

In the run-up to the war on Iraq, Bush also falsely claimed there were links between Saddam and al-Qaida. Now he accuses the Iranians of supplying explosive devices to the Shia insurgents in Iraq in order to kill American soldiers.

But when asked for evidence, the President, with an uneasily sheepish grin worthy of a schoolboy making excuses for cutting football practice, gave only the lamest of replies - saying the devices had been supplied by a section of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

Yet he had to admit he did not know whether President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had ordered their supply. "What matters," he blustered, "is that we are responding."

Responding? But how? That raises another question: is Bush simply using the Iranian nuclear program and the story about the Iranian supply of explosive devices as cover for a real purpose - that of launching a massive attack on Iran intended to topple the present Iranian state?

Attack Iran and spark world war

The answer to this is truly terrifying. Because we know from recent Pentagon leaks that Centcom (the Central Command, responsible for US strategy and operations in the Middle East) is engaged in detailed military studies for a "shock-and-awe" aerial onslaught aimed at destroying not only Iran's nuclear facilities but also the entire military infrastructure.

That is why there are now two attack-carrier task groups concentrated in the Persian Gulf, as well as Stealth bombers in readiness in the US. To achieve its targets, the Pentagon would have to unleash waves of attacks by more than 100 aircraft on the 20 widely dispersed plants of the Iranian nuclear industry.

Prolonged bombing of military bases, barracks, and air-defence systems, many of them in or near great cities, would be needed. We saw it all before in the much smaller and less populated country of Iraq.

The loss of life among civilians would far exceed the 7000 slaughtered during the "shock-and-awe" blitz on Baghdad which heralded the invasion of Iraq.

If the bombers struck an already "live" nuclear plant, the result would be another Chernobyl. In addition, such an onslaught would inevitably mean war.

AND it would mean war with a nation of 70 million people - 65 per cent of whom are under the age of 25 - at a time when the combined might of American and British armed forces have been unable to subdue a country with a population of no more than 27 million.

Geographically, Iran is a mountainous country much larger than Iraq or Afghanistan, and extending from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, from Turkey to Afghanistan. While the Iranian armed forces (including the 120,000 men of the Revolutionary Guards and the 200,000 in the Basij militia, all Islamic zealots) may be far inferior to the American forces in training and hi-tech weaponry, they fought a bloody war with Saddam Hussein for six years - proving that they are well able to take appalling attrition without buckling.

For them, every body-bag contained a glorious martyr.

No one should therefore underestimate Iran's capacity for prolonged resistance. War with Iran would be like Iraq plus Afghanistan multiplied by 10.

In a fresh demonstration of "asymmetric warfare" (where the two sides are mismatched in their military capabilities), America's colossal firepower would be countered by guerilla ambush and terrorist bombings anywhere in the world where infuriated Muslims could inflict damage on the West.

Remember the Madrid train bombings? Remember London in July 2005? They would be commonplace. Because of the connection between the Shias of Iran - who make up 90 per cent of the population - those of southern Iraq, and of Hezbollah in the Lebanon, the conflict would engulf the entire Middle East, from the Mediterranean coast to the borders of Pakistan, and very probably sucking in the Sunnis of Saudi Arabia as well in reaction.

What's more, such a conflict would inflict terrible damage on the global economy because of its impact on oil supplies from the Persian Gulf.

It would be all too easy for Iranian suicide speedboats to make the narrow Straits of Hormuz too hazardous for the passage of the giant tankers on which the industrialised First World (now including China) depends. It would be all too tempting for the US Navy to try to clear that passage by force.

In short, an attack on Iran would effectively launch World War III. Can Bush and his neo-conservative advisers really be contemplating such a war? And what would be the ultimate aim of this new war? More "regime change", as in Iraq? But it can't be emphasised too strongly that the present regime in Iran is not a one-man tyranny like Saddam's, as Bush seems to believe.

There is more than one centre of power in Tehran, each serving to counter-balance the others.

Attack Iran and spark world war

Take President Ahmadinejad. His bellicose rhetoric (so much like Bush's in reverse) may rattle American and Israeli nerves, but he does not control foreign policy.

That is in the hands of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, at present Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. It is he who appoints the heads of the armed services as well as the judiciary. But even the Supreme Leader has to share power with the Council of Guardians, made up of six clerics and six lay jurists, and this has the right to veto any new law which it reckons violates Islamic Law.

What's more, yet another body, the Expediency Council, with 31 members, also enjoys a key place in government. It advises the Supreme Leader on national policy. It mediates disputes between the Council of Guardians and the Majlis, or parliament. Under its current chairman, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, it is a voice for shrewd pragmatism rather than Islamic fanaticism.

And although the parliament is far from being the equivalent of a freely-elected western legislature, its debates voice criticism of government policy in an open way not seen in any other Middle-Eastern Islamic state.

Moreover, the dispersed nature of state power in Iran does not tell the whole story of a society that is far more open to change than, say, Saudi Arabia.

The highly educated young - including Ahmadinejad's own children - have access to the internet and, through this, to global news and culture.

Middle-class women enjoy professional careers and increasingly defy revolutionary edicts about the wearing of chadors and public association with men. Iranian film-makers are recognised as among the best in the world.

In contrast, the poor, who were once Ahmadinejad's popular base, are more and more disenchanted because he has not delivered his promise of jobs and a richer life. This is why he has recently lost ground in local elections. Yes, elections.

So Iran is no monolithic dictatorship exercising absolute control over its population. On the contrary, the position of the Islamic fundamentalists is increasingly under threat. Even within the structures of government, there is tension between them and the pragmatists who wish for better relations with the West.

Nothing suits the fundamentalists better than threats from "the Great Satan", America, because these threats serve only to consolidate patriotic Iranians behind the regime.

Iranians ask why their country should be denied nuclear weapons when Israel, Pakistan and India all have them in defiance of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. They note that across their border with Iraq, there stands an American army of 150,000 soldiers and a powerful air force, while to the south are the American bases in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, plus two powerful carrier groups. To the east, in Afghanistan, there is another large western army dominated by America, who are also building vast permanent bases (just as in Iraq). In consequence, Iranians see themselves as surrounded by hostile forces led by the US.

It is in this context that the aggressive rhetoric of Bushite Washington is so counter-

productive. Bush, it appears, has learned nothing from the Iraq experience. Just as in 2002-03, his recipe for global relations remains the same: bullying confrontation.

First of all, work up fear and hatred of the chosen enemy through alarmist stories about hostile threats. Then ostentatiously deploy the armed forces in order to coerce that enemy and, if need be, smash him.

These resemblances between Bush's pre-war policy towards Iraq and now towards Iran are deeply alarming - because we know what happened last time, and we know that next time it would be far, far, worse.

Attack Iran and spark world war

And yet, there is an alternative: a policy of patient, long-sighted engagement with Iran. This would save us all from the catastrophe of war. At the same time, it would encourage all those political and social forces in Iran seeking the gradual erosion of the legacy of the Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 fundamentalist Islamic revolution.

On the key question of Iran's nuclear programs, it is quite unreasonable of Washington to demand that Iran stop uranium enrichment before any negotiations can begin. No such demand was made of communist North Korea, where a deal over its civil and military nuclear program has just been satisfactorily concluded. So with Iran, too, Washington must be willing to sit down and negotiate.

At the same time, Iran should be invited to join a conference of all the states in the Middle East to settle questions of regional security, including the nuclear issue - and especially including the future of Iraq, which is of crucial concern to Iran and where it has a vital role to play because of the Shia connection.

Below this level of negotiation between governments, we in the West should be making every effort to foster informal co-operation with Iranians in the fields of education, science, medicine, the media, the theatre and film. And I mean genuine co-operation - not the kind of deliberate subversion of the regime favoured by the Washington hawks.

What's more, the West - and particularly Britain - could play a major constructive role in developing the Iranian economy, to the immense mutual profit of both sides.

For example, the capital equipment of the Iranian oilfields is old-fashioned and clapped-out, with the result that production is a fraction of what it was under the Shah and could be again.

At present, Chinese and Indian engineering firms are looking for contracts to rebuild and re-equip, but their technology is itself backward compared with what the West could offer. Here is a tremendous opportunity to be seized - but one which conflict could only destroy.

Over time, engagement could gradually dissolve the mutual suspicions and tensions between Iran and the West, and within the Middle East itself. The alternative is too appalling for sane people to contemplate.

First published in the Daily Mail, London

Correlli Barnett, CBE, is a fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge. He is a military historian who has also written extensively on the United Kingdom's industrial decline. His best known work is *The Audit of War*, which describes the decline of British power during the 20th century.

United States

Defence budget (2007) US\$538.8 billion

Active frontline personnel 1.4 million+

Total aircraft 18,000+

Fighter planes 2800+

Armour 30,000+

Artillery 5200+

Infantry support systems 2440+

Missile defence systems 35,000+

Tanks 7650+

Attack Iran and spark world war

Navy units 1860+

Aircraft carriers 12

Iran

Defence budget (2005) US\$6.3 billion

Active personnel 545,000

Total aircraft 950

Fighter aircraft 450

Armour 2400

Artillery 4600

Infantry support systems 12,500

Missile defence systems 1760

Tanks 2200

Navy units 65

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Armed Forces of the World Database, wire services

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Stranger than fiction Critical shots, 2006

The Toronto Star

December 31, 2006 Sunday

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Body

The book world faced one major scandal in 2006. It involved Larry King and Oprah Winfrey, and in public attention it almost rivalled such momentous controversies as Tom Cruise's wedding and Britney Spears' missing underwear.

Though it shook the book industry, it was not the only significant event in writing and publishing circles. There were deep currents of loss and anxiety running through many of the events and milestones of the year.

First, the scandal.

It began early in January when an investigative website called Smoking Gun took a good look at the supposedly true events recounted in the bestseller *A Million Little Pieces*, a memoir of drug and alcohol addiction by James Frey. The 35-year-old told quite a redemptive story about fights with the police, serious jail time and other hijinks. Oprah loved it. Readers ate it up.

After sifting through court and arrest records, and interviewing police officers, Smoking Gun came up with a much different picture - that of a docile and polite young man who just happened to drink too much on occasion. Frey spent a few hours in a holding tank, and that was about it.

Interviewed on Larry King Live, Frey had no rebuttal. During a return visit, Oprah refused him absolution.

The Frey scandal touched on two major issues. The first is truth in memoirs specifically and non-fiction generally. Such notable literary figures as Truman Capote, in his 1966 non-fiction book *In Cold Blood*, and Farley Mowat, in many of his books on the far north, have been caught cheating on the facts. Carlos Castaneda fooled many a hippie in the '60s and '70s by selling fiction - his encounters with a Yaqui medicine man - as fact.

This tendency not to let the truth interfere with a good story is anathema to serious journalists.

"I've never made anything up," insisted Gay Talese, author of *Honor Thy Father and Thy Neighbor's Wife*, among other landmark works of non-fiction, when he appeared at this year's International Festival of Authors at Harbourfront.

"Too many of these people who were calling themselves journalists were sloppy journalists," he told the Star. "I don't want to say anything negative about Hunter Thompson after his death, but I never wanted to be identified with Hunter Thompson. Why? Hunter Thompson was making it up."

The second issue is not so obvious. Novelist Norman Mailer once said that the one role he found insupportable, growing up, was the role of being "a nice boy." Likewise, in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, the

scamp Sawyer is infinitely more engaging than his well-behaved Cousin Sid. Frey's fabrications - including his tale of undergoing root canal without anaesthetics, and his story about beating up a priest who tried to grope him - are all designed to make him look good, in this American vein.

He may be a horrible drunk and a self-destructive drug addict, these adventures inform the reader, but by God he's no sissy.

Let's talk about a real tough guy. Two books published by novelists were on the subject of the Biblical strong man Samson: Israeli David Grossman's *Lion's Honey: The Myth of Samson* and American David Maine's *The Book of Samson*.

Grossman's Samson is a confused, basically soft-hearted, alienated fellow, set apart and isolated almost from the moment of his birth by his divine mission. Maine's Samson is not a bit alienated. His talent - killing - is perfectly in sync with his job in life. If he's isolated, that's the way he likes it. Maine's Samson has the feel of a murderous American frontiersman, as opposed to Grossman's conflicted, good Jewish son.

Samson's dual appearance may not be entirely coincidental. Historical fiction, like science fiction, is always about the present, and Samson's endless war against the Philistines obviously mirrors Israel's endless war against the Palestinians. Like Samson, the Israeli army is virtually invincible in open battle but is not always able to strike effectively against a wily foe - as was demonstrated by the summer conflict between Israel and Hezbollah.

Two well-known Americans, Cormac McCarthy and Philip Roth, published particularly sobering novels.

"Bleak" hardly does justice to the horrors of McCarthy's post-apocalyptic America in *The Road*, where the weather is always cold and bitter, and cannibalistic thugs roam the deserted interstate highways in search of edible slaves.

Roth's novel, *Everyman*, features an unnamed protagonist who is faced with a prospect almost as discomfiting: his imminent death.

Both novels clearly favour the past over the present and future. There is no future to speak of in McCarthy's novel. As for Roth's hero, his warm memories of childhood - unusually warm for a Roth hero - are set against a present and immediate future of hospital corridors, hostile sons, pain, fear and unresolved guilt.

Both Roth and McCarthy are well on in years, and it is understandable why they would privilege the past over the future. The old tend to do that. But the shrinking from the future in these two novels seems to echo a wider cultural mood of anxiety and apocalypse, particularly in the United States.

The past also looms large in two books of literary reminiscence published this year: American Cynthia Ozick's *The Din in the Head: Essays* and Canadian David Helwig's literary memoir, *Names of Things*.

A feature of both books is a sense of the dwindling reputation of former literary grandees.

"His fame is long dimmed," Ozick writes of Delmore Schwartz, an American poet who flourished in the mid-20th century.

"Few remember Irving Howe, say, or Randall Jarrell," she comments at another point, regarding two intellectual leading lights in her student days.

Even the late Lionel Trilling, a giant of academia while Ozick was at Columbia University, and a literary intellectual of unsurpassed moral seriousness, has faded in reputation.

Helwig's memoir is animated by a similar spirit. Whither, the memoir implicitly asks, such once-influential figures as Dave Godfrey, leading the troops of Canadian literary nationalism in the late '60s and early '70s?

Perhaps the faded figure Helwig is most concerned with, however, is Helwig himself. He was once in the forefront of Canadian writers, as judged by reviewers, academics, publishers. Now he must remind the reader of the good

Stranger than fiction Critical shots, 2006

reviews his work received in The New York Times and The London Sunday Times, and the occasion when Governor General Adrienne Clarkson quoted one of his poems in a speech.

"I was once told a story about Margaret Atwood being asked why, after all her success, she did publicity tours," Helwig writes. "'If I don't, they'll forget me,' she supposedly said."

Irving Layton, for generations of Canadians the embodiment of Canadian verse, died. So did American novelist William Styron, author of such works as *Lie Down In Darkness* and *Sophie's Choice*. The two writers were poles apart in temperament, background, style and genre, but the feisty Montreal Jew and the aristocratic Virginian had one thing in common: both came under political attack in the 1960s.

Layton's mistake was supporting the Americans in the Vietnam War. He once sent a book of his poetry, *The Shattered Plinths*, to Lyndon Johnson in admiration.

Styron's fall from grace occurred in the aftermath of the 1967 publication of *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, his fictionalized reminiscences of the leader of a slave uprising in pre-Civil War Virginia. Black critics recoiled from his portrayal of Turner as emotionally tortured and sexually conflicted, and accused the author - in an early anticipation of the appropriation-of-voice controversy - of producing a "whitened appropriation of our history."

A more interesting issue for Styron readers: his propensity to write about ***female*** sacrificial victims who are doomed to perish before novel's end.

The best-known writer to die this year was undoubtedly Mickey Spillane, creator of the immortal private detective Mike Hammer. Spillane was less important as a literary stylist than a cultural bellwether. An air force instructor during World War II, Spillane knew that the American sensibility had been permanently altered by the experience of total war.

His first book, *I, the Jury*, published in 1947, reflected the increased tolerance of - perhaps even appetite for - depictions of nihilistic brutality among a generation of war veterans. His private eye, even darker than the relatively knightly creations of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, had no compunctions about beating information out of unco-operative sources, or sleeping with the dames he met on the job.

Spillane lived long enough to see the figure of the quirky, authority-snubbing private eye, often living in the margins of society, fade from the television screen in favour of teams of relentless and unbelievably competent forensic scientists, police investigators and district attorneys.

The war on terror has made people like Mike Hammer dispensable.

In April I visited poet, novelist and culture critic Bruce Powe's class at York University on Marshall McLuhan and Northrop Frye to judge the winner of a debate between two student teams over the titans' respective merits. It was a tough assignment; I more or less chickened out by calling the debate a draw.

What's significant is that these students were interested in McLuhan ("the medium is the message") and Frye in the first place. Even when they were alive and flourishing in the '60s, the pair of University of Toronto English professors were regarded with suspicion by their colleagues.

The influential American literary critic Edmund Wilson once sarcastically referred to Frye and McLuhan as "two rare beauties." Even before McLuhan died in 1980, academic rivals were doing their best to bury him. They're still at it. Political trends in literary studies made Frye's criticism seem hopelessly out of date.

In fact, the two mavericks are an industry unto themselves. The University of Toronto Press is publishing a 31-volume edition of *The Collected Works of Northrop Frye*. Twelve volumes, including editions of his diaries and notebooks, have already been released. Gingko Press, a California-based publisher, has published a dozen reprints of works by and about McLuhan, with more to come.

Edmund Wilson, if he were alive, would weep.

As a culture, we insist that top-drawer literary prose is the property of fiction writers. But no novel I read this year matched the richness of three non-fiction books: Ron Rosenbaum's *The Shakespeare Wars: Clashing Scholars, Public Fiascos, Palace Coups*; David Foster Wallace's *Consider the Lobster: And Other Essays*; and Jonathan Franzen's *The Discomfort Zone: A Personal History*.

Rosenbaum, a New York-based journalist whose best known previous book was *Explaining Hitler*, demonstrated again that a free-ranging intelligence could do justice to the most formidable of scholarly controversies, being accessible to a general readership and coming up with a pretty shrewd idea of who's right and who's blowing smoke.

The essays of Franzen, best known for his novel *The Corrections*, were narrative in form, rich in detail, emotionally compelling and, it seemed to me, basically truthful. I say "basically" because we all construct a self for public consumption, novelists included; I can say there are no root-canal operations without anaesthetics in this memoir.

Wallace showed what a literary sensibility can do when covering a porn-film convention or a political campaign (two not entirely unrelated cultural phenomena). Every object or remark, even the most mundane, seems to shimmer with significance in Wallace's reports.

The atmosphere generated by this retrieved human bric-a-brac is not very cheerful, but that's life in George W. Bush's America. Mordecai Richler used to do this sort of thing in his reportage, but not with Wallace's ferocious intensity.

In the fiction department, one offering that made the Governor General's Award for fiction shortlist this year should not go unnoticed. Relative newcomer Paul Glennon, an Ottawa-based writer, came up with a series of linked stories entitled *The Dodecahedron: or A Frame for Frames*.

If you like metaphysics you could spend a lot of time pondering this frame for frames - think of it as an elaborate construction floating through the void - but the narratives themselves were playful and note perfect.

The bizarrely inappropriate metaphor is threatening to become a Canadian tradition. Remember the "penis sleeping like a sea horse" from Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*? Or this metaphor from Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*: "The sky was a hazy grey, the sun low in the sky, a wan pinkish colour, like fish blood"?

At least two metaphors are in the running for most disgusting trope of the year. The first is from Michael Redhill's novel *Consolation*, in which he compares Toronto's new City Hall to "a broken ice cream cone with a tumour in the middle."

The second is from the English translation of Gaetan Soucy's novel *The Immaculate Conception*. A night sky is described as "swollen and glittering, shot with green and blue: the belly of a fly about to lay its eggs."

Another tough choice.

Graphic

GETTY IMAGES Cultural bellwether: An air force instructor during World War II, writer Mickey Spillane (who died this year) knew U.S. sensibility had been altered by war experience. TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO Dept. of inappropriate metaphors: In *Consolation*, Michael Redhill compared Toronto's new City Hall to "a broken ice cream cone with a tumour in the middle." The image at left is from the cover of James Frey's memoir, *A Million Little Pieces*.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian (Australia)

March 30, 2007 Friday

All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Letters; Pg. 15

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Body

MATP

Capitalism and the climate might be mutually exclusive

MOST TALKED ABOUT

HOWARD V STERN

WHEN John Howard says jobs will be lost should Australia sign up to the Kyoto Protocol or implement recommendations in the Stern Report, is he really letting us know that capitalism and environmental sustainability might be mutually exclusive? Now there's a can of worms.

Tom Richman

Woolloongabba, Qld

NICHOLAS Stern certainly served us up the rough with the smooth: cut our carbon emissions by 30 per cent pronto, but also be clever enough to invent exportable new technologies for clean coal burning.

How easily he could cut the ground from under those nay-saying sceptics if only he and his ilk set a personal example. I'll sign up as soon as I see affluent green advocates making the same sacrifices to their comfortable lifestyles as the replaced coal miners will surely have to do.

L.Leroux

Acton, ACT

WHAT John Howard really means when he talks about not sacrificing the jobs of coal miners is he will not do anything that will have an adverse effect on the profits of his business mates in the coal industry.

G.Unwin

Gold Coast, Qld

JOHN Howard has rejected Nicholas Stern's argument that rich countries should make the deepest cuts in greenhouse gas emissions to curb global warming. It's clear to anyone who is paying attention to the issue that the

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

developed nations have a historical liability. Having created a disproportionate amount of greenhouse gases for many decades, which has allowed us to develop our economy, it would be extremely mean-spirited for Australia not to commit to deep cuts in emissions as a way of acknowledging our historic and contemporary carbon debt.

With regard to the Prime Minister's "self explanatory" impact that emissions reduction targets would have on the Australian economy, the stark reality is that the Government has refused to assess the impact of climate change on the Australian economy, so it cannot make any meaningful comparison to the costs of mitigation.

Stephanie Long

Byron Bay, NSW

IT seems Nicholas Stern, Al Gore and others are missing an easier, cheaper and healthier path to emissions control -- if we all became vegans, millions of tonnes of CO2 equivalents in methane would be eliminated.

Land now used for animal farming would be available for fruit, vegetable and nut production, for afforestation to generate more oxygen while absorbing industrial emissions, and for settlement of the growing world population in villages rather than personality-deforming cities with huge energy demands.

Grant Gascoigne

Mitchelton, Qld

THE Prime Minister's cool response to Nicholas Stern's advice on tackling global warming confirms how Rudderless we are.

Mem Fox

Brighton, SA

WHILE John Howard points the finger at Southeast Asia's forest destruction as a cause of carbon emissions, southeast Australia's forest destruction seems to have conveniently escaped his attention.

Government spending on Australia's Regional Forest Agreements 10 years ago cemented into place the continuing destruction of our own magnificent and ancient forests in Gippsland, Tasmania and southeast NSW, primarily for export woodchips. The cost of this process? A cool \$800 million -- four times what he is proposing to spend on the overseas problem.

Jill Redwood

Orbost, Vic

THE notion that tropical deforestation can be significantly reduced or halted by Australia and a coalition of developed countries is fanciful. Anybody who has worked in the area of natural resource management in southeast Asia knows that there are strong economic incentives for landowners and governments to log the forests and to convert the land for agriculture. The forest industry has a great deal of political backing and governments are often easily corrupted, making such schemes even less likely to work.

Australia will be throwing money away if it tries to bribe village landowners to forgo their agricultural options. Likewise, funding governments to monitor logging, which they would be doing now if it was in their interest, has little chance of making a difference.

There is no other way -- Australia must look to reducing its own emissions which are the highest per capita in the world -- before trying desperately to gain political capital by funding bogus schemes elsewhere.

Colin Hunt

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Yungaburra, Qld

IF there is \$200million available to spend on planting trees, why not create new forests in Australia. The Ord River dam has huge reserves of water. Why not irrigate hundreds of square kilometres of arid land and plant millions of trees, creating a huge carbon sink.

Jay Lord

Dudley Park, WA

WHILE the Howard Government is saving the world with a token \$200 million to reafforest Southeast Asia, it is turning a blind eye to a pulp mill which will ravage the forests of Tasmania.

Phil Robins

Toorak Gardens, SA

One of the most barbarous acts of the 20th century

GREG Sheridan ("Terrorist state has a history of insanity", Opinion, 29/3) omits the most notable example of insanity in theocratic Iran. This was the deliberate butchery of thousands of "child martyrs" who were sent ahead of the tanks to detonate mines during the 1980s war with Iraq. This must rank as one of the most barbarous acts of the 20th century and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, now Iran's president, was its chief instigator and organiser. A regime capable of such monstrosity must never be allowed to obtain nuclear weapons.

Tom Drake-Brockman

Berrilee, NSW

IRAN may well have handed back hostages in 1981 because it was afraid of Ronald Reagan, but that is Greg Sheridan's opinion, not fact. The facts are that two years later, *Hezbollah*, an Iran-backed militant group, seized six American hostages with no apparent fear of Reagan. Rightly so, because Reagan's response was to negotiate the release of the hostages by promising to supply arms to Iran. At the time, Iran was in a war with the US's good friend Saddam Hussein, and subject to an arms embargo. How quickly we forget.

Peter Gibson

Medowie, NSW

EARLIER this week, your paper quoted US navy sources as stating that US rules of engagement would dictate that the US navy would have opened fire on the Iranians.

As a former member of the Royal Navy, I would assume that the British patrol would have been in visual contact with the parent ship, HMS Cornwall. The question has to be asked, why, when the Iranians threatened the RN personnel, were they not fired on by HMS Cornwall? Her firepower would surely have been sufficient to drive off the Iranians. This would have sparked a lot of hot air from Iran, but that would be preferable to the embarrassment of having British sailors captured without a whimper. The Brits now have a major diplomatic crisis on their hands and no guarantee of any favourable outcome.

Chris Robinson

Birkdale, Qld

THE news that the Iranian government has detained British sailors who were going about their business in international waters will come as no surprise to anyone who knows how far the mullahs will go to maintain popular support with the Iranian people.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The use of foreigners to whip up xenophobia among the populace is a trick frequently used by unscrupulous or desperate governments. Thank goodness we don't live in a country where the government would pick up a bunch of foreigners in open waters, bring them ashore, and then tell a whole pack of lies about the circumstances under which it detained those people.

Tony Letford

Ashfield, NSW

THE guilty plea by David Hicks has as much credibility as the statement broadcast on Iranian television by British Leading Seaman Faye Turney, admitting to trespassing in Iranian waters.

John Ransley

Highgate Hill, Qld

Hicks making war on me

WHILE I think that some of the tactics used by the US in Guantanamo Bay were despicable, the issue of David Hicks remains perfectly clear. He went to train and fight for a regime that shot women dead on their doorstep if they dared to open the door with their faces uncovered. I'm an educated, uncovered woman. Hicks was making war on me.

Geralie Pollard

Ferny Grove, Qld

THE threat of David Hicks's supporters to intensify their efforts once he has been transferred to an Australian prison should send shivers down the spines of every other Australian prisoner serving time in a foreign jail. If inter-government prisoner exchange agreements are seen not to be honored, what hope for Schapelle Corby et al?

Thomas Smith

Paddington, Qld

WHAT John Howard and his government have failed to realise is that a lot of us have always believed David Hicks to be guilty but are angry that he was denied basic rights through incarceration without charge or trial.

The cynicism amongst voters will build from the belief that the Prime Minister (with George W. Bush) arranged the "finalisation" of the case in order to clear the decks before the federal election.

Geoff Broadfoot

Narooma, NSW

IT appears that some of what Senator Bob Brown has described as "cruel and unusual punishment of David Hicks in that US gulag" has been delivered in the form of the same high-fat/high-cholesterol foods that doctors here and in North America are now strongly advising us to avoid. It's time for Hicks to come home to a five-fruit and three-veg Aussie diet soonest -- before that Guantanamo gastronomy really does him in.

Graham Hornel

City Beach, WA

Restrictive work practices

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HOW ironic that on the day the Labor Party and the trade unions were protesting against Work Choices, we were told that a Chinese company, Nanjing Automobile, is to relaunch the MG roadster, one of the icons of the now defunct British motor industry ("British classics on the road in China", 26/3).

The massive car plants in the English Midlands and at Oxford, which once employed thousands and supplied half the world with quality vehicles, now lie desolate and unused, victims of the excessive demands and restrictive work practices of a trade union movement that had gone to seed. The same thing happened to the great shipyards on the Clyde, near Glasgow. If ever Australians needed to think very carefully about the political and economic future of this country, it's now -- while there still is time.

Bryan Ball

Martinsville, NSW

Cricket fans fight back

HOW sad to read that the cricketing world's most colourfully vociferous followers have been priced out of what should have been a giant red letter day in the history of West Indian cricket: the opening of Antigua's Sir Vivian Richards 20,000-seat stadium for the World Cup match between Australian and the West Indies ("Fans stay away in protest", 29/3). Perhaps the ICC consulted FINA?

Another management triumph for the suits of Big Sport who don't sit in the bleachers or the outer; another hijacking of what should have been a chance for locals to celebrate their participation in a world cup; and another grab for cash from people who simply can't afford a month's wages on half-a-day's entertainment. Sadly, but understandably, a boycott of this once-in-a-lifetime chance was the only way the fans could fight back.

Leonard Colquhoun

Invermay, Tas

High-risk investor

POTENTIALLY losing my retirement funds is bad enough, but what's even more galling is finding out that Victorian state Labor MP Tony Robinson ("Worries raised with watchdog", 29/3) had been warning, as far back as four years ago, the federal Government and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission about Fincorp Group's dangerous targetting of mum-and-dad investors for high-risk investments. I accept that my naivety played a major part in my loss. As for my reaction to ASIC's refusal to comment on Fincorp ...unprintable!

Max Fischer

Scarborough, NSW

A first-rank tosser

WHATEVER the truth about the number of notches David Oldfield has accumulated on his belt, if I took a lie detection test and was asked whether I thought he was a first-rank tosser, and I answered "no", then in all probability I would be lying ("Oldfield's sex stunt backfires", 29/3).

David William Hall

Southport, Qld

Keating was not the first

MATT Price (The Sketch, 28/3) may be right in attributing the "infamous" phrase "You've never had it so good" to Paul Keating, but an equally infamous pre-user was Harold Macmillan (British prime minister and later Lord

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stockton) who used it in a speech at Bedford, UK, on July 20, 1957 when Keating was only 13 years old. The UK media and cartoonists badgered him with its social and other implications for years.

And apparently Macmillan wasn't being particularly original because the phrase had been used as a US presidential slogan in 1952 (when Keating was 8).

Tim Conway

Drummond Cove, WA

FIRST BYTE

letters@theaustralian.com.au

JOHN Howard asserts that "history is littered with examples of nations having overreacted to presumed threats to their great long-term disadvantage". Could this be the long-awaited admission that the invasion of Iraq was a monumental mistake?

Ian Kelly

Golden Grove, SA

Did Lee Kuan Yew also receive an honorary HECS debt?

Seth Richardson

Chippendale, NSW

Santo Santoro's integrity is as intact as it ever was, and that is not very.

B.Welch

Bridgeman Downs, Qld

Punishing whistleblowers is as Australian as Vegemite. It has helped to make Australia what it is today -- a cesspit of amorality and incompetence.

Druce Horton

Kuranda, Qld

The symbolism of switching off the lights for 60 Earth Hour in Sydney tomorrow night is most apt. The uber-greenies want to take us back to the dark ages.

Aaron Govendir

Dover Heights, NSW

I reckon Janet Albrechtsen needs to realise that opinions are not necessarily "facts" (Opinion, 28/3). For instance, it is my humble opinion that her political views wouldn't have been out of place in 1930s Germany or Italy or Spain. But, thankfully, that's a long way from making it a fact.

John Skaro

South Yarra, Vic

Looking back over past issues of The Australian, I realised that there is one interesting old chap from whom we have not heard for quite a while. I really must write more often!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Michael Strangways Price

Mandurah, WA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GPO Box 4162, Sydney, NSW, 2001 Fax: 02 9288 3077

Email: letters@theaustralian.com.au (no attachments)

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This is the Week to come...

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

March 11, 2007 Sunday

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Body

Home news

Enough to make a Chancellor green

Tomorrow's Conservative "Green Busi-ness" summit gives David Cameron a chance to convince employers that the Tories haven't forgotten them. High-profile speakers such as BSkyB's James Murdoch and Tesco's CEO, Sir Terry Leahy, should take a little of the wind power out of Gordon Brown's scheduled speech on the environment.

Meanwhile, Scottish Nationalists will be finalising their plans for May's Scottish election at a two-day conference starting in Glasgow on Saturday.

International news

American trials and tribulations

Tomorrow the inquest resumes into the death of Lance Corporal Horse Matty Hull, the British soldier killed by US "friendly fire" near Basra in 2003. The coroner agreed not to show the classified cockpit video of the incident.

On Tuesday, a federal court in Virginia is to try the government of Sudan in connection with the deaths of 17 Americans during an al-Qaeda bomb attack on a US destroyer in Yemen, in 2000.

Lord Black of Crossharbour, the former chairman of the Telegraph, is to appear in a Chicago court on Wednesday, on charges including fraud, racketeering and money laundering. The former media tycoon seemed hopeful last week, saying that he and his wife, Barbara Amiel, were looking forward to returning to Britain after the trial, when "we will be ready for a quieter life".

People

Machiavellian prelate returns to his church

The body of the late Cardinal Cesare Borgia should now be back in the Church of Santa Maria in Viana, Spain, in time for this week's 500th anniversary of his death. The son of Pope Alexander VI, and brother of the more famous Lucrezia, he was the Machiavellian statesman personified, having inspired much of The Prince; and for his sins had been buried in unconsecrated ground.

This is the Week to come...

Oh how we'll laugh

This will be a busy week for Fearne Cotton, who is not only joining our own Terry Wogan to present Saturday's contest to find the UK's Eurovision entry, but also acting as one of the many co-hosts of the previous day's Comic Relief charity "telethon". As well as the absolutely final - or so they say - appearance of Dawn French's vicar of Dibley, the seven-hour Red Nose Day show could well feature a farewell turn from the Rt Hon Tony Blair.

Business

Adam Smith institution

The composer Edward Elgar bows out at the Bank of England on Tuesday, with the launch of a new pounds 20 banknote featuring the political economist Adam Smith.

What Kate did

The fashion retailer Top-shop can expect a boost tomorrow, when Vogue offers the world its first glimpse of its new Kate Moss collection, though buyers will have to wait until May 1 to get their hands on the clothes.

Its high street rival French Connection will be less cheerful about reporting a drop of more than 70 per cent in full-year pretax profit on Wednesday.

Other companies reporting this week include HMV Group (Tuesday); Wm Morrison, Prudential, Aegis and the aerospace group Cobham (all Thursday); and Debenhams (Friday).

Sport

Lara's last stand

This year's Cricket World Cup, which begins on Tuesday, when Pakistan take on the hosts in Jamaica, is, surprisingly, the first in the Caribbean. Sadly for admirers of Brian Lara, left, it will also be his last, as the West Indies captain plans to retire from one-day internationals after the series. Michael Vaughan's England team make their first appearance on Friday, against New Zealand.

Saturday being St Patrick's Day, Ireland will be hoping for success not only in their match against Pakistan, but also in the final round of Six Nations rugby, as they meet Italy in Rome the same day.

Prodrive wins 'grand prix'

Motorsport fans will be celebrating the beginning of the Formula One season in Melbourne at the weekend - and the likelihood that James Bond's favourite car company, Aston Martin, will be back in British hands in the next few days. Ford is expected to announce its sale to a consortium led by Dave Richards of Prodrive, which is already planning to join the grand prix circuit in 2008.

A different kind of horse power will be seen at Cheltenham, where the National Hunt Festival begins on Tuesday, culminating with the Gold Cup on Friday.

United against Europe

Manchester United take on the rest of Europe on Tuesday, in a charity match celebrating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome - and of their becoming the first English team to enter European competition in 1956/7.

That was the Week that Was...

Home news

This is the Week to come...

Power to the people? Maybe

With 36 seats out of 108, the Democratic Unionist Party topped Wednesday's Northern Ireland Assembly poll, well ahead of Sinn Féin, which won 28. The Prime Minister declared that the votes showed the electorate was ready for "genuine power-sharing". DUP leader Ian Paisley seemed less certain.

But then Mr Blair must have been grateful for any distraction from the cash for honours scandal, which rumbled on with injunctions against publishing details of a memo by Downing Street aide Ruth Turner, charges of anti-semitic scapegoating, and the confiscation of some of the PM's notes on party donors.

No doubt Mr Blair's former spin-doctor Alastair Campbell was busy updating the relevant sections of his memoirs of The Blair Years, which we learned are to be published this summer once the Labour leader finally leaves Number 10.

So many dangers to the fabric of society

In a week when the self-medicating "cannabis granny" Patricia Tabram was sentenced to 250 hours' community service for growing marijuana, a Royal Society of Arts report said current drugs policy was "driven by moral panic" and that some illicit substances could be less harmful than alcohol and tobacco.

At least Mrs Tabram did not become one of the "geriatric lifers" that Lord Phillips, the Lord Chief Justice, warned would fill Britain's prisons unless sentencing guidelines were reformed. Nor did crime boss Terry Adams, who was given seven years for money laundering after a plea bargain to stop his wife being charged.

The number of "geriatric lifers" in the Lords were, however, expected to drop, after Wednesday's Commons vote in favour of an elected second chamber.

And the Home Office announced plans to reduce illegal immigration by sending people text reminders before their visas run out.

Equal opportunities

The shadow homeland security spokesman, Patrick Mercer, was forced to step down on Thursday after saying that being called a "black bastard" was part and parcel of life in the Army, and no worse than being abused for being a redhead.

The Ministry of Defence finally agreed to give full pensions to Gurkhas serving in the Army - and to allow women to join the Nepalese brigade for the first time in its 200-year history.

International news

Achilles and the military solution

Although Lt Gen David Petraeus, the new US military commander in Iraq, announced there could be "no military solution to a problem like that", he still managed to persuade the Pentagon to give him an extra 2,200 military police to support the security drive in Baghdad, after days of sectarian attacks left more than 150 Shia pilgrims dead.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban said they had kidnapped a British journalist, but although they later decided he was Italian, it did not seem to advance his chances of release. On Tuesday Nato launched Operation Achilles, its biggest offensive in Afghanistan since 2001, to bring security to the opium-producing province of Helmand.

Nuclear fallouts

A retired Iranian defence minister linked with Hezbollah was reported missing in Istanbul. Tehran denied that Ali Reza Asgari had defected to the US with information about its nuclear programme, claiming that the former general had been abducted by "Western intelligence".

This is the Week to come...

The UN's International Atomic Energy Agency approved cuts in technical aid to Iran, but from this week Iranians will have daily reminders of their nuclear ambitions on new banknotes featuring atomic symbols.

China announced an 18 per cent rise in its military budget, and there were reports that Taiwan had tested a cruise missile capable of hitting Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Republic of Congo's top nuclear official was arrested on Tuesday, in connection with "an important quantity" of uranium that had gone missing in Kinshasa.

Affairs of the States

Lewis Libby, former chief of staff to Vice-President Dick Cheney, was found guilty of lying to a grand jury but the White House said there was a "strong expectation" that if he was given a jail sentence in June the President would pardon him. And Newt Gingrich, the loudest campaigner for impeachment of Bill Clinton over the Monica Lewinsky affair in 1999, admitted he himself had been having a fling with a young staffer at the time.

One might have expected the oh-so-ethical Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama to make the most of these Republican misdemeanours, but he had been put on the spot himself by allegations about his share dealings.

People

Supermodel turns scrubber

The Streatham supermodel Naomi Campbell was sentenced to a week mopping the floor of a New York garage as punishment for throwing a crystal-encrusted mobile phone at her maid. The judge was kind enough to rule that she need not step out in the sanitation department's regulation orange safety vest and workboots.

Judas good, Dylan bad, Wikipedia untrustworthy

The Pope revealed he had tried to stop Bob Dylan playing for Catholic pilgrims in 1997, because he feared the born-again musician was a "prophet" whose beliefs were at odds with the Church. No such problems with Jeffrey Archer, however, whose novel *The Gospel of Judas* by Benjamin Iscariot is launched in Rome this week. Perhaps the input of the Australian theologian Prof Francis J. Moloney helped to win the Vatican's endorsement of the perjurer's tale.

Meanwhile, the reliability of Wiki-pedia, the online encyclopedia, was undermined when one of its "expert" employees was exposed as a 24-year-old college drop-out. Far from being a professor of religion, "essay", aka Ryan Jordan, relied on such academic texts as *Catholicism for Dummies* to help him correct other people's entries.

Deaths noticed

Elizabeth Jolley, 83, novelist.

John Inman, 71, aka Mr Humphries ("I'm free"), the camp menswear assist-ant in the sitcom *Are You Being Served?*

Alejandro Finisterre, 86, Spanish writer and inventor of table football.

Robert Adler, 93, inventor of the TV remote control.

Henri Troyat, 95, grand old man of French letters.

Ernest Gallo, 97, wine-maker.

Ian Wooldridge, 75, sports journalist.

General Sir John Akehurst, 77, former commander of Oman's Dhofar Brigade.

This is the Week to come...

Jean Baudrillard, 77, French post-modernist thinker.

Bill Threlfall, 81, tennis commentator.

Sir John Smith, 83, businessman and founder of the Landmark Trust.

Business

Don't call them...

ITV suspended all its phone-in polls and competitions for the duration of an independent "security audit" into its premium rate telephone services. Fellow broadcaster Five followed suit on Thursday, and the BBC and Channel 4 were also investigating their own "call TV" programmes. The regulator Ofcom said it would introduce licensing for premium rate phone services, and promised to change its name to something less "like a nasty urinary disease".

Given that Endemol's Cheetah Television subsidiary was found to have been making up winners for its Brain-teaser quiz, it might not have been the best week to start the auction of the Big Brother production company - especially after Carphone Warehouse withdrew its pounds 3m sponsorship of the Channel 4 show.

Meanwhile ITV reported a 19 per cent fall in pre-tax profits to pounds 364m partly due to difficult advertising conditions, although its new executive chairman, Michael Grade, also admitted to "a lack of innovation in our programming".

On a wing and a promise

The crisis at the European defence group EADS continued, as its subsidiary Airbus posted a loss of pounds 389m - its first ever - on Friday and warned of "another substantial loss in 2007". Still, the plane-maker's future was clearly secure, after the French presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy told trade union leaders: "I have not decided to let Airbus fail."

Carry on regardless

Stock markets around the world continued to slide as investment firms playing the "carry trade" were damaged by what Goldman Sachs called "an amazing amount of lever-age on currency markets that has nothing to do with real economic activity".

'Stunning' JLP takings

John Lewis Partnership's chairman, Sir Stuart Hampson, announced "simply stunning" results on Thursday: record profits of pounds 319m in the year to January and group sales up 11 per cent to pounds 6.4bn. While this didn't exactly push shop-floor staff in the employee-owned partnership into the 946-strong band of billionaires identified by Forbes magazine, it did give them a bonus of almost 18 per cent on their salary, or about pounds 2,000.

Follow the money

Fraud costs UK business nearly pounds 4bn a year, a police report said on Wednesday, though less than the public sector's pounds 6.4bn. The UK Financial Services Authority revealed that suspicious trading occurred ahead of almost a quarter of all merger and acquisition deals on the London stock market in 2005.

Sport

The luck of the English

Having eliminated the reigning champions, Barcelona, last week, Liverpool found themselves one of three English clubs in the quarter-finals of the Champions League. The others are Chelsea and Manchester United (the less said about Arsenal's humiliating defeat by PSV Eindhoven the better), but the luck of Friday's draw means none of them will meet before the semi-finals.

This is the Week to come...

Ashton changes side

With Jonny Wilkinson, Phil Vickery and Andy Farrell injured, England's rugby head coach Brian Ashton was forced to make 11 changes to the side last week. As a result today's encounter with France at Twickenham will see Mike Catt, aged 35 and a half, as the oldest back ever to captain the national team, albeit temporarily.

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'I was scared. Who would believe the Israeli president raped me?'

The Sunday Times (London)

February 11, 2007

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; News; Pg. 22

Length: 2226 words

Byline: Marie Colvin Tel Aviv

Body

IN A hotel room in Tel Aviv, a young assistant who worked in the office of Moshe Katsav, the Israeli president, is acting out the moves she claims he made when he raped her.

"I went into his office with a book I needed to put away," she said. "He was sitting at his desk and there's a big wall of books behind him. I was reaching up to put the book away when he came up behind me."

She crosses her hands on her stomach and hunches. You can almost see the big arms trapping her hands under his.

"He was behind me in a kind of hug," she continued. "It was like my hands were tied. He is not a big person but he is strong. I said: what are you doing?"

"I don't know why I said that. I was shocked. He said, 'I want you. I want you to love me. Why don't you love me? I want to have sex with you'. I think I said again: what are you doing?"

Katsav pushed her onto the corner of his desk, she claims. She rises from her chair to demonstrate how her hips were allegedly forced on to the table as he turned her to face him.

"My hands were on the table and his hands were over mine on the table. I'm not weak. (But) I had this feeling I never felt before -you can't do anything.

"Before I even understood, he opened his belt (she starts unbuckling hers to demonstrate) and he pulled up my skirt. I started saying: I'm leaving, I'm quitting. I was sure that he would stop."

She draws on a cigarette and grimaces. "Maybe I didn't struggle enough," she said.

"I was shocked. I was thinking, what if people know, what if I don't have a job.

He penetrated me."

The alleged attack lasted minutes, she said. "One leg was out of my panties and I put it back in. And I pulled them up and I just went out of his office. I took my purse from my desk and I just went."

She has been seeing a psychotherapist for six months and says that it has given her a new perspective. "I didn't shout. But I did say no, strongly. I know I did.

'I was scared. Who would believe the Israeli president raped me?'

I said: don't touch me." Afterwards, she says, he warned her: "Don't tell anyone."

She went to a public garden nearby and sat for hours, she says, smoking one cigarette after another before taking a taxi home. It was sunny but windy. "I was thinking, why me? What did I do wrong? Did I do something wrong? I saw my life ruined in just one moment."

Calls to her mobile went unanswered. "I took a shower and went to bed," she said.

"I wanted to wash away his touch. He was all over me."

The young woman, who bears a resemblance to the actress Michelle Pfeiffer in Chanel tortoiseshell glasses, now divides her life into two parts: before and after the alleged rape.

Before, her interests were simple. She says she loved her job. She had a boyfriend and a car and she socialised when she could outside the long hours of the president's office.

Now, she shies away from the company of all but good friends. "I don't listen to music any more, I don't go shopping. I'm not the same person," she said last week.

The president vigorously protests his innocence of her allegations, saying that years had gone by before she made them and vowing to fight until his last breath to clear his name. Nevertheless, he is facing indictments not only for rape but also for charges of sexual misconduct against three other women.

The young assistant, who cannot be named by law, is at the centre of a swirl of sexual and financial scandals in the Israeli government that have brought public confidence in the country's leaders to an all-time low.

Haim Ramon, the justice minister, was forced to step down last summer. Last month he was convicted of committing an indecent act by forcibly kissing a 20-year-old female soldier as he arrived at the prime minister's office for a meeting on the day when Israel decided to go to war against Hezbollah.

The prime minister himself, Ehud Olmert, faces inquiries into his alleged role in promoting the interests of two friends in the privatisation of a bank and also over claims of corruption in property deals.

However, it is the sex scandal surrounding 61-year-old Katsav that is gripping the nation.

In a speech broadcast live on Israeli television, he claimed that there was a conspiracy against him by the police, the prosecutors and the media. Then he got into a shouting match with a Channel 2 correspondent who had tried to ask him a question.

Katsav's duties as president are largely ceremonial but he is a symbol of the nation. He beat Shimon Peres, the nation's elder statesman, to the post in 2000 although he had held only second-rank posts in successive governments of the right-wing party Likud. One newspaper said that he "rose simply by being too dull to make enemies".

Katsav, the first Israeli president from a Muslim country, was born in Yazd, Iran, and came to Israel at the age of six, joining the hundreds of thousands of Jews emigrating after the 1948 war that ended with the foundation of the Jewish state.

At a modest bungalow in Kiryat Malachi, he and his wife Gila have raised five children.

The assistant joined Katsav's staff soon after he became president and did menial work before rising to a more responsible job. She was young, naive, poorly educated and in awe of the president. Looking back, she claims that she can now see that his advances began gradually.

"The president would call me on my private line," she said. "He would stop by my desk and say, 'You look pretty', or 'I like your skirt'."

'I was scared. Who would believe the Israeli president raped me?'

It was flattering to have the attention of such a powerful man, but matters soon became uncomfortable. "He would stand too close or seek out my company too much. I thought, well, it's only talk. What can I say? I didn't want to lose my job. My father is not a Rothschild."

Katsav's questions became increasingly personal. She once walked out of his office when he asked what she liked to do in bed, she claims, but she says she could not confront him.

Her days grew longer. She would start at 8:30am, meeting the president when he came back from early morning prayers at the synagogue next door. Sometimes she would stay in the office until 11pm at his request.

Katsav, she said, would go upstairs at the end of the working day and return in a tracksuit, asking her to sit and watch the news with him. "I didn't know if it was part of the job," she said. "I was dating someone and it ruined that a lot, because I didn't have so much time."

He constantly rang her on her mobile phone, she claims, sometimes starting at 7.30am as she headed into work and finishing late at night.

Sometimes he would discuss colleagues in intimate terms, for instance, telling her that one of them was gay.

At other times he berated her for incompetence.

"It made me nervous," she said. One day, she alleges, he crossed the line of acceptable behaviour. She was sitting in front of his desk taking instructions, when he walked around and stood next to her.

"He said, 'Stand for a second'. And I don't know, instinctively I stood up. He put his hand on my breast, like this," she said, demonstrating a cupping motion.

"I said: what are you doing?"

And I froze."

She left and stayed away for two days. "He kept calling and saying, 'It's okay, I'm not going to touch you, if you don't like it that's okay'. I was confused. I couldn't really know what happened. But I started thinking that I need to think about another job."

Now she believes she should have done precisely that. Just a few weeks later she went into his office to return the book, with all the consequences that she says have changed her life.

She knows it seems suspicious that she walked out for 10 days after the alleged rape and then came back to work for a month before fleeing the country.

She struggles to explain herself, but says she had resolved to put the rape behind her and try to survive in a situation that had overwhelmed her.

Asked why she did not report the rape, she ponders for a moment. Then the words come pouring out.

"I thought, who would believe me? I was scared, ashamed. I didn't want anyone to know. He was calling and threatening me, saying, 'Don't tell anyone. If you do, you will never even work as a waitress again'.

"Then he would call and say, 'I don't have an assistant. Where is your professional responsibility?'

"I worked there again knowing I was going to leave," she said. "I had to prepare my parents, sell my car. I had a life to cut off." She added: "If nothing bad happened to me like they say, why would I leave my dream job?"

She stayed away from Israel for several months. The manner of her return has raised further questions about her account.

'I was scared. Who would believe the Israeli president raped me?'

She says she contacted Katsav because she needed a reference and in return he asked her to write a letter of appreciation for her time in his office. He then offered to set up three job interviews for her.

"I knew it was not a good solution," she said. "He could never fix what he did to me, but I thought if he wants to do this little thing, I will accept it. I need a job."

A confrontation with Katsav followed in his office when he had failed to arrange a single interview after four months: "I was excited. I could have killed him at that moment. It felt like he was still driving into my body."

By then, she claims, someone -a journalist, she believes -had come into an office where she was on menial duties, offering her \$500,000 for her story.

According to her account, she told Katsav about this during their confrontation, which was taped. The exchange culminated in her shouting: "Not even for \$2m would I forget what you did to me."

By now, other claims of sexual misconduct were beginning to circulate and the president approached Menachem Mazuz, the attorney-general, claiming he was being blackmailed.

This prompted a police investigation during which 10 women, including three who had worked at the residence, made allegations against him.

The police said they had enough evidence to indict in four alleged cases, including one of rape and one of "forced sexual intercourse involving abuse of authority", which is said to apply when the victim did not tell anyone at the time.

The attorney-general is expected to make a final decision on indictments later this year after hearing an appeal from Katsav.

Olmert has urged Katsav to resign and Mazuz ordered him to move out of the official residence. Last month the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, approved his suspension from the presidency for three months.

Katsav spent the time in his bungalow, reading through the black folders in five boxes of testimony taken by the police, preparing his defence. Some of the stories are said to be similar to those of the traumatised young woman I interviewed.

She has no money to pay a lawyer; nor do the other women. But they have found people to believe in them. One of the most prominent is Kinneret Barashi, a lawyer working for one of the main complainants, known as woman "A".

"I didn't know I would be taking on the whole establishment with no budget," said Barashi, who has practised law for only five years. "It started for me with my belief. My client is my friend and from the moment she told me I knew she wasn't lying."

Katsav denies that he touched anyone. Last week he cancelled a promised interview with The Sunday Times at the last moment and sent Lior Katsav, his brother and legal adviser, to put his case.

"The president feels like he is a victim of the media, the police and some of the politicians in Israel," said Lior Katsav.

"He believes he did not do anything wrong. For six years as president there were no complaints. Why now?"

Lior Katsav clearly believes in his brother: "He feels the damage against him and the office is unbelievable and unjustifiable."

The two women who had alleged rape were out for revenge, he said; the others had been manipulated by the police.

'I was scared. Who would believe the Israeli president raped me?'

"One, he kissed her on the cheek on her birthday, and she didn't think anything of it until the police convinced her she had been sexually harassed,"

he said.

The young assistant is equally vehement. "It was not a classic rape, where someone grabs you by the hair and drags you into the woods," she said. "But it is not less hard when you know the person who rapes you."

She added: "I'm waiting for my day in court. This is my chance. I'm afraid a little bit, but I know I can tell what happened to me and no one can take that away from me. I was there and I know the truth."

Fingers point at other politicians

Other Israeli leaders tainted by allegations of sleaze:

Ehud Olmert, the prime minister, has been accused of corruption in Jerusalem property deals. It is alleged that he received payment for a house above the true market value.

Omri Sharon, son of Ariel Sharon, the former prime minister. Sentenced to nine months' jail last year on corruption charges. Between July 1999 and February 2000 he received \$1.3m for his father's campaign to lead the Likud party, far in excess of the permitted limit.

Tzahi Hanegbi, chairman of the Knesset's foreign affairs and defence committee.

Indicted last year on charges of fraud, bribery, providing false testimony and lying under oath -all related to unlawful appointments he allegedly made while a government minister.

Ezer Weizman, former president. Received \$450,000 in gifts from Edouard Saroussi, the French millionaire, in the 1980s when he was a minister. Public criticism forced his resignation in July 2000. He died in 2005.

Haim Ramon resigned as justice minister after being charged with sexual misconduct. He was found guilty last month of forcibly kissing a woman soldier.

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Letters to the Editor

The Australian (Australia)

August 14, 2006 Monday

All-round Country Edition

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Body

MATP

Arrests expose the true nature of al-Qa'ida terrorism

MOST TALKED ABOUT

UK TERROR PLOT

THE arrest of Abdul Waheed (formerly Don Stewart-Whyte, the son of a British politician) and his co-conspirator Ibrahim Savant (formerly Oliver) shows us what the nature of al-Qa'ida-style terrorism really is.

Waheed's father died while he was only 14, and according to reports he was a drug addict and an alcoholic before he fell in with the bunch of lunatics that planned to kill all those innocent people.

Information gathered on organisations such as al-Qa'ida and Lashkar-e-Toiba reveals that the majority of their members come from disenchanted members of the middle class.

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was a Jordanian street thug. Osama bin Laden was disowned by his family and had his Saudi citizenship revoked.

Waheed's and Savant's neighbours said that neither of them had been visiting their local mosques of late, avoiding the spiritual guidance of the Koran, which says (18:29) "Whoever wishes, let him disbelieve, and whoever wishes, let him believe", and in relation to converting non-Muslims (88:21-2), "Therefore do remind, for you are only a reminder. You are not a coercer over them".

Fascists employed by these organisations to kill innocent people aren't true Muslims, merely products of broken homes and abuse brainwashed into thinking that freedom

in society is the cause of their downfall.

Kane Gough

Wodonga, Vic

LET me begin by agreeing with everything written in your editorial ("Terror busts are a win against evil", 12-13/8). The glaring question is, where is the response from the West to the threat against our way of life?

Letters to the Editor

The truth is that there has been no meaningful attempt to capture Osama bin Ladin whatsoever. By any stretch of his imagination the deployment of only 30,000 troops in Afghanistan does not represent a wholehearted response to terrorism.

The results have been appalling. Since 9-11 moderate governments in Iran and Palestine have been replaced by more hardline regimes, and still no capture of Osama. My own feelings are that while the Bush Administration likes to talk up the risks associated with terrorism, it has no real intention of preventing it completely.

David Rowell

Wooloongabba

IN the late 1960s British politician Enoch Powell was branded a racist after his "rivers of blood" speech in which he warned of the dangers of continuing to allow immigration from countries within the British Commonwealth. In the light of current events, and particularly in relation to immigrants from Pakistan, he wasn't so much a racist but more likely a visionary.

Malcolm Durell

Norman Park, Qld

IT is monstrous to claim, as certain of your correspondents have done, that the thwarted UK attacks have anything to do with redressing wrongs done to Muslims. Plane passengers are people going on and returning from holiday, visiting friends and family, innocent people at work and play. They are every race, gender, age, nationality and religion, a cross-section of humanity. This plan exemplified terror at its ugliest. Both it and any attempt to justify it are inexcusable.

Geoffrey Zygier

Executive Director

Executive Council of Australian Jewry

South Caulfield, Vic

WELL I am sure that the longer we put up with possibility of terrorists entering our airports, the more they will.

I have always tried to understand just why we make so much fuss about a national ID card.

Surely we can't keep making excuses why we shouldn't have one as apposed to the benifit of having one. It must be the only card that is not avaiable to us.

Honestly, there is no reason why we should not act now.

Dont talk about the negetives, just go ahead and do it. We live in a new, yet terrible, world at times.

Bryan Taylor

Hobart, Tasmania

IN reply to Vincent Zankin (Letters 12-13/8), moderate Christians, Jews and Muslims can and do get along. The extremists are the problem, for whom dialogue, compromise and reconciliation are anathema -- in some cases even between those of opposing views within the one religion let alone between different religions.

Roseanne Schneider

Yeronga, Qld

Letters to the Editor

THE letter from Kel Joaquin-Byrne (12-13) oozes with a naive, simplistic view of the root causes of terrorism, notwithstanding the fact that most of the causes listed by him occurred after the major attacks in Bali and New York.

The ultimate irony of his letter is that Islamic extremists will continue to attack any country that allows the right for letters like his to be published in the first place.

Mike Young

Floreat, WA

Climate refugees are our responsibility

RISING sea levels ("Polar snows fail to halt seas rise as globe warms", 11/8), will have devastating effects for all peoples living close to sea level. In fact, some of our Pacific neighbours are already having to relocate their homes, and some of these nations are likely to completely disappear within the next 50 years.

Worldwide there are predicted to be 200 million climate refugees -- those people displaced as a result of the impacts of climate change -- by 2050.

Currently, these people are not recognised by international or Australian law. As Australia is one of the largest per capita greenhouse gas emitters in the world, we have a responsibility to these people.

Australia needs to recognise climate refugees and also increase its foreign aid to account for the changed conditions caused by climate change.

Of course, we must also make significant reductions in our greenhouse gas emissions to prevent dangerous climate change, for our sake and for the sake of all peoples of the world.

Emma Brindal

West End, Qld

Names hurt

PHILLIP Adams (The Weekend Australian Magazine 12-13/8) refers to "the fuss in Brisbane over a grandstand named Nigger for a thus nicknamed Aboriginal football player". He is presumably referring to the E.S. Nigger Brown Stand in Toowoomba, which was named after a white member of the Kangaroo Rugby League team of 1921.

For a number of years a university lecturer in Toowoomba, Stephen Hagan, has been unsuccessfully trying to have the word Nigger removed as its usage is insulting and unacceptable. He has recently been named Indigenous Person of the Year at the NAIDOC Awards ceremony in Cairns.

Some names are worth making a fuss about.

Katy Brain

Hope island, Qld

For English, take Latin

WINSTON Churchill would be hard pressed to learn anything about the structure of the ordinary English sentence in a secondary school English classroom today (Letters 12-13/8). Students tell me they learn much more about English in my Latin classes.

Don Barrett

Spring Hill, Qld

Letters to the Editor

As a supervisor of postgraduate university students, it is difficult to forgive those who believe that teaching English grammar and spelling is of low importance. The ability to express thoughts clearly and unambiguously in writing has largely vanished from the Australian academic landscape, despite the fact that precision in written communication is essential in many professions.

The use of language by broadcasters and, dare I say, many journalists, encourages young people to use cliché phraseology that is frequently vague and ambiguous. Many do not even understand what "ambiguous" means.

Education ministers in all states (no point talking to the federal one) should think carefully about how poorly their next crop of election statements and proposals will be understood. But, sadly, the consequences of poor education this year won't influence voters' comprehension for the next few elections. So I guess I'm wasting my time with this letter.

Keith Gregg

West Perth, WA

Some kids do 'ave 'em

CAROLINE Overington's article ("Boring children' suffer an appalling mother", 12-13/8) is a good argument as to why some people should never have children. It is amazing that our Treasurer Peter Costello is throwing money to encourage people to give birth to more babies when there is so much child abuse and neglect in our society.

No one should have children unless they are prepared to nurture them into adulthood. Perhaps parents should be licensed before they are allowed to have children.

Tom Nilsson

Sandy Bay, Tas

One ward remembers

THANK you for giving coverage to the Victorian Government's apology to people who spent their childhoods in the care of the state and churches of Victoria ("Wards rate apology 'gutless'", 10/8).

I cut short a holiday and travelled from London for this important event. I wouldn't have missed it for quids. It was important to me to be in my home state to hear the words and the tone of the Premier of Victoria finally acknowledge that what happened to me and tens of thousands of other Victorians in our childhood, mattered.

I went into care at three years of age and suffered the loss of my family, and the effect has had a lasting impact on me. I've waited 52 years for this acknowledgement.

The saddest legacy for me is the separation from my siblings. To this day we remain a fractured family.

Is it any wonder when we went to a total of 26 Victorian orphanages and children's homes?

Many state wards of Victoria did not get a chance to hear this apology as they have died, including one of my six siblings. Acknowledgement is wonderful and it will assist me personally to heal, but so will redress.

Many, many state wards need assistance to repair their shattered lives. Redress is the next step of the healing process.

Leonie Sheedy

Georges Hall, NSW

Chance missed

Letters to the Editor

HOW I wish Beazley had said to Tuckey: "Wilson, go back to you party bear pit and find the decent liberal values to scupper the plan to transport innocent children, women and men to indefinite detention on Nauru. Australia is big and generous enough to give protection to those who flee persecution".

Frederika Steen

Chapel Hill, Qld

In everybody's interest

PAUL Kelly's interesting article on a proposed new security agreement with Japan suggests that the initiative comes from Australia. The proposed arrangement would not be an Anzus-type treaty, but similar to the agreement the Howard Government now seeks with Indonesia and provide formal official arrangements for co-operation in relief emergencies or in peace keeping.

On the face of it is hard to see why a formal document with security in the title is necessary for such benign arrangements. Security is a much over-used word which these days implies something bigger than, but certainly including, armed defence and in some cases can mean pre-emptive attack.

Presumably one of the unstated reasons for the treaty is -- as it was and is in our objectives for such treaties with Indonesia -- a desire for our defence and intelligence establishments to have opportunities to get close to their counterparts and get an insider's view of Indonesian/Japanese strategic thinking. If we do develop this intimacy it should provide opportunity for frank discussions.

Might we feel confident to say to Japan:

* It has been past Japanese carelessness and incompetence -- a succession of corrupt and inward-looking governments and their equally mendacious bureaucracies in the bubble years -- that left the vacuum in east Asia that China has neatly moved to fill. This continuing incompetence has pushed South Korea into closer relations with China than Japan, and given North Korea the room to move that more intelligent Japanese and US policy might have avoided.

* That the sabre rattling from the likely new Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, even if it is only for internal conservative party consumption, is totally counterproductive to increasing Japanese influence in East Asia.

* That tripartite US-Japan-Australia security arrangements that have the objective or apparent objective of containing China will be similarly counterproductive.

* That Japan and Australia might look back to a more enlightened era, where John McEwen and John Crawford in Australia in 1957 and Japanese prime ministers such as Takeo Miki and Masayoshi Ohira in the 1970s understood that the rock on which a peaceful Japanese democracy was built was the integration of Japan into the global economic system and its benefits.

It was these benefits that were the source of Japan's post-war material success and national pride -- which not only made its pre-war policies completely unacceptable to ordinary Japanese and the elites in the post-war years, but which also gave Japan a leadership position in east Asia until the 1990s. Why would these liberal ideas, supported again by the US alliance, not succeed in overshadowing military authoritarianism in dealing with China and North Korea?

Max Suich

North Sydney

FIRST BYTE

letters@theaustralian.com.au

Letters to the Editor

The UN has passed a resolution demanding a ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon. Wow, that oughta scare the pants off Hezbollah.

Andrew Buchanan

Woree, Qld

Good work by the Brits in tracking down the terrorist suspects, which must have been akin to looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. Meanwhile back at the ranch, the Yankies are still searching for the haystack.

David Price

Camberwell, Vic

If a Liberal MP can attack the leader of the opposition outside parliament as a "fat so-and-so", they must be more confident of winning the next election than they claim. The obese vote is a large slice of the electorate.

Philip Machanick

Taringa, Qld

I am shocked to learn that the suspected terrorists are as young as 17 years old, and a couple of them are also "white converts". I am puzzled why these UK-born youth are turning against their country. This is indeed a sad moment for all good citizens.

Nahid Kabir

Churchlands, WA

Why do many of your photographers appear to be so tipsy they wield their cameras at tilted angles, as if they are about to collapse?

Jack Cameron

Mount Mellum, Qld

In the light of recent bombings in India and the foiled attempted bombings of aircraft in London, I call upon founder of the Islamic Friendship Association of Australia Keysar Trad to organise demonstrations in Australia so that moderate Muslims opposed to terrorism can demonstrate to their fellow Australians that they are on our side against extremism.

Michael Tapson

Mawson, ACT

How much would Sol be paid if he was actually good at his job?

Victor Tanti

Geraldton, WA

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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The Star Phoenix (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)

August 21, 2006 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. B8; Around the World in Photos

Length: 3009 words

Byline: Associated Press

Graphic

Colour Photo: Associated Press; SAINT SACRIFICE: Iraqi Shiite Muslims flagellate themselves outside the Imam Mousa al-Kadim shrine, during the annual commemoration of the saint's death, in the Shiite district of Kazimiyah, in Baghdad, Iraq, Saturday. An uneasy silence cloaked the streets of Baghdad at the start of a two-day vehicle ban aimed at preventing attacks during the major Shiite religious gathering.;

Colour Photo: Associated Press; A THING FOR MING: Chinese fans hold up pictures of Yao Ming, a Chinese basketball star who plays for NBA's Houston Rockets, prior to their FIBA World Championship of basketball game against U.S., Sunday, in Sapporo, Japan. The U.S. went on to win 121-90.;

Colour Photo: Associated Press; PARTY ON: Lebanese women dance on top of a bar in the Christian heartland of Ashrafieh, an area of Beirut, Lebanon, Saturday. On the sixth day of the UN-brokered ceasefire, the Lebanese capital was returning to normal as bars, nightclubs, and restaurants came back to life after 34-day-long fighting between Israel and Hezbollah guerrillas.;

Colour Photo: Associated Press; BLAZING PADDLES: Members of the Belarus men's C4 canoe team celebrate after winning in the men's 500-metre final race at the Flatwater Canoeing World Championships in Szeged, Hungary, Sunday.;

Colour Photo: Associated Press; GOLDEN GIRLS: Dancers with an Indonesian youth troupe perform during the opening of the International Youth Dance Festival Celebrating the Joy of Nature held at Asia World-Expo of Hong Kong, south China, Saturday.;

Photo: Associated Press; TRIPLE THREAT: Scott Chandler holds his daughter Tyler, 7, aloft as his dog Zoe balances on the front of his surfboard during practice for the First Annual Surf Dog Small Wave Competition held in Imperial Beach, Calif., Sunday.

Load-Date: August 21, 2006

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Western Mail

September 11, 2006, Monday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 16

Length: 2573 words

Byline: DUNCAN HIGGITT Western Mail

Body

Today is the fifth anniversary of the attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York. Duncan Higgitt argues that world leaders have not only failed to reduce the threat from Islamic extremists, but that they have made the world a more dangerous place

HOW well we remember the pristine blue skies that day. It was the Kennedyesque moment, so beautiful, before it was extinguished in a flash-filled instant still hard to revisit.

On that day, five years ago today, when two planes sharked out of the blue and changed the world forever, Afghanistan was a war-wrecked backwater in the iron grip of Islamists, a minor headache for the international community. Iraq was ruled by a murderous despot - although the country itself was less murderous than today. There was no such thing as the War on Terror. And this country had never produced a suicide bomber.

The 9/11 culprits are all dead, all 19 perishing in the flames of the World Trade Centre, the Pentagon and in the wreckage of Flight 93. They exist only as grainy flicks of CCTV footage shot at nondescript points of departure, grainy images who killed 2,973 people. Meanwhile, mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed lies deep inside the shadowy rendition system.

We have spent the past five years living with the consequences of 9/11, with what should have been a mop-up following an attack on the most powerful nation on Earth, a global manhunt for the small band of men that made up Al-Qaeda.

Instead, a series of events have led us to the point where we have to ask very serious questions about the peaceful co-existence of the West and the Islamic world. As such, Osama bin Laden and his movement have not only achieved their aims, but have succeeded beyond their wildest expectations, to the point where we are losing a war against a still relatively tiny collection of murderous medievalists on every level.

At every step of the way, those living in both spheres of influence have been failed by their leaders. The short-termist and lobby-influenced political system that has grown up both here and in the US in the past 20 years necessitates a confrontational approach, to convince the electorate that the world is a very frightening place and that our governments are the only ones that can protect us.

They talk nothing of dealing with the causes that give rise to our foes' grievances and everything of combating its symptoms. In the process, they have played a significant part in turning Al-Qaeda from a marginalised band of

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unrepresentative fundamentalists into an idea, a course of action, a far more frightening concept that has brought together fanatics of every hue - Sunni and Shia, Persian and Pashtun - united in their hatred of our way of life.

For too long, weak and ineffectual leaders across the Islamic world have been only too happy to divert the extremists towards us, blame our colonial past rather than reform and combat poverty, starvation and inequality. There is also an attitude prevailing among many, including some Muslim leaders in Britain, that what fundamentalists do is over-enthusiastic, rather than appalling, because it is done in the name of faith.

It is a view that we have not attacked nearly enough. Instead, we remain silent, fearful of speaking out in case we are branded 'Islamophobic', a term now so abused - predominantly by Western commentators and those with ulterior motives - as to become meaningless.

This fear has paralysed every level of public life in Britain, leading to absurd outcomes, like the man arrested at the height of the Mohammed cartoons hysteria because he objected to demonstrators carrying placards threatening to behead non-believers.

Jason Burke points out in his definitive book, *al-Qaeda*, that it is only the decency of millions of Muslims across the world that is acting as a brake on Islamist terrorism. The same is true here in the West, where we continue a peaceful relationship between white and Asian communities (who, including Indians and those from Muslim countries, make up 4% of the UK population).

But while we are happy to blame the British Empire as a cause of Muslim enmity, we rarely consider other equally significant factors.

Many of the small group gathered around bin Laden in the 1990s were, like him, influenced by the Salafism, whose practitioners argue that their beliefs are simply pure Islam, as practised by the first three generations of Muslims. One of its foremost theologians was Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab al-Tamimi, who was born in what is now Saudi Arabia in 1703 and whose present-day countrymen practise a form of Islam to which he gave his name: Wahhabism. It calls for a return to the ways of those earliest converts.

There are arguments, admittedly among Western scholars, that this preoccupation with a return to the past belies a frustration focused on the decline in Islamic culture: that many countries are considered Third World these days, in stark contrast to 500-1,000 years ago, when civilisations strung across the world from North Africa to Asia Minor were far superior to those in Europe and the Americas. Bin Laden bears this out, partly through his obsession with robbing the West of its wealth - he talks of the World Trade Centre attacks in terms of financial rather than human cost - and his call for, among other things, Andalucia to be returned to Moorish control.

Bin Laden and the real power behind the Al-Qaeda throne, Ayman al-Zawahiri, were also hugely influenced by Qutbism. Based on the thinking of Sayyid Qutb,

who argued that Islam is 'extinct' and that any non-Qutbists who claimed they were Muslims were in violation of the Sharia law, making them guilty of apostasy and liable to a sentence of death. It makes pretty much anyone in the world a target.

Qutb demonstrated another trait in common with the 9/11 attackers when he visited the US in 1949. A string of encounters, including one with a nurse with 'thirsty lips ... bulging breasts ... smooth legs ... and provocative laugh' who made advances towards him, left him appalled, not least because he was tempted.

Like Qutb, Mohammed Atta al-Sayed, the chief hijacker who piloted the plane that crashed into the World Trade Centre's North Tower, had a problem with Western women. The 9/11 Commission Report reports also how, during his time in Germany, he became increasingly extremist, voicing 'virulently anti-Semitic and anti-American opinions, ranging from condemnations of what he described as a global Jewish movement centred in New York City to polemics against governments of the Arab world'.

Atta was Egyptian but, in the same way as bin Laden formed a firm bond with the Taliban leader and his host, Mohammed Omar, he found allies who hated the US, and the 'planes operation' was born.

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Much has been made of the Bush administration's failings where Al-Qaeda was concerned, but for years American intelligence failed to see the threat. Inheriting an institutional fear of bodybags following Vietnam, Bill Clinton authorised an ineffectual missile strike against Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, following the bombings of US embassies in Dar es Salaam, and Nairobi in 1998.

The Bush administration response to 9/11 was at first measured, giving the Taleban an ultimatum to hand over bin Laden, and then supporting the Northern Alliance in its ousting of the Taleban. Few wept tears for their departure.

But his next decision was to have huge consequences. It is hard now to be dissuaded of the view that the invasion of Iraq was done purely for the benefit of those who funded Bush's path to the White House, like a latter-day Opium War with the rich petrochemical businessmen of Texas taking the role of the East India Company.

Oddly enough, there is evidence today that Saddam Hussein was making overtures to the extremists. Michael Burleigh, in his new book, *Sacred Causes*, calls Saddam's motives 'characteristically opportunistic', those of a 'would-be Saladin'.

Some three years after the fanfare of an end to hostilities, US and British troops are still dying in what was once the epicentre of high Islamic culture. Worst still, as many as 60 Iraqis die a day, their country a training ground of far greater potential than Taleban-ruled Afghanistan, or the Bekaa Valley of the 1980s.

While the invasion was a qualified success, the subsequent administration has failed at every conceivable level. Iraqis are considerably worse off now than they were under Saddam. Not only do they face death from vicious Sunni and Shia extremists, edging ever closer to the civil war once envisaged by the now-thankfully dead Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and from the nervous trigger fingers of US patrols, but running water, effective sanitation and healthcare, not to mention schools and businesses, remain in a precarious and often broken-down state.

The reputation of both our army and that of the Americans has been dragged through the dirt, making some coalition troops seem little better than Saddam's secret police. These images have inflamed Muslim opinion across the world and fed the insurgency.

On the world stage this has had the net effect of making Iran seem far more of a threat to world peace than Iraq ever was. Paul Moorcraft, a defence expert for close to 30 years, said recently of Iran, 'The Shias really think their time is now, and they are pushing for it'.

Here in Britain, the hugely unpopular War in Iraq has finally appeared to have put Tony Blair out of a job.

Could we have said no to Bush when he came asking for support in the Coalition? His treatment of the Prime Minister - 'Yo Blair' - suggests he regards our premier as little more than a vassal prince, and that he is willing to abuse the US position as the senior partner in the so-called 'special relationship' with threats, to encourage our co-operation.

The four men who died on July 7 last year while killing 52 people and injuring 700 in attacks on the London Underground and a double-decker bus in the capital, in the first-ever suicide bombings in Britain, saw our actions in Iraq as grounds good enough to attack their own country.

Burleigh calls this viewpoint worrying, adding, 'It demonstrates ulterior loyalties among second and third-generation immigrants, suggesting a conspicuous failure to integrate them into host societies. When young Muslims speak of their brothers and fellow countrymen, they sometimes mean not their neighbours in Barcelona or Bradford, but in Chechnya, Iraq or Palestine. Bizarrely, many of them have managed to combine radical Islam with a street culture that owes more to Los Angeles than Islamabad, with their booming stereos, hoods, sweatshirts and trainers.'

We are now at the start of a new homegrown domestic terrorist threat, with no prospect of it fading away soon, even if we withdraw from Iraq. We have faced this before - the Provisional IRA while usually more discriminating in its targets than Al-Qaeda, was also once the most sophisticated terrorist organisation in the world, and one of the hardest to infiltrate.

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The involvement of Richard Reid and Germaine Lindsey, both British-raised converts to Islam, suggests that the extremist network that is producing these terrorists could be more easily penetrated. Additionally, while the security forces has a glut of experts who worked for long periods in Northern Ireland, this movement remains in its infancy.

Such covert warfare would require the co-operation of the British Muslim community and would present a golden opportunity to build bridges. It would also serve to keep many attempted plots out of the headlines. However, it appears that our Government is determined to let us know how hard it is working on our behalf, with a seemingly never-ending string of arrests.

But neither the military and the Government appear to be set up to match this threat. The Ministry of Defence is structured to fight a Cold War foe that collapsed more than 15 years ago. No longer do we need masses of tanks, artillery frigates, or a new nuclear defence. We need highly mobile strike units like the SAS, able to move at a moment's notice around the world, snatching or assassinating those like bin Laden.

We really need to make these terrorists believe that there is no place they can run from us. For that, we'll need soldiers and agents fluent in an assortment of languages, such as Arabic, Persian and Urdu, the best in personal equipment, bases around the globe that we can work from, and a joint intelligence agency that sees at least the UK and the US pooling its knowledge.

We used to fight and win insurgent wars. We won a very successful action in Malaya in the 1950s. At least one member of a patrol would be trained to close to doctor standard and, as they moved from village to village, he would hold clinics while his colleagues helped locals fix any other problems they had, including securing food. It was known as 'hearts and minds'.

Down the years, the British army was famed for such an approach. In Kosovo in 1999, the American sector dissolved into chaos while the British zone was the model of order. Troops on the ground put it down to their willingness to engage with local people.

But hearts and minds can be done in other ways. For the billions we spend on war we could deliver huge amounts of self-aid to impoverished countries. We have the power to improve a country's prosperity and make it less a breeding ground for extremism.

Similarly, instead of getting our troops to destroy opium crops in Afghanistan and make themselves even more unpopular, we could spend money improving social conditions in the UK, helping to remove the heroin market.

It may seem idealistic to make this argument, but surely it is better to spend money on medicine than bullets? We are back to the Ploughshares argument.

Of course, to make this happen, we are dependent on one group. Recently, musician Steve Chandra Savale said, 'The greatest danger to society is the professional politician'.

They will no doubt tell anyone who asks them to spend defence budgets on aid, that they are not living in the real world. That doesn't help the private agonies of the loved ones of those who have died the past five years. It cannot help Steven Morris, 31, and originally from South Wales, who was working on the 97th floor of the North Tower at the World Trade Centre. Nor Lance Bombardier Llewelyn Evans, from Llandudno, the first Welsh soldier to die in Iraq, nor Flight Lieutenant Alan Squires, from Buckley, the latest Welshman to die, this time in Afghanistan. It won't bring back the Iraqi children that became statistics of collateral damage, nor restore the limbs of Australians maimed for life in the Bali bombings, nor comfort those who lost partners and friends in Madrid, Istanbul, Casablanca, nor bring solace to the men who sit in the dark of their Guantanamo Bay cells wondering at their crimes. It will do nothing for Beirut bystanders, who perished in Israeli jet strikes while the war against Hezbollah raged 50 miles to the south, nor for those brutalised by secret police in Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, their governments allies of the West - and among the top five of human rights violators. Fortunately for most of us, this grief is personalised. But our leaders should remember that this War on Terror has made us suspicious of our democratically-elected governments, unforgiving of their errors. We shout at our televisions when they appear. They can restore that trust if they stop making the wrong decisions.

WAR OF THE WORLDS

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian (Australia)
November 14, 2006 Tuesday
All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Letters; Pg. 13

Length: 2674 words

Body

MATP

MOST TALKED ABOUT

AIRHEADS

Educators don't like students who display originality

I WAS amused and relieved to read the extract from Shelley Gare's book *The Triumph of the Airheads* (*Inquirer*, 11-12/11). In 1989, I was a mature-aged student studying English at a university in Western Australia.

This was a time of excitement because postmodernism was a new concept for me and meant that the meaning of texts and how they were interpreted could be varied to "fit important social indicators". So, there were Marxist, feminist, colonialist and various other interpretations of a single text. French philosophers exercised our minds. They were explained as showing that the meaning of the author was irrelevant and that "truth" was a fabrication.

However, because I was 30 years older than most of the other students, I found it difficult to accept the postmodernist idea that a comic, a Mills and Boon novel and advertisements were all considered literature. To me, they were merely methods of self-interested communication. In spite of this, I managed to achieve good marks and was offered a place to do honours. For this, it was decreed, I must demonstrate originality of thought.

My first essay as an honours student was an interpretation of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*. I demonstrated originality of thought and the postmodernist attitude towards truth by using the first chapter to interpret the main text that followed.

Because my essay was "unusual but interesting and an excellent piece of writing", my supervisor decided to leave the marking to more experienced minds. My work was passed from hand to hand. Nobody, it seemed, could give me a fail or a pass, or even a mark.

When it finally arrived back, the professor who had made the final proclamation (50 per cent) remarked that I was "obviously of high intellect" but, because I had used no primary sources apart from James himself, the essay was not considered "rigorous".

Since then, while acknowledging that I am not an expert, I surmise that educators prefer their students to be replicas of themselves. They do admire originality of thought, but only if it stays within the parameters of an

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

accepted form. They do not like to be challenged in the agreed way of doing things. As Gare so efficiently points out with her example of whole-word teaching of reading, this is a disaster for education as a whole.

Sylvia Jones

Bridgetown, WA

ONE cannot agree more with Shelley Gare's assertion that too much of today's debates about education is airheaded tosh as her own piece is a powerful contributor to just this kind of nonsense. Gare exhibits no understanding of the concerns of adolescents or of education in the 21st century. Unlike a generation ago, we are now educating a much wider range of students for a workplace demanding a greater variety of knowledge and skills than previous generations ever needed to learn at school.

Young people today have access to unprecedented levels of entertainment in family environments that are more variable. All teachers know that unless you engage a student by what is interesting to them, you can not lead them on to new horizons. Why should they bother? They have the world at their fingertips. Instead of berating schools for postmodernism, deconstructionism and being new age -- none of which feature in the mainstream curriculum -- perhaps it might be more helpful to go into a school and see what actually happens in a real classroom rather than simply recycling the over-exposed ideas of a minority of vociferous critics.

Eva Gold

St Ives, NSW

SHELLEY Gare's piece on airheads was a great read. Ever heard of one of these new age exam questions asking a student to discuss a matter from a "socially, politically or economically conservative" point of view?

The reality is that the airheads are trying to teach them to think inside a containment that has dimensions of Marxism, feminism and racism and to express themselves in the language of the PC catechism.

How can kids be taught to think outside the square if they do not know what a square is? How can they think outside the box if they have to keep their minds inside the PC box?

Alternatively, maybe I am just not sitting under the right sort of crystal or my pyramid is at the wrong angle.

M. Seward

Gravelly Beach, Tas

THING is, Shelley Gare, there will always be a drongo who doesn't know where Tasmania is. Ask a teenager to outline the plot of a popular movie or TV show and you'll get a reasonable summary complete with characterisations. Just because that teenager has not read Othello does not mean she does not understand the nuances of jealousy and love. But ask them to find Hobart on the atlas and you'll score some blanks.

Weren't there any airheads at your school back in the 1960s, Shelley? My parents thought popular culture was superficial and always told me so. But that didn't stop me growing up to appreciate books and music. Airheads in my day argued the merits of Elvis Presley over Johnny O'Keefe. It was lightweight stuff, but we were kids having fun. Teenagers today are bright enough and clever enough to match your generation, Shelley, for energy, imagination and initiative.

David Millar

South Melbourne, Vic

DON'T despair -- it's not as bad as you think. You only require 25 per cent of the population to run a country. The rest can be illiterate, as they are simply consumers.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bill Hudnott

Albany Creek, Qld

Sex was not discovered

in the swinging '60s

KEITH Windschuttle is keen on demanding historical facts, an admirable trait but he should apply it to himself (Opinion, 13/11). He makes five unsupported assertions. The 1960s were not primarily about sex, though it may have seemed so to Mr Windschuttle when he was a leading member of the Left at Sydney University and possibly concentrating on the female lefties he now decries. The advent of the contraception pill may have brought some increase in promiscuity but sex existed before Mr Windschuttle discovered it.

I suggest the '60s revolution, as he calls the non-event, was primarily driven by the Vietnam War and caused the emergence of the generation gap.

The radical feminist movement was not about telling women to throw out their husbands -- it had far wider themes. The revolution in the divorce law was not a uniquely Australian event. It is hardly likely that Lionel Murphy and Elizabeth Evatt influenced similar laws in other Western nations.

Welfare for single mothers provided desperate mothers with a buffer against poverty. Recent evidence from Britain shows that forcing parents to work has reduced greater contact time with their children and it is this that is responsible for the juvenile delinquency plague. The legacy of forcing single parents into work can cause greater social dislocation among children of single-parent families in the future.

The rise in unemployment in the '70s and early '80s was not peculiar to Australia. It was also bad in Britain. It was a world phenomenon and was not solved by Australian neo-liberalism.

The repeated use of the word revolution suggests an emotional obsession retained from Mr Windschuttle's leftist days -- did anyone except him and the Beatles believe there was truly a revolution then?

Dr John Duley

Nerang, Qld

Hicks's chance of a fair trial WHEN we contemplate John Howard's great Australian value -- a fair go for everyone -- should we regard David Hicks as an exception, or does he not really exist?

The federal Government abandoned Mr Hicks nearly five years ago. Both Mr Howard and Philip Ruddock know as well as anyone that Mr Hicks has never had, and never will have, any chance of a fair trial at Guantanamo Bay, yet they maintain the childish pretence to the contrary. The pretence continues, year after year after year.

The fact that the Americans would not permit one of their own to be treated so despicably seems entirely lost on our Government. For Australia it is all an international embarrassment. For its citizens it is very sad.

Ian Barker, QC

Berry, NSW

THE Prime Minister has said that David Hicks is innocent of any crime in Australia. Our ally, after five years, has still not proceeded with anything remotely approaching a fair trial and their hamfisted attempts to do so have been rejected by their highest court. This, after it had been decided long ago that no US citizen would ever be subjected to the now-discredited process.

The PM has a responsibility to both the citizens of this country, whether he likes them personally or not, and the law of the land, whether he agrees with it or not. Other countries have done it and we must do it, too. Mr Hicks must be

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

returned to this country as soon as possible to ensure we remain true to our principles and that we can defend a fellow citizen for the simple reason that, while we disagree with his actions, he is innocent of any crime under Australian law.

Chris Mangan

Bracken Ridge, Qld

Nuclear hypeFORMER NSW premier Bob Carr says that "fourth generation reactors are safe". In fact, fourth generation nuclear power reactors are non-existent. The hype surrounding these non-existent reactors has attracted scepticism and cynicism even from within the nuclear industry, with one industry representative quipping that "the paper-moderated, ink-cooled reactor is the safest of all" and that "all kinds of unexpected problems may occur after a project has been launched".

Mr Carr also says that "in 30 years, spent fuel won't be a problem, it will be recycled". Such schemes would require reprocessing plants as well as fleets of plutonium-fuelled fast-neutron reactors to transmute radioactive waste, thus rendering it less harmful.

Richard Lester, professor of nuclear science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, argues that the reprocessing and transmutation schemes outlined in the US Government's global nuclear energy partnership, amount to an "appealing vision, but the reality is that GNEP is unlikely to achieve these goals and will also make nuclear power less competitive". According to Steve Kidd, a director of the World Nuclear Association, the GNEP proposals have been received politely but coolly by the nuclear industry.

Dr Jim Green

Melbourne, Vic

ABC not a mouthpiece

DOES Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells (Letters, 11-12/11) really mean that government-funded broadcasters ought to describe Hezbollah and Hamas as terrorist organisations because that's what the Government says they are? These broadcasters are not government mouthpieces. Many people disagree with the Government and some would count it the broadcasters' duty to strive for language that conveys the breadth of opinion. Where the senator sees bias, others see healthy independence.

It's bad enough that this Government wants to restrict what we can read if we want to inquire into the nature of terrorism and attempt some informed appraisal of the Government's policies on terrorism. That the Government would also like to dictate the language of such inquiry and appraisal, including that issued by the ABC and SBS, seems all too plausible. Thank you, Matt Price, for exposing it to ridicule.

Geoff Chappell

Brisbane, Qld

Murray a series of dams

YOUR photos of the Murray ("Worst drought for 1000 years? Hardly ...", 11-12/11) does not represent the real situation. The only lock that had been constructed on the Murray was at Blanchetown, South Australia, before your photo at Nyah in 1923 was taken. The other 12 locks were constructed after 1923. The people fishing at Nyah recently were, in effect, fishing on a dam. The Murray is being held in a series of dams.

Jo Marshall

Bridgewater, SA

Umpires raises his finger

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I TOTALLY disagree with Cricket Australia and those journalists defending Darrell Hair's umpiring. Throughout his career he has been a controversial figure. Donald Bradman was critical of him. There have been many incidents and umpiring decisions that have provoked far greater controversy than normal from an adjudicating official.

During my own Test umpiring career the best umpires were invariably those who were the least noticed.

There are many who see Hair falling into the category of those umpires who seem to believe that spectators come to matches to see them umpire. Why does Cricket Australia want to continue the controversy by appointing him to officiate in our domestic cricket?

Tom Veivers

Bongaree, Qld

Treaty provisions a mysteryTHE new treaty with Indonesia should give any organisation working on human rights issues in West Papua cause for concern. Hopefully, Alexander Downer takes note of the last couple of sentences in your editorial (13/11), "nor must the treaty be used to limit freedom of speech in Australia". Statements from a former Indonesian presidential adviser suggesting that the treaty demands suppression of private support for Papuan independence are completely out of place and must be rejected without delay.

Mr Downer has implied that the first security treaty with Indonesia failed because the agreement had not been subject to any public debate and had not proved to be a sustainable document. In discussing the proposed new treaty last June, Mr Downer stressed that "this whole process will be very transparent", and "people will be able to make public submissions, long before this treaty is formally ratified. To allay fears, why not publish the treaty so we know to what the Government is committing us?

But like much of the debate on West Papua, the discussion of the treaty ignores the West Papuans. By signing a treaty with Indonesia the West Papuan issue will not disappear no matter how much Mr Downer might wish.

Joe Collins

Australia West Papua Association

Mosman, NSW

FIRST BYTE

letters@theaustralian.com.au

It seems that in NSW, the presumption of innocence does not apply in cases where a politician is involved. I agree with Morris Iemma. Why let principle get in the way? Let's presume politicians are guilty of almost everything right across Australia.

Grant Boydell

Beaumaris, Vic

What to stop people spending their baby bonuses on luxury goods in instalments?

Mokhles K. Sidden

South Strathfield, NSW

How soon before China owns the US? At the rate it is accumulating US debt, the Chinese will be able to just walk in and demand the lot without a shot being fired.

Keith Russell

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mayfield West, NSW

I suspect that TV stations believe that those plumes rising from cooling towers consist of CO2 rather than water vapour.

Gordon Thurlow

Sandy Bay, Tas

Michael Bodey ("Cup lifts Seven out of ratings blues", 13/11) mentions a rating figure of 2.272 million. This shows up the inadequate system of ratings -- it doesn't include pubs, clubs and parties. Surely the true figure is much higher.

Matthew Weiss

Coogee, NSW

Sneering and mean-spiritiness was the very staple of the ABC's The Glass House. Thank God it's gone, I say.

G. Sanders

Waterford, WA

John Howard should emulate Emma Tom's visit to Aussie prisoners in Bali (Features, 13/11) by spending a little time with David Hicks in Guantanamo Bay.

John R. Wilson

Daisy Dell, Tas

There is an obvious reason for George W. Bush to ditch Dick Cheney. As a lame duck, he has to worry about working with a hunter who mistakes humans for birds.

Philip Machanick

Taringa, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GPO Box 4162, Sydney, NSW, 2001 Fax: 02 9288 3077

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian (Australia)
November 15, 2006 Wednesday
All-round Country Edition

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Body

MATP

Pessimists should aim for peace and pluralism in Iraq

MOST TALKED ABOUT

RETHINKING THE WAR

I HAVE opposed the Iraq war from the beginning but I would love to have been proved wrong by the rapid establishment of a stable, functioning democracy. The tragedy is not an appropriate occasion for point scoring and exploitation of Iraqi military and civilian deaths as propaganda fodder.

Opponents of the war must honestly face a number of facts. First, the outcome of any war is only inevitable from the point of view of hindsight. History is replete with conflicts that were won or lost in contradiction to forecasts.

Second, the military eradication of an evil system can be tragically and astronomically costly in casualties. Third, we Westerners suffer from short attention spans. We are notoriously impatient for instant outcomes.

Even some of the most pessimistic of us might live to eventually see peace and pluralism in Iraq. I, for one, hope so.

Bill James

Bayswater, Vic

AFTER the attacks of September 11, all Americans, and much of the rest of the world, stood ready to assist. But President George W. Bush squandered that goodwill.

Mr Bush, searching the other day for an example of post-9/11 sacrifice, pointed out that everybody pays taxes. The result of this attitude is a US whose standing around the world has been lowered.

The goodwill can be recovered, but it requires from the Bush administration a less selfish attitude -- a US that listens to the rest of the world and to the UN, a US that works seriously at resolving the suffering in the Middle East, rather than dividing the world into good guys and bad guys, and a US that is a good international citizen, rather than an arrogant, lone superpower determined to impose its views.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Benjamin Thomson

Essendon, Vic

IT was with incredulity I read of Robert Kagan and William Kristol's answer to the Iraq dilemma - send in more troops (Opinion, 14/11). They suggest 50,000 to "secure the Iraqi capital". Guys, you could send in another 200,000 troops -- it won't make much difference to the end game. How long before the US realises that military might won't win all conflicts?

Roy Stall

Mount Claremont, WA

DOUGLAS Kirsner (Letters, 13/11) needs reminding that the coalition invaded Iraq supposedly to address the imminent threat posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. While the claim that Saddam Hussein was a genocidal dictator squared with the premise for invasion, it was not the *raison d'etre*. No less an authority than Paul Wolfowitz, then US deputy secretary of defence, said in 2003 that for bureaucratic reasons the US settled on one issue -- WMD because it was the one thing everyone could agree on.

Dr Kirsner implies that this war would already have been won if only Donald Rumsfeld wasn't so incompetent; if only the Iraqi army had not been disbanded; if only there were more boots on the ground. These musings mask the probability that Iraq would still be in a civil war even if these ideal strategies were employed following the overthrow of Saddam. Dr Kirsner states that we can't afford to lose this one. Nobody likes to lose but that's where this is heading.

John Katiforis

Glen Iris, Vic

NO amount of spin by apologists for the US-led invasion of Iraq can justify the fact that the removal of a genocidal dictator was in itself a crime. The invasion was unauthorised by the majority of the UN Security Council; it was opposed by the Vatican and other world religious bodies; it generated anti-war protests on a huge scale; and it has deepened the divide between Islam and Christianity at a time when relations between the two threatens to engulf the entire world in a battle of apocalyptic proportions.

The challenge for the Democrats is whether they can steer the US towards what the Iraq Study Group has called "a new equilibrium of interests". This would not only open up a dialogue with Syria and Iran, it would include the beginning of a new world order where the US no longer leads by the power of force but by moral example.

Dr Vincent Zankin

Rivett, ACT

THE fallout from the mid-term elections has been outstanding. All of a sudden, pro-war commentators are speaking out against the war -- they realise it's a quagmire. They now criticise the flawed policy although it was glaringly obvious three years ago.

Why didn't they speak out before? Do they sense a change in the political wind? They want to look as if they got it right even though they have been wrong since John Howard took us into an illegal and immoral war.

David Anthony

Cairns, Qld

NOW that the US, Britain and Australia are considering ways out of Iraq, the full realisation of their bad decision to invade is hitting home. If the coalition leaves, Iraq could destroy itself in a civil war, with the possibility that Iran, Syria and Turkey will try to pick off their areas of interest.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If the coalition stays -- and increases its troop commitment, as a gambler doubles up to win back his losses -- many more would be killed. Of course, with 500,000 troops on the ground, the coalition might just defeat the terror gangs and establish a stable, democratic state. But who would bet on it?

George Bennett

North Sydney, NSW

Scientists still disagree over

causes of global warming

IT is frustrating to note that politicians, this time British Environment Secretary David Miliband (Opinion, 14/11), often argue for a low-carbon economy but never acknowledge the controversy in scientific circles about the cause of global warming. The often-claimed consensus only lives within the circles of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The honest and credible approach should be to perform a risk analysis -- taking into account the chance that humans may not be the drivers of global warming as well as the likely benefits of a warmer world -- the outcome of which should serve as an indispensable part of any economic cost analysis.

Only then we can have a meaningful debate about the application of the precautionary principle to justify action. Not on the basis of a report such as that delivered by Nicholas Stern.

Unfortunately, most politicians appear to believe that the manmade case is a given. Since they cannot be that ignorant, I can only conclude that it is opportunism that makes them jump on the bandwagon of environmentalism, in the perception that environmentalism and global warming alarmism are sleeping in the same bed.

Dr Chris Schoneveld

Clifton Beach, Qld

THE zeal of the Blair Government shows no sign of letting up with its latest mission to cure global warming, as David Miliband proclaims: "Climate change is the defining global issue". This is so because he says so, and based on a report made to measure by Nicholas Stern which offers not a skerrick of empirical evidence that warming and change is occurring outside the natural cycle over which we can have no influence.

David William Hall

Southport, Qld

DAVID Miliband claims that the scientific evidence on climate change is overwhelming. But the IPCC's warming estimates for 2100 are based not on science but on economic modelling, with highly contentious assumptions about the relationship between economic growth and the increase in greenhouse gases.

The world is so variable that medium-term economic forecasts looking three to five years ahead have limited accuracy. Yet the IPCC depends on 100-year forecasts. Even worse, these forecasts have been demonstrated by experts, such as former Australian chief statistician Ian Castles, to have serious flaws which exaggerate growth and emissions. Some of the modelling results are incredible. However, the IPCC has flatly refused to revisit its modelling.

We don't know what the course of global warming will be in the next 100 years. We do know that climate is, and always has been, highly variable, and can pursue policies that increase our ability to respond to changing climate and economic circumstances rather than policies based on a view of what may or may not be the situation in the 22nd century.

Michael Cunningham

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

West End, Qld

Booze should be labelled

SO, the federal Health Minister, Tony Abbott, wants to have warning signs put on soft-drink labels. That's a very good idea, Mr Abbott, and while you're at it, isn't it about time that warning labels were also put on Australia's favourite beverage consumed by adults and teens alike?

I'm talking about alcoholic drinks, of course. Alcohol is more than just a beverage. It is a drug and an addictive drug at that. It also contributes towards obesity and numerous medical conditions, plus death. We are warned on cigarette labels, and even prescription drug labels, but where is the warning on ethyl alcohol labels? The World Health Organisation says that cigarettes hold 4.1 per cent of the global burden of disease and alcohol 4 per cent. And we've all seen the outcome when people have too much alcohol -- domestic violence, assaults, vandalism, fatal car and boat accidents, and much more. Yes, it's time that warning labels were put on bottles, cans and cartons of alcohol as well as cigarettes and soft drinks.

J. Nentwig

Coffs Harbour, NSW

Deaths in Vietnam FOR those who are interested, there were 501 Australian deaths in the Vietnam War. Among these serving defence personnel, 25 were killed accidentally, 74 were non-battle deaths, six were missing believed dead. There were also seven civilian deaths.

The figures include suicide (how many?), murdered (fragging) and death by stupidity. These are all listed (except for civilians) on the honour roll at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Chris Moore

Perth, WA

Amazing sex in the '60s

BY dismissing the 1960s sexual revolution, John Duley (Letters, 14/11) is trivialising that amazing decade. No, sex was not invented then, but that era certainly saw the start of a cataclysmic change in mainstream sexual morality -- and this was not simply due to the invention of the contraceptive pill.

How much benefit would the pill have been to unmarried women if all doctors had kept the '50s moral standard of only providing birth control to those with a wedding ring? How would the pill, of itself, have led to the growing calls for legalisation and social acceptance of homosexuality? Or, for that matter, calls for an end to censorship of "obscene" films and pictures? Dr Duley is insulting the feminists, gay rights campaigners and others who fought to change such laws and social mores, and ignoring the huge ways in which they have changed the lives of many.

No, the anti-war marches were not the most significant aspect of the '60s. Wars and their protest movements come and go; it was the sexual revolution, along with the feminist revolution, that wrought the most significant and lasting changes on Western culture.

Anna Blainey

East Melbourne, Vic

SBS should name terrorists

GEOFF Chappell (Letters, 14/11), broadcasters (government or otherwise) should call Hezbollah and Hamas terrorists organisations simply because they are terrorist organisations. Any group that deliberately and specifically aims to cause as much civilian death as possible for political gain, and rejoices when it happens, are terrorists. The fact you can't see that, suggests you have been watching SBS or ABC for too long and therein lies the problem.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Just what do the Islamists have to do before you will concede they are terrorists? Right now, it seems firing rockets at civilian population centres, kindergartens and houses, with impunity, isn't enough to earn them the title. Perhaps if they blew up more Australians? For if we do not win this war, that is certainly on the horizon, and I for one would be more than happy for the broadcasters to help prevent it by opening your eyes to it now.

Daniel Lewis

Rushcutters Bay, NSW

Petty to attack senator's silk THE criticism of the elevation of Senator George Brandis to silk is petty and small minded (14/11). It does nothing to recognise the contribution that successful professionals make to Australia's public good by forgoing well-paid careers to stand for parliament.

I would have more regard for the opinion of the unnamed senior lawyer criticising the senator's elevation if he or she had put their name to their opinion.

Paul Scarr

St Lucia, Qld

Happy ending in Tasmania

MATTHEW Denholm's article ("Boys ordered off island by fellow Aborigines", 13/11) did not point out that there has been a positive conclusion to this story. The lease to the Indigenous Land Corporation has now been terminated. No one has been compelled to leave Clarke Island. Full, unencumbered title to the property has now vested in the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania as a result of the ILC's actions.

The ILC is pleased with this outcome. As a state-funded body, the primary responsibility for the ALCT lies with the Tasmanian Government. However, the ALCT also has the option to make an application to the ILC for funding to support diversion programs being run on Clarke Island.

Shirley McPherson

Indigenous Land Corporation

Adelaide, SA

FIRST BYTE

letters@theaustralian.com.au

Some blokes from my church and I are wildly growing our moustaches as part of Movember, a charity event held every November when participants grow facial hair. We're mid-way through and things are going swimmingly. But the untimely visit by the cringe-worthy Borat is making us Mo-Bros recoil with embarrassment.

Hendry Wan

Matraville, NSW

With all this talk about surrogate motherhood, I'm reminded of the story my Irish grandmother told me of the girl, who announced to her mother, "Mum, I'm pregnant," and her mother replied "Mary, are you sure it's yours?".

Frank Bellet

Petrie, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dr Jim Green (Letters, 14/11) really should put his title on letters to the editor. As national nuclear campaigner for Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, I doubt if he has much to contribute to a debate on the use of nuclear power.

Andrew Nicholls

Geraldton, WA

It seems the real Phillip Adams is trying to stand up (Opinion, 14/11). He senses a natural event, global warming, will justify all his writings. He is clearly moving from atheism toward agnosticism.

Grant Gascoigne

Mitchelton, Qld

Sylvia Jones (Letters, 14/11) reminds me of my reason for quitting academe. Bertrand Russell said two things that bore out my experience: "We are faced with the paradoxical fact that education has become one of the chief obstacles to intelligence and freedom of thought," and "People would rather die than think."

Greg Hamilton

Macksville, NSW

In my letter (14/11) you referred to me as a former Test umpire. I am, of course, a former Test player (21 Tests).

Tom Veivers

Bongaree, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian (Australia)

November 24, 2006 Friday

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Body

MATP

We would prefer coal-based power to nuclear any day

MOST TALKED ABOUT

SWITKOWSKI REPORT

S. W. MANLEY (Letters, 23/11) has an antiquated view of coal-fired power stations. I should know, I live within two kilometres of one and we locals monitor it carefully and take credence from Australian health studies, not those based on US data. Manley's notion of risk and hazard is also limited, but then so is most people's, which is just what the nuclear industry wants.

The problem is that while the risk may be low, the hazard posed by a nuclear accident and its potential consequences are far more devastating than those previously encountered from other industries. Chernobyl and Three Mile Island are often quoted as one-offs, but what is never mentioned are the smaller nuclear accidents and incidents that occur with alarming regularity.

Every day, the two coal-fired power stations on Lake Macquarie in NSW churn out hundreds of mega-litres of cooling water into the lake. As it's virtually a closed water body, the 300,000 or so people who live around the lake and in nearby Newcastle aren't too thrilled that there is a real and measurable risk that a small Sellafield-type leak of contaminated water would render our lake an environmental disaster from which there would be no likelihood of remediation.

So yes, we would prefer a coal-burning power station to a nuclear power station any day, thank you.

C. Pettigrew

Eraring, NSW

AS one who lived within spitting distance of a major nuclear power plant for two decades, I find it amusing (and a bit mischievous) that certain interests are trying to stir up public fears about the possible introduction of clean and efficient nuclear power generation in Australia.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I lived at Table View, on the edge of Table Bay, Cape Town, where South Africa's first nuclear power plant was built, 30 odd years ago, at Duynefontein, a few kilometres down the coast. There were the usual attempts to stir up opposition, but the project went ahead and proved to be a boon for the country. Tied into South Africa's power grid, Duynefontein allowed for the closure of two messy, noisy and smokey coal-fired power plants at Woodstock and the Cape Town foreshore, and has operated trouble-free ever since.

We could see the big concrete main dome a short way down the coast and soon got used to it -- and we had reason to be grateful to it for reliable power supply year in and year out. There were townships all around it and they were hardly aware that it existed, in terms of pollution of any kind. It uses seawater for cooling purposes and, all round, has been an outstanding success.

Cedric Wright

Macleay Island, Qld

AS you point out in your editorial ("Nuclear report is radioactive for ALP", 23/11), John Howard puts the proposition that "if you are fair dinkum about the problem of addressing climate change you have got to consider everything".

Well, that said, he's only been "fair dinkum" about addressing the problem of climate change for five minutes, and only since the issue began bleeding votes. Five minutes ago, he was fair dinkum that global warming was a greenie-lefty conspiracy.

And so what is his one and only solution? The most polarising one, of course. Not tide power, not wind power, not solar power, not clean coal, not geo-sequestration, not a combination of all the available technologies, but solely and specifically nuclear power. Divide and conquer; business as usual.

The problem is, and it's been pointed out by eminent geologist Ian Plimer, that even though deep burial is a geologically sound means to dispose of high-level nuclear waste, what is to stop future warmongers from digging it up to make bombs out of? Your editorial's dismissal of that possibility smacks of either naivety or complicity.

Jody Bailey

Kahibah, NSW

WHY are the state premiers so adamantly opposed to nuclear energy? Is it because they have more knowledge about the pros and cons of nuclear energy than Ziggy Switkowski, John Howard or the French with their 56 reactors? No, it's pure political opportunism riding on the irrational fear that the average uninformed Australian has of radiation.

Chris Schoneveld

Clifton Beach, Qld

JOHN Howard must establish a task force of "renewable energy" scientists to investigate the feasibility of a renewable energy future. Only then will he demonstrate open-mindedness on Australia's energy debate.

Jennifer Bonham

Wayville, SA

IT has been a real education this week watching the Prime Minister deftly "wedge" the Opposition and the Greens, and at the same time take AWB and Iraq off the front page. Smooth. Will we do anything about nuclear energy? I doubt it.

Brian Duckworth

Buderim, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ONLY when I hear the Howard Government announce that the first two nuclear power stations ever constructed on Australia soil will be built at Barrenjoey Point and on the old Caltex site on Sydney Harbour (just around the corner from Kirribilli House) will I take the proposition seriously. Until then, I will treat the Prime Minister's disingenuous flirtation with this madness with the contempt it deserves.

Peter Cain

Greystanes, NSW

A recantation by Howard would demean the dead

I BELIEVE that Matt Price ("For PM, recanting is one for the wimps", The Sketch, 23/11) and letter writers Joe Loss and Doug Cadioli have missed the point of the message from John Howard's interview in Vietnam.

Mr Howard is placing the process of making a decision firmly within the historical context of the time. This message is reinforced by his earlier comments on the teaching of history and his repudiation of those who view historical events through a modern prism.

If a leader can look back and say that the decision he or she made was correct at the time, based on both the situation and the knowledge available to them, then nothing more needs to be said. This is particularly pertinent when a decision is made to go to war. A later public repudiation would effectively demean those whose lives may have been lost as a result of that decision.

According to Price, our involvement in Iraq revealed "good intentions, appalling judgment". Price appears to want the Prime Minister to publicly acknowledge this. At the time of our involvement, I believe the correct path was honestly taken by Mr Howard (and backed by the Opposition) based on all the evidence available at that time.

The PM is a leader who has been prepared to make tough decisions though they may be unpopular at the time. History will, and should, be the judge of all leaders and the decisions they make, but only if those decisions are rightly placed in their correct historical context.

Sue Potts

Ashgrove, Qld

JOHN Howard demonstrates that he's not fit to lead this nation when he states that he doesn't intend to recant on his support for Australian involvement in the war in Vietnam. This war cost some 2.7 million lives in Vietnam, set the scene for the killing fields of Cambodia, undermined the US's moral and military authority for a generation and had disastrous consequences for many of our soldiers. The Prime Minister's unwillingness to acknowledge past mistakes has no doubt contributed to Australia's involvement in the "new Vietnam" we now see unfolding in Iraq.

Andrew Robinson

Bridgeman Downs, Qld

WHILE it may excite the political commentators, for a political leader to forget or confuse a name is understandable. For an experienced political leader to refuse on reflection to admit a mistake is unacceptable and a mark of hubris.

David Dyer

Ballarat, Vic

Sensitivity a two-way street

CHRISTOPHER Paul (Letters, 23/11), being a man, can perhaps be excused for holding the opinion that racism is worse than misogyny. What is inexcusable is the attempt to label people's reactions to Elisabeth Wynhausen's

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

apparel as racism. Muslims are not a "race" and indeed come in all shapes, sizes and colours, just like everyone else.

Call it bigotry if you must. However, I suspect most Australians are not bigots and have no objection to veils, scarves, yarmulkes or rosaries. It's the simple act of covering one's face that is so confronting. It's natural and understandable that many people will find masked faces insulting or threatening, given that masking is open to interpretation and may represent, among other things, a rejection of Australian society's norms, the restriction of women's freedoms and the desire to hold oneself separate from the broader community in anonymity. Cultural sensitivity should be a two-way street.

Jodie Porter

Margaret River, WA

AUSTRALIA is an open society where contact with fellow citizens must be open and trusting, an impossible task if some people deliberately hide their identity behind intimidating masks. No wonder Elisabeth Wynhausen got a reaction.

G. Banks

Chiltern, Vic

Savvy might lift service

CAN Qantas still call Australia home if it's sold in to the tentacles of Macquarie Bank and US corporate raider Texas Pacific Group ("Raid on Qantas risks jobs", 23/11)? If it's no longer the symbol of Australia, what is the point in hanging on to the Pacific route as if it were a family birthright. Perhaps some stern competition and the business savvy of a bank might improve the service. God knows, it needs it.

Chris O'Connor

Nairne, SA

THE airline that keeps calling Australia "home" has, for some time, been part-owned by British Airways, a situation that has resulted in the loss of local Qantas jobs and a considerable outflow of dividends. In view of the latest onslaught by foreign capital via Macquarie Bank, I predict the graceful kangaroo logo will soon make way for a stylised dollar or pound sign.

Henk Verhoeven

Beacon Hill, NSW

DOES anyone remember what happened to that once great Australian airline Ansett once it was acquired by overseas interests? Will Qantas go down the same path to eventual extinction?

Kerry Seebohm

West Croydon, SA

The duplicity of Syria

LEBANESE Prime Minister Fouad Siniora has quite rightly called the assassination of Pierre Gemayel an "attack against a symbol of freedom in Lebanon" ("Assassination sparks civil war fears", 23/11). And this latest act of barbarity only highlights the duplicity of Syria. Its support and financing of Hezbollah and its wholesale distribution of insurgents to Iraq makes it a real destabilising force in the Middle East and a hinderance to any peace process. Syria should have been included in George W. Bush's axis of evil.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A. Khat

Ryde, NSW

Mary's moral superiority

IT'S not so much the woolly, intellectually lazy, factually challenged, standard-issue Left-elitist rhetoric from Mary Kostakidis (Cut&Paste, 22/11) that rankles. From an SBS personality, I guess that's to be expected. It's the sheer arrogance and self regard evident in her smug moral superiority. Someone should remind her that she is, after all, just a newsreader.

Richard Moss

Chisholm, ACT

WAS Mary Kostakidis reading an SBS script or voicing her own ideas? In either case, this jumble of confused and contradictory thoughts demonstrates that, as an intellectual, she is an outstanding newsreader.

Andrew Lake

Daw Park, SA

Shackles of a bygone era

MATTHEW Stevens breaks the best news to wheat farmers in 30 years: AWB opens its mind and accepts that monopoly power is not worth hanging out for, especially if it ends up in the hands of someone it can't control ("AWB pushes full deregulation", 22/11).

The new CEO of AWB, Gordon Davis, is a breath of fresh air, a man with no baggage who is obviously reading the politics and the culture of the industry well. It's a fine line to tread for Mr Davis, dealing with board members who must see their days numbered, and the National Party, which says it would rather die in a ditch than give up the AWB monopoly.

The cruel irony in all of this sorry saga is that it's the wheat farmers themselves who have been marginalised by not having the freedom to choose who they do business with. The AWB monopoly was a good war-time marketing strategy, but today 70 per cent of the nation's wheat is grown by those who do not support a single desk. I think we all know, like Mr Davis, that John Howard has only one option for the wheat industry: to free it of the shackles of a bygone era.

Chris Kelly

(Wheat farmer)

Woomelang, Vic

Cricket and Mozart

FIRST drinks break on day one of the first Ashes Test and already one must decide whether to (a) take on the utter gibberish of Channel 9 commentators and the incessant commercials for cretins or (b) listen to ABC radio commentary, which in Adelaide was about two seconds in front of the TV picture but, with the notable exceptions of Jonathan Agnew and Kerry O'Keefe, has commentators who rant and rave as if they are describing a football match. Solution: turn all audio off and watch TV screen while listening to Mozart. It's going to be a very long summer, folks.

Fred Fairhead

Erindale, SA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FIRST BYTE

letters@theaustralian.com.au

I may be a grumpy old man, but am I the only one who is offended by the unshaven appearance of the sporting elites who represent Australia and appear on TV?

Neville Davis

Newstead, Qld

It's when the Ashes start landing on your roof that you realise this is not a Test match.

SandraK. Eckersley

Marrickville, NSW

I'm sure that Peter Costello would be pleased to help John Howard arrange a meeting with Deidre Anderson in view of her recent success with Ian Thorpe.

Edward Sianski

West Moonah, Tas

Geoffrey Luck's response (Letters, 22/11) to my advocacy on behalf of hybrid cars (Letters, 21/11) is a little presumptive. I'm not interested in breaking even, winning is my game. Winning for the environment and the economy. At a personal level, I have already won.

Robert Dow

Darra, Qld

I didn't recognise "bloviating" either, Frank Cross (First Byte, 23/11). According to the online dictionary at yahoo.com, it means "to discourse at length in a pompous or boastful manner", which explains why Janet Albrechtsen was so across it.

Felicity Biggins

Cooks Hill, NSW

Webster's Unabridged Third New International Dictionary, on page 239, lists "bloviate" as meaning "to orate verbosely and windily". A word correctly used by Janet Albrechtsen and of increasing value in describing Kim Beazley's utterances.

Stuart Hastings

Robina, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GPO Box 4162, Sydney, NSW, 2001 Fax: 02 9288 3077

Email: letters@theaustralian.com.au (no attachments)

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The Future of the Jihadi Movement: a 5-Year Forecast

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Body

This forum was developed from a panel at the recent meeting of the American Political Science Association in Philadelphia.

Jarret Brachman

Director of research, Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy

The Salafi jihadi movement poses the most significant ideological challenge to Western democratic liberalism since the collapse of Soviet communism. While the scope of this ideological challenge is comparatively smaller than that of communism and fascism, there is ample reason to believe that the jihadi ideology will persist for decades to come. The United States defeated its historical ideological rivals by bringing the wealth of national resources to bear against them. Throughout the 20th century, the nation's leading scholars helped policy makers understand and exploit the points of tension among Mao, Stalin, Tito, and Marx; among Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito. Western governments waging today's "long war" against the jihadi ideology, however, have not applied the hard-won lessons learned from past ideological struggles.

Five years after September 11, 2001, relatively few scholars have found ways to participate in government counterterrorism efforts, in large part because the government has classified an inordinate amount of information that could be usefully mined by academics. Those scholars that do interact with law-enforcement, military, and intelligence agencies have to face academe's internal prejudice lingering from the Vietnam era: Scholars may be marked by their academic colleagues as co-opted, affecting prospects for tenure and general professional standing.

In seeking to reverse this tide, the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point has initiated a number of projects bringing scholarly expertise to bear on policy challenges related to counterterrorism. At the recent American Political Science Association conference held in Philadelphia, the center, with support from the U.S. Air Force Institute for National Security Studies, brought together a panel of experts on jihadi terrorism in order to provide a five-year forecast in this long war.

Over the past five years, the jihadi movement has evolved into an organic, self-sustaining global insurgency. The movement seeks to reach the hearts and minds of average Muslims frustrated with the dominant political, social, and cultural order and with the perceived reluctance of Arab regimes and Islamic establishment scholars to implement Islamic law.

Anyone anywhere can now access the ideology at virtually any level of intellectual sophistication. For those seeking pure "entertainment," snuff films of beheadings or improvised explosive devices killing U.S. forces in Iraq pervade the Internet. Kids can play jihadi video games or watch jihadi cartoons. Those who want to access more-scholarly

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discourse can visit Al Qaeda's virtual library holdings of thousands of books on Western military strategy, the history of the jihadi movement, the role of women in waging violence, and countless other topics.

The knowledge and the practical skills needed to become producers, not simply consumers, of the violent jihadi ideology are widespread. The quality of jihadi strategic literature continues to improve, as do the technological sophistication and quantity of propaganda being posted online. The number of ways for Muslims to participate in the jihadi movement increases.

In short, while bin Laden's Al Qaeda may begin to alienate Muslims who are frustrated with the wanton bloodshed, the jihadi worldview that Al Qaeda has promoted since 9/11 will continue to spread worldwide. The need for scholarly participation in the next five years of struggle against the global jihadi insurgent movement cannot be overstated.

Peter Bergen

Senior fellow, New America Foundation; author, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (Free Press, 2001) and *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al-Qaeda's Leader* (Free Press, 2006)

Today the U.S. military and NATO are engaged with the Taliban on a scale not seen since the winter of 2001, both because coalition forces are pushing into areas that were formerly no-go and dominated by the Taliban, and because religious warriors have regrouped substantially over the past few years. In the past three months, U.S. military officials estimate that coalition forces have killed more than a thousand Taliban, while the religious militia has in turn killed dozens of coalition soldiers and hundreds of ordinary Afghans, creating a climate of fear in much of the country.

The key to the resurgence of the Taliban can be summarized in one word: Pakistan. The Pakistani government has proved unwilling or incapable (perhaps both) of clamping down on the Taliban. Unless that changes, Afghanistan will be plagued by instability for years to come.

To the extent that Al Qaeda has a new base it is in Pakistan. From there Al Qaeda's leaders, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, have released a stream of audio and videotapes -- 18 so far this year alone -- that pump up their base and incite violence against Westerners, Americans, and Jews.

Al Qaeda has also succeeded in reconstituting itself to some degree on the Afghan-Pakistan border. Evidence can be seen in the advice, assistance, and personnel Al Qaeda is offering the Taliban in its campaign of suicide attacks in Afghanistan, as well as in the London bombings of July 7, 2005. The two lead suicide bombers in the London attacks recorded suicide "wills" with Al Qaeda's video production arm, As-Sahab, and received bomb-making training in Pakistan, according to British officials.

Al Qaeda has also been able to deepen its cooperation with Kashmiri militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed -- for example, sharing training facilities and safe houses. The Kashmiri issue is also being mobilized by Al Qaeda in Pakistan to bring in recruits.

The fact that Pakistan is the new training ground for Al Qaeda recruits is deeply worrisome and indicates that Al Qaeda "the organization" will continue to be a significant threat. Terrorist plots have a much higher degree of success if some of the cell's members have received training in bomb making and operational doctrine.

The 11 people charged in August with conspiring to blow up planes using liquid explosives are all British citizens. So were the terrorists who attacked London in 2005, almost all of the plotters who allegedly conspired to detonate a fertilizer bomb in England in 2004, the suicide bombers who attacked a beachfront Tel Aviv bar in 2003, and an alleged Al Qaeda operative who, along with would-be shoe bomber Richard Reid, planned to explode a plane in the fall of 2001.

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For terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda, ethnic Pakistanis living in Britain make perfect recruits, since they speak English and can travel on British passports. Indeed, in the wake of August's high-profile arrests, it can now be argued that the biggest terrorist threat to U.S. security emanates not from Iran or Iraq or Afghanistan but rather from Britain, our closest ally.

Five years after the attacks on Washington and New York, we face a world of ideologically driven home-grown terrorists -- free radicals unattached to any formal organization -- in addition to formal networks such as Al Qaeda that have managed to survive despite the tremendous pressure brought to bear against them since 9/11. And they now feed off and strengthen one another.

Ambassador Barbara K. Bodine (ret.)

Visiting scholar, Persian Gulf Initiative, MIT Center for International Studies

Whether Al Qaeda as we know it will still be with us in five years is not the question. The questions are what variant of jihadism will we face, what tools do we have, and can we adapt or will we just fight the last war?

The forces that drive jihadism will not be resolved in five years: the social alienation, political marginalization, and economic stagnation in the region that fuel extremism; footage of U.S. soldiers in Iraq or Israeli soldiers in Lebanon. The demographic distortions within the Muslim world will have increased, not subsided. In virtually all Arab states, well over 50 percent of the population is under 30 years old, often undereducated and underemployed. The same holds true for many Muslim communities in Europe. The need to define a personal and social identity and a political structure in a complex world, perhaps most intense among those living outside Muslim-dominated countries, will still rage. There may be genuine progress toward political and economic reform within the Muslim world, but there will not be resolution.

There are two probable trend lines to consider. First, because of specific historical and perhaps ethnic/sectarian roots, jihadism will turn inward with greater violence against regimes in the region in a drive to cleanse the power structures. Its popular appeal will be fueled by systemic corruption and civil anarchy. The Algerian civil war, the Union of Islamic Courts in Somalia, the Taliban, even the Hamas electoral victory are part of this trend. Violence against Americans and the West will increasingly be collateral damage, a means to discredit the ruling elite, destabilize the economy, and force draconian security measures that delegitimize the regime further. The goal is a pure Islamic state, a caliphate.

Second, the alienation and self-radicalization of diaspora Muslims will continue. The driving force is not to establish an Islamic state in Britain or the United States, but a need to punish and humiliate the West through a kind of honor killings. Jihadis are not glorious warriors but criminals. The scale of death they seek to inflict, the rage they reflect, and the measures they are willing to employ go well beyond those of any common criminal or organized criminal gang, but at the end of the day, what they seek is murder and should be called such. Power struggles within the region and U.S. policies may provide rallying cries for recruiters, but the roots will be in underemployment, perceived (and real) racism, and a search for identity.

Traditional counterterrorism policy recognized four interdependent players: law enforcement, intelligence, diplomacy, and the military (specifically, special operations). To detect, deter, disrupt, and defeat transnational terrorism required broad bilateral and international cooperation and agreement; actionable intelligence developed collaboratively and shared effectively; the ability to identify, apprehend, and prosecute; and the military as a credible threat.

Over the past few years, the balance, in rhetoric and resources, among the four has become skewed. The objective now is to destroy, not defeat. We lead with the military. The others support. But Israel's inability to destroy Hezbollah and the centrality of intelligence and law enforcement to the defeat of the August airline bomb plot underscore the need to reassess the long-term effectiveness of our approach.

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If there is to be effective, aggressive, international collaboration to detect, deter, and defeat jihad movements, we need to recalibrate that balance -- to understand the roots, not just the manifestations; to use the broad range of tools to pre-empt, not just respond. We need to lessen the yawning governance gap in the region and the pervasive corruption that is both its cause and consequence. If we do not counter the forces that drive jihadism now, and will drive it in five years, then we risk having this same conversation in 10.

Jessica Stern

Lecturer in public policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Specialists on the perception of risk tell us that people tend grossly to underestimate the probability of unlikely threats but overestimate the likelihood of dangers that are easy to imagine or recall. Most of us who were alive on September 11, 2001, have difficulty forgetting the shock of what we saw -- passenger jets flying directly into those two tall buildings, people jumping from the windows, some of them holding hands as they jumped to their deaths just before the buildings fell. With such images in our collective mind's eye, we are prone to overreact.

Every longtime student of terrorism has experienced this issue of distorted perceptions in his or her own career. Before September 11, we were seen as eccentrics, perseverating about a supposedly nonexistent threat. Afterward, we were seen as Cassandra, our views suddenly taken very seriously. But the fact is that the threats we study have remained largely the same.

Because we tend to underestimate low-probability threats, then overreact to visible threats, we should give more study to how our values and understanding of capabilities -- both ours and our enemies' -- affect our intelligence analysis and actions.

From what I've seen during fieldwork in Europe, it seems that the jihadi idea is spreading way beyond the terrorists who are attacking us. It is now a "cool" way to express dissatisfaction with the status quo -- with globalization, with America's dominant role in the world, with the power elite -- whether that power elite is real or imagined. The jihadi idea has become a kind of gangsta rap. We Americans are smug about how badly Muslims are treated in Europe and how the resentments European Muslims feel could never be stirred to such a fever pitch here. But in the United States, as elsewhere, oppressed minority urban "honor cultures" can easily blend and morph into this protean international jihadist identity and mind-set.

The Iraq war only exacerbates that. The goal of the Al Qaeda movement is to expand the "jihadi current" around the globe. According to their literature, the jihadists were aiming to provoke us into attacking a Muslim country. This would, in their view, enhance their moral authority because they could present themselves as liberators of an occupied people. And it would reduce our moral authority, since we would be occupiers.

We fell right into their trap -- we attacked a Muslim country that had nothing to do with the 9/11 strikes. The Iraqi insurgents, together with the international jihadists who have joined forces with them, are now getting the best possible training in urban warfare and terrorism. They are training against the world's most powerful military. And it certainly is not the case that we are fighting them over there so we don't have to fight them at home, as President Bush keeps telling us. After we leave Iraq, some of the terrorists now training against our military will come here and kill American civilians. It will be relatively easy for European jihadists, now fighting in Iraq, to get into America because they have European passports.

When we consider policy options such as going to war, we need to assess the full portfolio of risks we face. If you take an aspirin to relieve a headache, but you end up with a debilitating stomachache that keeps you bedridden -- worse off than you were before you took the pill -- it probably wasn't the best remedy. This is what we've done in Iraq. We removed a vicious tyrant from power. That was an important achievement. But by going into Iraq, ill-prepared to create a functioning state, we increased terrorism not only there but throughout the world.

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Substate terrorism will remain the major threat to national security in our lifetimes. But it will be a roving, constantly changing threat, and we need more-flexible intelligence communities to counter it. Instead, right now, for every shift in the nature of the threat, we form a new bureaucracy. The Arabists and linguists hired in response to 9/11 may not be as helpful in countering homegrown European jihad as urban sociologists or criminologists. Intelligence agencies should have the mechanisms to hire and dismiss academics and other experts on a far more flexible contract basis.

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