

Date and Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 4:02:00PM EEST

Job Number: 223445072

Documents (100)

1. [FALLOUT OF WAR ON TERROR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

2. ['Islamist' is the word for these terrorists](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

3. [Israel Drops Rape Charges As President Agrees to Quit](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

4. [Gelt Complex](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

5. [understanding your world: BROWN, BLAIR AND THE MIDDLE EAST](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

6. [*Guardian Weekly: Books: The colours of Allah*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

7. [*'Terminal to nowhere' High-tech border crossing serves as monument to Mideast gridlock*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

8. [*Around the North ...*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

9. [*On a creative mission to save the world*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

10. [*A Southerner opines*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

11. [God save our gracious queens](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

12. [Labor Woes Hit Memorial to East Side Wage Slaves](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

13. [California Lawmaker Becomes Highest-Ranking Official To Say He's a Nonbeliever](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

14. [Another perspective, or jihad TV? Al Jazeera English](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

15. [The Best Boekes](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

16. [*I Will Stand Up for the Muslim Brotherhood*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2007

17. [*Lofty Goals Are Scaled Down at Meetings on Mideast Democracy*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2007

18. [*News Summary*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2007

19. [*Talk yes, but don't dare trust these two pariahs*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2007

20. [*Q&A WITH SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE PRESIDENT: 'People don't want to be violent'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2007

21. [*Egypt : A country in crisis as fearful government cracks down on Islamist opposition: Mubaraks obsession with Muslim Brotherhood deals blow to multiparty politics*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

22. [*The Road to Justice in Argentina Leads to Iran*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

23. [*World Journal*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

24. [*Novel approach to history*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

25. [*Arab regimes have been cracking down on human rights advocates MIDEAST: Paying Lip Service to Human Rights*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

26. [LETTERS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

27. [Your view](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

28. [It is better to be governed by old, nodding Lords than by cash-for-honours addicts](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

29. [Sharon's legacy tarnished: Ex-prime minister, in coma for more than a year, has legacy linked to corruption, analysts say](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

30. [CARTOONS & COMMENT Viewpoints from around the world No obvious answers](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

31. [The problem with al-Jazeera](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

32. [*U.S. Gives Tour of Family Detention Center That Critics Liken to a Prison*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

33. [*Letters to the editor*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

34. [*Another Perspective, or Jihad TV?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

35. [*The House That a Hope for Peace Built*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

36. [*News Summary*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

37. [Readers Write](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

38. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

39. [Ivory tower chutzpah](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

40. [5 Minute Herald: Breaking news at calgaryherald.com](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

41. [Growing Talk of Jordanian Role in Palestinian Affairs](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

42. [World Report](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

43. [The Faces of Tariq Ramadan](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

44. [EGYPT AGAIN CRACKS DOWN ON ISLAMISTS MUSLIM BRETHERN SAYS HUNDREDS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

45. [We're being robbed of our freedom to think and debate](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

46. [5 Minute Herald: Breaking news at calgaryherald.com](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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

Sep 30, 2007

47. [*For Bush the year went from bad to worse Fear of mankind hit by a bird flu pandemic, surprisingly, became one of the few good news stories. Alex Spillius recalls the major events*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

48. [*News Summary*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

49. [*Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Bush's total catastrophe: In every vital area, from Afghanistan to Egypt , his policies have made the situation worse*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

50. [*Egypt takes the scenic route to democracy*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

51. [*As EU talks stall, Turks question pro-West policy Country may look elsewhere for allies*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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

Sep 30, 2007

52. [For Palestinian women soccer players, a field is a dream](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2007

53. [Chipping away at old tensions NEXT NEIGHBOURHOOD JAFFA, ISRAEL : Although there are still issues that can cause friction, Arabs and Jews are learning to live together around the ancient port, writes Sharmila Devi](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2007

54. [US POLICY OF COUNTER-TERRORISM](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2007

55. [PERSPECTIVE: Why hard line is only way to deal with Iran In 2002 President Bush labelled Iran as part of the "Axis of Evil" now Tony Blair is saying this state - in conjunction with Syria - may hold the key to a peaceful Middle East. Lord Corbett of Castle Vale, former MP for Erdington, argues why taking a firm line with Tehran's rulers is the only option](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2007

56. [High stakes over Turkey Ankara and EU heading for a nasty split?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

57. [*Al Qaeda slips further from political goals*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

58. [*Mother-in-law lured victim to assassin; Husband Also Convicted In 'Honour Killing' Of Woman Who Wanted A Divorce*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

59. [*HOW WISE IS MAJORITY RULE IN AN ILL-INFORMED NATION?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

60. [*Auntie, how could you?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

61. [*Life at full volume; A happy blend of the sacred and profane: just like Israel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

62. [5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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63. [Spare me the woman driver](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

64. [5 Minute Herald](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

65. [A bloody nose for Bush but his brutality goes on](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

66. [A Liberal Brother at Odds With the Muslim Brotherhood](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

67. [*Arab heroes of the holocaust*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

68. [*The woman who has to get Bush out of his tangles*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

69. [*Hated 'peacemaker'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

70. [*US academic slams Iran President*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

71. [*Saving the planet while the English swim for their supper*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

72. [Review: The colours of Allah: Book of the week: Edward Mortimer welcomes an attempt to paint a picture of the Muslim world: Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalisation by Akbar Ahmed 323pp, Brookings Institution Press, £17.99](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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73. [Seeing the truth](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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74. [The spies who loved. . . and lost their jobs James Bond may always get his girl, but when the women who spy for the CIA get their man they get sacked. Now they are suing the Agency for discrimination, they tell Toby Harnden](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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75. [ENDING PIP COVERAGE IS A RECIPE FOR DISASTER](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

76. [BUSHISM IS NEO-FASCISM](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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

Sep 30, 2007

77. [For Barack Obama, a careful courting of Jewish vote](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

78. [Chiquita case puts big firms on notice](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

79. [No title set.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

80. [Prince and the Middle East revolution MUSIC](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

81. [World Report](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

82. [Turkey plays waiting game](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

83. [Army lays siege to Palestinian refugee camp amid worst internal violence since civil war](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

84. [Prophet and loss: why it counts ISLAM](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

86. [LETTERS FROM READERS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

87. [Does Islam encourage terrorism?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

88. [*A bonkers plan to clear up conkers*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

89. [*Violent agenda carefully veiled*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

90. [*World Report*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

91. [*Liberalism, Democracy, and the Jewish State*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

92. [*The hostage industry ANALYSIS Terrorist groups with few resources are increasingly using a weapon with big impact: kidnap. Why?And how can captives be freed?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

93. [*'Violence is inherent in Islam - it is a cult of death' . Islamic faith schools must close . Sharia law could happen here . Multiculturalism has failed . Islam is the new fascism*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

94. [*A mirror on the world A city at the crossroads of the pivotal issues of our time, Cairo offers a vision of where we are headed, says Rahul Jacob*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

95. [*Faint glimmer of hope but peace is still elusive*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

96. [*Q&A / CHRIS HEDGES, Author and journalist: 'Theology of despair' a threat*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

97. [*Educated in the extreme*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

98. [Jimmy Carter, the popular maverick](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

99. [Sheep in Wolfowitz's clothing DOWNFALL](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

100. [INSIDE THE REAL IRAN Iran 's leaders seem intent on picking fights with the West. But, say David Blair and Damien McElroy, behind the poverty and paranoia of this fundamentalist regime is a young, educated and quietly rebellious population that is desperate to join the rest of the world](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2006 to Sep 30, 2007

FALLOUT OF WAR ON TERROR

The Nation (AsiaNet)

July 31, 2007 Tuesday

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Length: 1014 words

Byline: IFTIKHAR AHMAD

Body

Agreed that the clash of civilisations theory has been disproved. However, as writer and analyst Jonathan Kay, puts it, the clash is within a single civilisation, the Islamic civilisation. This is evident from the state of affairs in Muslim countries in Africa, the middle east, South and Central Asia, particularly the events Since after 9/11, leading to destruction of Afghanistan and Iraq where the aggression of the west, more prominently that of the United States of America (the World's most powerful military force) still continues and hundred of people, - innocent women and children included, are being killed everyday. If there is civil war condition in Iraq the responsibility for such a sorry state is that of the United States administration for dividing the people on the basis of religious sects and playing one group against the other.

The policy of divide and rule is not new that people are not aware of. The US has its policeman in the middle east (illegal State of Israel) which is the mother of all conflicts and destruction of peace in the region. If the American's believe in the power and value of the ballot and have respect for democratic norms and procedures why did the US authorities and Israel reject Hamas as they were popularly elected by the people. This dualism and double standards speak loud of the real intentions and the mindset of the crusaders.

What is happening in Afghanistan is a reflection of this mindset. And its fallout is badly affecting life and prospects of peace in Pakistan. So, the US is partly responsible for Pakistan's deteriorating law and order, violence, chain of bomb blasts etc) which makes the writ of the government not only challenged but non existing.

Since after the "Operation Silence" law and order situation has gone from bad to worse, particularly, in the NWFP and tribal areas. The federal capital Islamabad is insecure in the background of the war on terror and the situation across the border, in Afghanistan. American and NATO forces on Pak-Afghan border are least concerned about the security of people on the Pakistani side. Accordingly there is reaction from our tribal belt.

Those supporting democracy and world peace would rather desist from such an approach. Post-cold war neo-conservatives are too ready to use (or at least threaten to sue) force. It is impossible to imagine Truman or Kennedy or Eisenhower, Nixon starting a war in Iraq when the US was already fully engaged, and had not yet achieved success, in a conflict in Afghanistan.

The new breed of neo-conservative has a reflexive horror of most forms of international institutions (writes Richard Holbrooke, a former US representative to the UN): whereas Kirkpatrick supports strengthening the UN through reform, for instance, most younger neo-conservatives would like to see the organisation weakened or abolished. There is one big mistake that liberals in the US make in terms of equating/bracketing communism with Islam. Now that their war against communism is over, they are out to challenge the world of Islam to fight against international

FALLOUT OF WAR ON TERROR

'jihad', adapting the principles of their struggle against communism. The reason? So that their pre-eminence endures and is welcomed by weaker countries (a contradiction of liberal philosophy).

If Americans have an ideology of life, they should, in all fairness, not interfere in other peoples belief system and values. If they do justice and recognise the rights of other people and believe in human rights and democracy, there should be no reason for conflicts. These conflicts arise when you are out to ignore others' rights and make use of force and violent means to get hold of something that is not yours. This is the basis of conflict when Muslim lands were occupied and their resources were stolen / taken away, and the people were rendered homeless and resource less by use of military power or treachery. The wave of resentment had started. This naturally involved anger, stress and ultimate aggression in some form.

Wisdom of statesmanship is to resolve conflicts international, regional, national as well as local). This involves diplomacy and sensible leadership skills. Jihad is a movement against injustice. If there is no injustice there is no need for protest. As simple as that. So, if there is extremism and terrorism the best way is to ensure justice and to manage to remove any causes that can lead to behaviours which are otherwise normal. Effective visions must accurately diagnose the world situation, balancing realism with risk and ideals with capabilities.

As they care for their own civilians and army personnel the American leaderships should look into the consequences of Indian state terrorism, for example in Kashmir, which kills people by dozens every day, every week, every month. It is also on record that India has been actively involved in support of certain groups in Balochistan province and its (Indian) secret agencies have been source of internal threats to Pakistan. Not only that, Indian hegemonic policy has also resulted in their military intervention in Sri Lanka, Maldives, and other smaller states in the neighbourhood.

Unfortunately, the superpower US has not taken any serious view of Indian human rights violations in Kashmir and its military excursions in the neighbouring states. Now that India and US are in strategic partnership and India has ambitions to become a regional power and may be a world power. The expectations of justice and fair deal to its smaller neighbours become more and more questionable. In spite of this background India insists that all that goes wrong in that country is due to terrorist groups sponsored by Pakistan.

Pakistan had taken the role as a partner in the war on terror in spite of strong opposition on the home front it did an excellent job. Understandably, it was an odd job with serious consequences in terms of divisions within our own ranks. The fallout of war on terror is telling on our people and our economy as well as politics.

The writer is Former Director NIPA

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Load-Date: August 1, 2007

'Islamist' is the word for these terrorists

The Daily Telegraph (LONDON)

July 3, 2007 Tuesday

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Section: FEATURES; COMMENT; Pg. 20

Length: 996 words

Byline: Denis MacShane

Body

Why consult the crystal ball when you can read the book? Bevin's epithet is more than ever appropriate as Britain wakes up to the beginning of a long combat with the Islamist ideologies that send young men to kill and maim our citizens.

The calm, rational, determined and unfussed response of the new Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, as well as sombre language from the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, is a welcome change after the theatricalities of declaring war on terrorism, or instant consultation committees whose members are keener to denounce Britain's foreign policy than ask hard questions about the thought processes that guide the suicide and car bombers.

Six weeks ago, David Cameron wrote an article in the Observer criticising those who used the word "Islamist" to describe the ideological roots of the terrorist threat. Yet "Islamist" is an accurate description of a global ideology that has been slowly incubating for decades. It took 69 years between the writing of the Communist Manifesto and the imposition of Bolshevik terror on Russia after 1917. Hitler's hatred of Jews was derived from writings and ideologues active before he was born. The Islamist equivalent of Marx's revolutionary appeal can be found in the writing of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, with a growing presence in Egypt, as well as off-shoots such as **Hamas** and a European network, including prominent members of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Writing in the 1930s, Hasan al-Banna declared: "The Koran is our Constitution. Jihad is Our Way. Martyrdom is Our Desire." At a stroke, the history of modernity that is based on separation of faith and democracy, church and state, politicians and priests was overturned. Today, it is al-Qa'eda and the myriad Islamist outfits from Indonesia to Britain who are inspired by Islamist ideology to carry out evil acts.

These are repudiated by decent Muslims everywhere. I spend more time in mosques than in churches in my constituency of Rotherham, where 10,000 Muslim citizens live. Their imams and members of mosque councils are men of peace. They teach their children to recite the Koran, just as I learnt to recite the Latin mass as an altar boy. British Muslims know the difference between their faith and the ideologies of Islamism. For Mr Cameron to deny the concept of Islamism would have al-Banna and all the other founding fathers of Islamism laughing in their graves.

But measured and impressive as the Government's response (and, to be fair, Mr Cameron's) have been to the attempted atrocities in London and Glasgow, the fact is that the Labour Government, Whitehall and the entire political-media class in Britain have been slow to wake up to the need for an intellectual-ideological confrontation with Islamism.

'Islamist' is the word for these terrorists

I experienced this first-hand when, in November 2003, as Europe minister, I made a speech after Islamist terrorists drove a lorry bomb into the British consulate in Istanbul, killing scores - mainly Turks. At the same time, a young man from South Yorkshire had been groomed by Islamists into becoming a suicide bomber in Tel Aviv.

I made what I thought were banal points, saying a choice had to be made between "the democratic rule of law, if you like the British or Turkish or American or European way, based on political dialogue and non-violent protests, or the way of the terrorists, against which the whole democratic world is now uniting. We need to move away from talk of martyrs and I hope we will see clearer, stronger language that there is no future for any Muslim cause anywhere in the world that validates, or implicitly supports, the use of political violence in any way."

Read today, those words are so commonplace every MP would endorse them. Four years ago, they were seen as provocative and unacceptable. "Experts" wrote articles denouncing me. Inside the Foreign Office, I was ordered to negotiate with a representative of the Muslim Council of Britain a partial retraction of my statement. I regret now my temporising, based on the genuine upset I could sense among Muslim friends in Yorkshire and, of course, any politician's wish to hold on to office.

Now, there is no excuse. If ministers and MPs want to know where terrorism comes from, they can read Ed Husain's book *The Islamist*, with its self-explanatory sub-title "Why I joined radical Islam in Britain, what I saw inside and why I left". Husain is one of a growing number of British Muslims who are telling the truth. Shiv Malik's remarkable reportage on the Islamist factionalism that won control of the July 7 bombers in Leeds can be read in a recent issue of *Prospect*. Unlike non-Muslims who tried to raise issues before a complacent political-media world was ready to listen, today's witness from British Muslims cannot be gainsaid. They are not like Tariq Ramadan, the grandson of al-Banna, who writes reverently about the founding father of Islamism. Recently, *Prospect* published a sympathetic profile interview of Ramadan. Last month, the magazine's editor, David Goodhart, wrote an open letter to him after Ramadan condemned a meeting at Downing Street that included Muslim leaders opposed to Islamism. Goodhart pointed out that neither foreign policy nor racist attitudes in a Britain where Muslim citizens have freer lives than in any Muslim state can justify the constant attacks on British democracy from the Islamist ideologues.

Ramadan did not deign to reply. He remains however a Whitehall consultant - despite his refusal to call for the abolition of stoning women to death under sharia.

But the days of refusing to confront Islamist ideology are drawing to an end. There is a new determination in government to spell out hard truths. And soon someone will explain to David Cameron that there is such a thing as Islamist ideology and Islamist terror crimes, and that they represent a fundamental challenge to everything Britain and British citizens - of all faiths and none - stand for.

Denis MacShane was Europe minister, 2002-05

Load-Date: July 3, 2007

Israel Drops Rape Charges As President Agrees to Quit

The New York Times

June 29, 2007 Friday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 16

Length: 963 words

Byline: By ISABEL KERSHNER

Dateline: JERUSALEM, June 28

Body

The Israeli government has dropped rape charges against President Moshe Katsav in exchange for his agreement to step down and to plead guilty to lesser charges, the attorney general, Menachem Mazuz, announced Thursday.

Mr. Katsav, 61, will receive a suspended sentence and will pay a total of \$11,695 in compensation to two of the women who accused him, Mr. Mazuz said. One of them had worked for Mr. Katsav when he was tourism minister in the late 1990s; the other worked in his office in 2003 and 2004. Mr. Katsav will plead guilty to committing indecent acts without consent, sexual harassment of the two women and harassing a witness.

He is expected to resign on Friday. His seven-year term as president, a largely ceremonial post, was to end in July. Shimon Peres is expected to take office as president on July 15.

The announcement of a plea bargain caused debate and expressions of anger from Israelis who said Mr. Katsav was being treated too lightly.

Mr. Mazuz defended the reduced charges at a news conference, saying that Mr. Katsav had gone "from the status of No. 1 Citizen to the status of sex offender, with the shame that will follow him from now on."

Mr. Katsav had maintained that he was the innocent victim of a witch hunt or conspiracy. His lawyers suggested Thursday that he had made the plea bargain only to avoid a long and embarrassing trial. One of his lawyers, Avigdor Feldman, told Israel Radio that the president "will admit that he hugged" one complainant, "and that he touched her leg," acts, that did not constitute "a blatantly sexual situation."

"We persuaded the president, almost forcibly, to admit to this charge," he added, "because if he didn't, there would have been an indictment on two counts of rape."

"He would have been acquitted ultimately, but would have gone through hell first," he said.

Another of Mr. Katsav's lawyers, Zion Amir, said that some "touching of hips, an attempt at a kiss, and a kiss" had occurred.

Ten women made accusations against Mr. Katsav to police investigators. The final indictment focused on four cases. The attorney general said that many cases had problems of proof and evidence, and that in some cases the

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statute of limitations had expired. He said the settlement was in the public interest because it would reduce "the harm to the institution of the presidency."

Moshe Negbi, a commentator on legal affairs for Israel Radio, said the attorney general's statement had raised more questions than it had answered. "If the acts of which the president is charged are so serious --and I think they are -- how is the case being closed with a suspended prison sentence?" he asked.

In March, an Israeli court sentenced former Justice Minister Haim Ramon to 120 days of community service for forcibly kissing a **female** soldier. Mr. Negbi referred to another case of a prominent businessman, Ofer Glazer, who served four months of a six-month term for sexual harassment.

"This is the difference between someone in power and other people," Mr. Negbi said.

Mr. Mazuz noted that the case began almost a year ago, when Mr. Katsav invited him to his office and complained that a woman who worked for him was blackmailing him. The police inquiry soon turned against Mr. Katsav as the employee, who can only be identified as A. by court order, raised accusations of sexual offenses.

Mr. Mazuz said that he was closing the case of A.'s complaint and Mr. Katsav's without charges, because of a lack of evidence.

In response, A. held a televised news conference on Thursday, her face blurred to maintain her anonymity. By turns sounding tearful and composed, she criticized the plea deal, saying it gave sex offenders "a license to do whatever they want." She said Mr. Katsav was "a rapist, a serial sex offender and a pervert."

Afterward, Mr. Feldman, Mr. Katsav's lawyer, said that A. had lied brazenly in giving her version of events. He has proof that she intends to write a mudslinging book about Mr. Katsav, inspired by Monica Lewinsky, Mr. Feldman said.

In another development on Thursday, the Israeli Army conducted an incursion in Nablus on the West Bank. An army spokesman described it as a move against "terrorist infrastructures." During the incursion, five Israeli soldiers were wounded by Palestinian fighters, six explosive devices were thrown at, or activated against, the Israeli forces and two Fatah operatives were arrested, the army said.

The Fatah-affiliated Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades took responsibility for wounding the soldiers in a call to the news agency Maan.

Nablus is known as a base for militants. Last year, 117 of the 187 people suspected of planning suicide bombings who were arrested in the West Bank came from Nablus, the army said in a statement.

Palestinian officials associated with President Mahmoud Abbas, of Fatah, condemned the incursion as "unhelpful" when Israel is supposed to be trying to bolster Mr. Abbas's standing in the West Bank, especially with rival **Hamas** controlling Gaza.

Nimr Hamad, a political adviser to Mr. Abbas, said that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel and Mr. Abbas had agreed in principle to form a joint committee to discuss the details "of the wanted people and the issue of disarming groups."

The idea was raised Monday at the Sharm el Sheik meeting of regional leaders, he said, "but instead of giving us time to start convincing the groups -- and first among them those belonging to Fatah -- these incursions do not help."

This week, Mr. Abbas said all Palestinian militant groups should be disarmed. But Mr. Hamad said that, before acting on disarmament, the Palestinians were awaiting guarantees from Israel that it would stop its policy of going after the armed men.

Israel Drops Rape Charges As President Agrees to Quit

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photo: Moshe Katsav will plead guilty to indecent acts and harassment. (Photograph by Pool photo by Menahem Kahana)

Load-Date: June 29, 2007

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Gelt Complex

The Forward

June 29, 2007

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Section: News; Pg. A4

Length: 1027 words

Body

Challenger Wins at EJC

In a watershed election, Russian tycoon Moshe Kantor won the presidency of the European Jewish Congress, marking the first time that an Eastern European has taken the reins of an international Jewish organization.

In the secret-ballot election, Kantor won 55 votes. The incumbent, Pierre Besnainou, won 30 votes in the bitterly fought election.

During his tenure, Besnainou had concentrated on European relations with Israel. Kantor, by contrast, stressed the need for the EJC to focus on such intra-European issues as education, culture and Jewish identity.

Kantor was aided by behind-the-scenes support from the newly elected head of the World Jewish Congress, Ronald Lauder. Lauder is a major philanthropic player in Eastern Europe, and Kantor supported him in the recent WJC elections. Lauder was in Brussels, and while he did not take any official position, sources said that Lauder worked to secure votes for Kantor.

Arie Zuckerman, a Kantor aide, told the Forward that the Russian had convinced delegates that he would favor team work rather than the one-man show of Besnainou.

In the end, the British, the Germans, the Scandinavians, the Dutch and the Swiss joined Central and Eastern European leaders in voting for Kantor.

After the vote, Besnainou told the Forward he believes that Lauder played a big, big role and clearly supported Kantor.

Before the elections, Besnainou publicly raised questions about Kantor's closeness with Russian President Vladimir Putin, noting, for instance, that Russia was far more accommodating toward Hamas than Western European countries were. When asked about this by a French delegate, Kantor snapped that if there was such a close relationship with Putin, the Russian president was unaware of it.

MARC PERELMAN

GOP Reaching Out

Republican leaders in Congress are reaching out to the pro-Israel lobby after anti-abortion politics led GOP lawmakers to oppose a bill that included \$2.4 billion for the Jewish state.

Gelt Complex

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee lobbied hard for the \$2.4 billion in defense assistance for Israel, as well as for another \$40 million in refugee assistance that was included in the measure.

While the bill and the money for Israel was eventually approved by a Democrat-controlled congress, most Republicans in the House voted against the overall bill because it restored some funding for contraception aid to overseas groups that provide abortions. It was part of a larger \$34.2 billion foreign operations bill. President Bush has sworn to veto the bill if it reaches his desk with funding for abortion providers. In a memo urging a no vote on

money, makers & Jewish communal life

the foreign aid bill, House Minority Leader John Boehner, an Ohio Republican, went of his way to assure fellow Republican lawmakers that the GOP leadership was taking steps to reach out to Aipac. Members are advised that the Leadership has drafted a letter to Aipac affirming Republican support for Israel funding, notwithstanding final passage of this bill, Boehner wrote in a P.S. attached to the memo that was sent to House Republicans.

JTA

Birthright Milestone

New research released this week purports to show that the number of young American Jews who applied to participate in the Birthright Israel program is greater than the number who celebrated bar and bat mitzvahs this year.

Over the past 12 months, 44,675 Americans have applied to the Birthright program, which offers free 10-day educational trips to Israel for Jews between the ages of 18 and 26. Laurence Kotler-Berkowitz, director of United Jewish Communities' research and analysis department, projects that between 29,000 and 31,000 American Jews celebrate becoming bar and bat mitzvah each year. (Kotler-Berkowitz used data from the National Jewish Population Survey of 2001, which has been criticized for undercounting the number of American Jews and the level of observance.)

Taglit-Birthright Israel has become a new Jewish rite of passage, a new life cycle event onto [sic] itself, said Jeffrey Solomon, president of The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies. The Bronfman Philanthropies is one of the foundations that initially seeded the program.

The comparison between Birthright applications and bar and bat mitzvah figures is potentially misleading, because while it is generally only 12- and 13-year-olds who can celebrate the coming-of-age ceremony (with Orthodox females not taking part), any Jew between 18 and 26 can apply for Birthright. Moreover, many Jews who have been rejected reapply for future sessions.

While 44,000 have applied this year, funding limitations mean that only 12,000-18,000 can go in each of the summer and winter sessions. After this summer's session, the program will have taken to Israel nearly 150,000 participants from more than 52 countries.

ALANA NEWHOUSE

Aipac Launches Digest

In the latest salvo in the battle to sway the public debate over Israel, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee launched its own Middle East news digest that will be distributed to policymakers and journalists nationwide.

Aipac's Daily News Digest, sent out for the first time this week, will be the third service providing summaries of news reports on the region. The longest-standing report is from the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, which distributes the Daily Alert through the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. After years of complaints about the hawkish tone of that newsletter, last month the Center for American Progress launched a competing newsletter that took a more dovish approach.

Gelt Complex

The new Aipac digest, which has been in the works for months, gathers news from leading media outlets in America and Israel, and looks to draw a dividing line on the conflict. In its debut edition Monday, it featured a Wall Street Journal op-ed blasting congressional Democrats on Iraq. Another article, though, described Israel's refusal of American calls for final-status peace talks with Palestinians. NATHAN GUTTMAN

Graphic

IMAGE: Kantor: Won the EJC election.; EUROPEAN JEWISH CONGRESS

Load-Date: June 30, 2007

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understanding your world: BROWN, BLAIR AND THE MIDDLE EAST

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)

July 1, 2007 Sunday

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Section: NATION & WORLD; Pg. B-1

Length: 957 words

Byline: William M. Stewart

Body

Stewart: Arabs have reservations about Blair

We've not seen the end of Tony Blair. No sooner had he left 10 Downing St. than the former prime minister became the Middle East envoy representing the United Nations, Europe, the United States and Russia. The group is otherwise known as "the Quartet." More fuss was made over his departure from office and his new appointment than was made over incoming Prime Minister Gordon Brown. But perhaps that's just what a bemused British public wants: less celebrity, and more peaceful, down-to-earth hard work. The British are more than a little jaded with "Cool Britannia," as Blair's government re-branded the country a decade ago.

Just what is it that Blair is expected to do in the Middle East? To make peace? At the moment, that doesn't seem likely, as he is expected to confine himself to the issues of Palestinian governance, institutions and the recovery of a devastated economy. At least, that is what is said. All of that is rightly deemed essential if there is to be an independent Palestinian state. The final status talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the talks that would actually result in an independent Palestine, are said to be those between the two entities themselves, brokered by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Yes, well É One hardly knows what to say. The Bush administration has not exactly distinguished itself in the matter of making peace. As far as that goes, it hasn't exactly distinguished itself in waging war, either.

Before progress of any kind can be made, the security situation on the ground, especially in Gaza, needs to be guaranteed. If good governance is to mean anything at all, the safety of all the Palestinians needs to be assured (that of the Israelis is in the capable hands of the Israeli Defense Force). Both **Hamas** and Fatah must be brought into the fold. This is surely where Tony Blair must first put his formidable and undoubted talents to work.

But will he be allowed to? The tortured politics of the region should be his forte; we only have to look at the former "hopelessness" of Northern Ireland to see what the man can accomplish. His success in Northern Ireland was not his alone, of course, but he was the driving force.

Perhaps the reasons George Bush pushed him for the Middle East job are (1) he stiffed the former prime minister for years over pursuing an Israeli-Palestinian peace, perhaps hoping that a victory in Iraq would take the problem off his hands; and (2) a man of Blair's talents will find some way to move beyond the imbroglio to reach a situation that could indeed allow the White House to broker an agreement.

Moreover, former President Jimmy Carter, the only western leader to actually have brokered a successful Arab-Israeli agreement, is almost certainly unacceptable to the Bush administration. And former President Bill Clinton,

understanding your world: BROWN, BLAIR AND THE MIDDLE EAST

who came close to brokering an agreement, is tied up with his wife's presidential campaign, in case anyone hadn't noticed.

Blair brings to the job his well-known passion for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. That is a point on which all sides agree. The Arabs, however, have major reservations about a man who so forthrightly backed the U.S. on Iraq and refused to condemn Israel's attack on Lebanon last year. The fact that Israel so strongly backs his appointment is a reason why the Arabs harbor their doubts. But it is early days. We shall see.

Back in London, Prime Minister Brown undertook the biggest cabinet reshuffle since Labour came to power in 1997. It was almost a clean sweep. Only one cabinet member, Defense Secretary Des Browne, retained his job (and, as a Scot, got the new job of Secretary of State for Scotland, as well). Out went old-timer Margaret Beckett as foreign secretary and in came David Miliband, at 41 a rising Labour party star and one of the youngest foreign secretaries on record. His younger brother Ed Miliband becomes the chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, an ancient title that allows the holder to do any job the prime minister of the day wants him to do. Both are sons of Jewish refugees from Europe who fled to England in 1940.

It's not only in the U.S. where talent can rise to the top from humble beginnings. Alistair Darling, another Scot, replaced Brown as chancellor of the exchequer and Jacqui Smith became Britain's first **female** home secretary. The Scots are well represented in the cabinet, beginning with the prime minister himself. This may be coincidental, but it may also be a shrewd move on the part of Gordon Brown to weaken the power of the Scottish Nationalist party, now in control of the Scottish parliament, and to demonstrate to Scotland, still a Labour Party stronghold, that being part of Great Britain is a good thing.

Gordon Brown is proudly a Scot and also proudly British. The two are not incompatible, despite the wilder claims of some in the ranks of the Scottish Nationalist Party.

He is also a "son of the manse," meaning he is the son of a Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) minister and was brought up in the manse, or the residence of the local minister. By all accounts, he is an exceptionally moral man and deeply intelligent. He entered the University of Edinburgh at age 16, and later became rector of the same university while still in his 20s. Brown was a brilliant chancellor of the exchequer, presiding over a British economy that has grown steadily for the past 10 years. It was an extraordinary performance. Tony has gone (barely). Let's see what Gordon can do. It may not always be to George Bush's liking. That would please the British no end. It might even please many Americans.

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

Load-Date: July 1, 2007

Guardian Weekly: Books: The colours of Allah

Guardian Weekly

July 6, 2007 Friday

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*The*GuardianWeekly

Section: Pg. 39

Length: 990 words

Byline: Edward Mortimer

Body

Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalisation by Akbar Ahmed Brookings Institution Press 323pp pounds 17.99

Edward Mortimer

Once upon a time, in the mid-1980s, a young Pakistani civil servant wanted to carry on the best traditions of the British-created Indian Civil Service. Like many of his British predecessors, Akbar Ahmed combined his role as the government's political agent in a remote hill district with anthropological fieldwork, seeking to analyse and understand the unruly tribesmen whom his day job required him to pacify and subdue. A little pretentiously, perhaps, he called the resulting book *Religion and Politics in Muslim Society*. I remember being slightly disappointed when I first came across it to find that it dealt almost exclusively with the manners and customs of one particular Pukhtun tribe, which could hardly claim to be representative of the worldwide Muslim community.

Yet as it turns out, young Ahmed was in the right place. The province where he was stationed was South Waziristan, the wild area on the Afghan border where Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants are now believed to be hiding out. So in this new book the mature Ahmed can shake his head sadly over the clumsy handling of the Pukhtun tribes by the US and Pakistani governments. Commenting on "Operation Mountain Storm", the joint operation aimed at flushing out Bin Laden and the remnants of the Taliban in the spring of 2004, he is able to remark - patronisingly, perhaps, but pardonably so - that "neither the Americans nor city-dwelling Pakistanis like Musharraf and his generals appeared to have done their homework".

But the theme of *Journey into Islam* is much broader. In part it is an account of a literal journey - an "anthropological excursion" - that Ahmed, now a professor at American University in Washington DC, undertook in various countries (Turkey, Qatar, Syria, Jordan, Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Indonesia) in 2005-6, accompanied by two of his non-Muslim American students (one male, one *female*) and one *female* Arab-American Muslim research assistant. It is not a travel book in any conventional sense - particular episodes are vividly described, but not as part of a continuous narrative. Rather they are woven into a sustained and passionate argument, almost a desperate plea, for better mutual understanding between the West and the Islamic world.

Inevitably the phrase "clash of civilisations" appears. It even appears as a chapter heading, though followed by a question mark - as it was in its first incarnation as the title of Samuel P Huntington's 1993 Foreign Affairs article.

Needless to say, Ahmed, who is proud to be both Muslim and western, is anxious to avert this clash as far as possible. Yet to a surprising extent he accepts Huntington's premise that Islam and the West are still distinct civilisations.

With that in view, his argument is carefully addressed to "both sides", in terms that sometimes seem to imply not only moral equivalence between western and Muslim societies but the equal complicity of both in particular acts of violence, such as "the shooting of an entire Haditha family [in Iraq] by American soldiers and the beheading of Nick Berg in Iraq and of Daniel Pearl in Pakistan".

This is slippery terrain and Ahmed must expect some angry reactions. But he will take comfort from his success in establishing friendly relations with people ranging from, on one side, Judea Pearl (Daniel's father) to, on the other, Aijaz Qasmi, whose chilling words, "the actions of Osama bin Laden, Hizbullah, Hamas and the Taliban, even if they kill women and children, are perfectly justified in Islam", he uses to open the book.

"But hold on," you are probably thinking, "what kind of symmetry is that? Judea Pearl is obviously a man of peace, willing to strive for understanding and reconciliation even with the faith and culture that produced his son's murderers, while Qasmi is going around inciting Muslims to more indiscriminate violence." Yes, but Qasmi turns out to be the ace up Ahmed's sleeve. By the end of the book he has become general secretary of an Islamic peace foundation and a showcase for the healing power of dialogue, "at last able to put a human face to what he had earlier called 'American barbarians'."

So the journey turns out to be not only a voyage of discovery, but also a kind of mission. The American students are brought along not only so that they can learn about Muslim attitudes at first hand, but also so that the Muslims they meet will see a different face of the West. The main purpose of the book, therefore, is to give western readers a more three-dimensional picture of the Islamic world, enabling them to engage with real-life Muslims and acknowledge "their common humanity". Ahmed's device for doing this is to introduce us to three "models" of contemporary Islam, which he associates with three rival centres - all in India, as it happens - that he and his team visit.

Aligarh, seat of the university founded on the Oxbridge model by the great 19th-century Muslim reformer Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, stands for strengthening Islam by learning from the West. Deoband, a major madrasa in India, also founded in reaction to Islam's 19th-century crisis, asserts mainstream or orthodox beliefs and traditions. And finally Ajmer, shrine of the 12th-century Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti, stands for a more quietist, mystical Islam, stressing inner calm, transcendence of earthly passion and openness to other forms of spirituality such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

Crudely summarised, Ahmed's message to western leaders is to rely less on Aligarh products such as his younger self, and to engage with the Deobandis - those in the Muslim world who at first sight seem most fanatically hostile. In the end his advice to Muslims is to seek a synthesis of all three. Perhaps his next book should be a Journey into the West, on which his fellow travellers will be students from the Islamic world.

Load-Date: July 23, 2007

**'Terminal to nowhere'; High-tech border crossing serves as monument to
Mideast gridlock**

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

May 20, 2007, Sunday

Copyright 2007 Charleston Newspapers

Section: NEWS; Pg. P5B

Length: 981 words

Byline: Dion Nissenbaum, McClatchy Newspapers

Body

EREZ CROSSING, Israel - At the end of a dusty road, cleaved into a scratch of desert on the border that separates Israel from the Gaza Strip, a high-tech terminal of glass and steel symbolizes this region's political impasse.

The only legal way to travel between Israel and Gaza, the complex is a monument both to years of deadly attacks and to the new realities that have prevented all but a few from using it.

To prevent attacks, Israel has made it so that Gazans entering the Erez crossing terminal have no direct contact with an Israeli until they reach a passport-control booth at the very end. Before that, they pass through an elaborate series of steel gates, metal turnstiles, narrow passageways, advanced body scanners, identity checks and remote-controlled doors. They're monitored by Israeli security officials lodged behind a protected bank of windows in their second-floor offices.

The complex cost \$35 million to build.

Yet almost no one uses it. Israel prohibits the vast majority of Gazans from coming out, and almost no one from Israel goes in. These days, many simply call the high-tech crossing point the "terminal to nowhere" - a costly icon to the region's stagnant political process.

On any given day, in a cavernous terminal meant to handle 15,000 daily travelers, no more than 300 Palestinians are allowed through the labyrinthine, depersonalized process.

"It's kind of Kafkaesque," said John Viste, the acting regional director for JumpStart International, an American-run international aid organization.

Viste, who uses the crossing regularly, described it as otherworldly. "You don't talk to anybody, you go through these endless series of corridors and you have strange machines swirling around you. Everybody remarks on what a strange experience it is."

The surreal nature of the experience is something even Israelis are willing to concede.

"I know it looks very funny, like we spent a lot of money for nothing," said Shlomo Dror, a spokesman for Israel's Civil Administration, "but, in the future, I think things will change."

'Terminal to nowhere' High-tech border crossing serves as monument to Mideast gridlock

The terminal was conceived in the run-up to Israel's historic 2005 exit from Gaza and was billed as ushering in a new era when Israelis and Palestinians would travel easily between Gaza City and Tel Aviv, as they had decades ago.

That never happened. Israel routinely shuts Erez and a cargo terminal a few miles to the south at Karni. Gaza militants fire rudimentary rockets into southern Israel almost daily. Palestinians loyal to rival Hamas and Fatah factions battle one another in the streets, making it dangerous for outsiders to enter Gaza.

Over the years, Erez has been the target of at least nine major attacks. Three years ago, a female suicide bomber killed four Israeli soldiers when she blew herself up at the crossing. More recently, Israeli soldiers killed two Gaza Strip militants who tried to storm the crossing in February 2006.

As a result, isolating potential attackers from the Israelis who must screen potential entrants became a priority. Gone from Erez is the scene experienced elsewhere in which armed guards working out of neglected buildings coordinate passage via walkie-talkie.

In its place is a lengthy crossing process that entrants largely traverse on their own.

First, there is a sixth-of-a-mile walk through a long, dingy tunnel of concrete blast walls, topped with a corrugated metal roof. At the end is the first Israeli barrier - a remote-controlled metal turnstile set in a tall metal fence.

Once through it, the visitor faces a thick steel door. That door opens onto a covered outdoor passageway monitored by a series of surveillance cameras. Travelers then confront a group of sliding steel doors set in towering blast walls that mark the entrance to the new terminal. Using external cameras, guards inside decide when to open the doors.

Next, travelers encounter a metal detector, then a second remote-controlled turnstile that leads to yet another bank of turnstiles. Here is where travelers have their first face-to-face contact - with a Palestinian worker manning the luggage check.

People are required to put all their luggage on a metal detector, which funnels the baggage to unseen security guards for possible hand checks.

Travelers then are buzzed through a glass door and enter the crossing's most sophisticated security check: an advanced body screener created by a California company.

The scanner is so sensitive, officials say, that it creates a complete holographic image of the traveler and allows the screener to see even a tissue or penny stuck in a pocket.

Travelers step into the scanner through a plastic portal and raise their hands above their heads. The translucent plastic doors close and a scanner whizzes around them in a complete circle.

The scanner's manufacturer, L-3 Communications Inc., declined to discuss its work with Israel, though an official indicated the company has fine-tuned the process so that, in theory, body images that Israeli security guards see wouldn't be sharp enough to offend modest Muslim culture.

The company said the machine's radiation is less than what one is exposed to using a cell phone.

After the body scan, two more remote-controlled glass doors lead to the baggage claim area, where luggage often emerges with a note indicating that it has been examined by unknown inspectors.

Once travelers claim their luggage, it's off through another turnstile and onto passport control, where inspectors sit in enclosed booths with thick, blast-proof windows.

One last turnstile, and travelers emerge into the parking lot in Israel, from which they go on their way. The process has taken them through nearly two dozen gates, scanners, doors and turnstiles.

'Terminal to nowhere' High-tech border crossing serves as monument to Mideast gridlock

"The worst thing is that you begin to think it is normal to live like this," said Munir Badran, a Palestinian from the West Bank who travels to the Gaza Strip to visit his fiancée. "It's not a normal life."

Load-Date: May 21, 2007

End of Document

Around the North ...

Townsville Bulletin (Australia)

May 26, 2007 Saturday

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Section: WEEKEND EXTRA; Pg. 98

Length: 1030 words

Body

INNISFAIL

The cyclone-ravaged Innisfail Hotel failed to sell at a weekend auction. Innisfail company Subloos offered the sole bid at the auction but the \$385,000 offer was believed to be well under the reserve price. Cairns-based owner Chris Cameron said his consortium bought the hotel just three weeks before Cyclone Larry all but destroyed it. Negotiations with Subloos were set to continue this week.

INNISFAIL

Johnstone Shire Council will write a submission giving Cardwell Shire as its preferred option for amalgamation. Council administrator Graham Webb was disappointed less than 40 people attended a public meeting last week to discuss merger options.

INGHAM

Gilroy Santa Maria College champion shot-putter and rugby league player Callan Twaddle met his hero, ex-Brisbane Bronco Shane Webcke, at a 'Future State Greats' luncheon at Suncorp Stadium. The lunch recognised 18 young Queenslanders who had excelled in their chosen sports.

INGHAM

Fire has forced the closure of Ingham's McDonalds restaurant, just days after an extensive revamp was completed. It was a bitter blow for licensee George Colbran, who watched his Flinders Mall store burn early last year. The fire started in the ceiling cavity of the Ingham shop early on Monday.

THE BURDEKIN

CSR was to explain new cane-pricing choices for growers at a series of public meetings. CSR Sugar's Kim Morrison said CSR would offer growers the means to fix a price for their cane on a daily basis before the season and during the season. Growers' returns would remain determined by the Queensland Sugar Limited Pool unless they elected to use the other methods.

THE BURDEKIN

Burdekin Shire Council was ranked 45 out of 94 councils named in the Queensland Treasury Corporation report on the financial standing of councils. The Burdekin council was among 44 councils rated 'moderate', while neighbouring Bowen Shire was rated 'weak', coming in at No. 55 on the list.

BOWEN

When the cameras stop rolling, Bowen has big plans for the Australia movie location on Front Beach. The area will be developed with hotels, units, conference facilities and retail and commercial projects, in tandem with a council and state government-funded redevelopment of the foreshore along Santa Barbara Parade.

CHARTERS TOWERS

A turnout of less than 200 people at a local government amalgamation forum could indicate Towersites are not concerned about the prospect of a Charters Towers-Dalrymple council merger. However, Charters Towers Mayor Brian Beveridge said the issue was still a hot topic of conversation in the town.

CHARTERS TOWERS

A proposed pipeline from the Burdekin Falls Dam to Brisbane has been labelled an attempt to steal water from North Queensland. Charters Towers MP Shane Knuth said a multibillion-dollar, 1200km pipeline would be irresponsible and could bankrupt the State.

Around the State

* A VICTIM of one of the country's most notorious pedophiles could receive up to \$100,000 in criminal compensation -- five times more than expected.

In March, lawyers for one of the two more recent female victims of former Ipswich lawnmower shop owner Roy Schloss, 77, applied in the Ipswich District Court for the maximum criminal compensation available at the time of the offences.

The application was for the \$20,000 maximum amount available under Queensland legislation, between 1986 and 1990, for each of the five offences of which Schloss was convicted.

Schloss garnered national infamy when he was convicted in 1997 of paying a couple \$20 to buy cigarettes in exchange for having sex with their 11-year-old daughter.

He also was convicted of sexually molesting the girl's nine-year-old sister and sentenced to a total of almost 13 years' jail, which the Court of Appeal reduced to nine years.

* A BID to reinstate sacked Douglas Shire chief executive officer Terry Melchert has stalled but Deputy Mayor Dave Egan says the fight is not over.

Cr Egan's warning comes despite Local Government Minister Andrew Fraser vowing to sack the council if it tries to reinstate Mr Melchert.

The deeply fractured local authority plunged further into crisis this week after Cr Egan accused Mayor Mike Berwick and Cr Rod Davis of breaking the law in the dismissal of Mr Melchert on Friday last week.

Cr Egan has also accused two members of a three-person performance review panel -- which recommended Mr Melchert be sacked -- of a conflict of interest.

At a special meeting on Wednesday, called by Melchert supporters, the mayor refused to accept Cr Egan's motion pushing for a probe of the panel and an investigation into the conduct of the mayor and Cr Davis in Mr Melchert's sacking.

Cr Berwick said the attempt to reinstate the CEO breached a 22-point plan agreed to by councillors in February in response to Mr Fraser's threats to sack the dysfunctional local authority.

TOP 10 NEWS ITEMS OF THE WEEK

Around the North ...

- 1 Industrial relations policy -- Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd scrambled to deny his wife's company was forcing people on to AWAs.
- 2 Climate change -- Science broadcasters claimed many reports sceptical on climate change were based on research that had already been discredited.
- 3 Iraq -- US Congress backed down on its demand linking war funding to a troop departure timetable.
- 4 Wheat single desk -- In a backbench stoush over the future of the single export desk, Wilson Tuckey attacked the Government's decision to maintain the desk.
- 5 Lebanon -- More than 80 people were killed in fighting between government forces and Islamic militants at a refugee camp.
- 6 Drought and water supply -- Relieving rain continued but scientists discovered ground reserves may be in an even worse state than first thought.
- 7 Clashes in Palestine -- Israel became involved in fighting between **Hamas** and Fatah forces in the Gaza Strip.
- 8 Baby Catherine -- The baby left on the Dandenong Hospital doorstep headed for foster care as authorities urged the mother to make contact with the hospital without fear of legal consequences.
- 9 Future fund -- Chairman forced to defend the decision to award the administration of the fund to an American bank.
- 10 Zimbabwe -- International focus remained on the tottering economy and political violence of Robert Mugabe's regime.

Source: Media Monitors Index

Load-Date: May 26, 2007

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On a creative mission to save the world

Australian Financial Review

May 16, 2007 Wednesday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Features; Pg. 60

Length: 919 words

Byline: Lyndall Crisp

Body

Legendary lateral thinker Edward de Bono never runs out of new ways to look at life and business, writes Lyndall Crisp.

Computers may be a wonderful tool, but when it comes to creative thinking they stymie the ability to develop ideas. Progress comes to a halt.

Edward de Bono has lectured the world on lateral thinking for 40 years and reckons that businesses are suffering because, while they use computers to collect information, they don't take the next step and interpret it from different angles.

"It's a bit like the Chinese, who 2000 years ago were way ahead of the West in science and technology. If they'd continued at the same rate today they'd be the most dominant power in the world," he says. "What happened? The scholars began to believe you could move from certainty to certainty to certainty. So they never developed the possibility system, hypothesis, speculation, imagination.

"The same thing's happening in the rest of the world. We're collecting all the data, the computer analyses it, then tells us what to do. That's very dangerous unless we develop creativity that means 'OK, that's the data, let's look at it differently'."

De Bono, who is in Australia for a series of lectures and to promote his latest book, *How to Have Creative Ideas*, says anyone can be creative but that some people are more creative than others. Imagination is the playground in which creativity can work.

While the formal techniques of lateral thinking can be powerful - he says a group of his workshops in South Africa generated 21,000 ideas for a steel company in one afternoon - the basic habits of creative thinking are the ability to extract concepts, to see connections, value and points of difference.

"I am interested in idea creativity which produces value," he says. "When I started writing in 1967, the business sector of society was the most interested and has continued to be the most interested in thinking. Other sectors, like the academic and political, it's enough to verbally convince people you're right, there's no real bottom line. In business you can prove you're right and go bankrupt next week.

On a creative mission to save the world

"As countries like China and India produce things at a fraction of the cost, creativity is becoming more and more important. Otherwise, Australia is going to become the herb garden of China."

Without creativity there is only repetition and routine. Merely being competent is the kiss of death in business. Creative thinking can produce simplicity, which in turn can save business time and money.

"Different ways of communicating, different marketing concepts, different products, new services - all need new thinking," de Bono says.

While the younger generation equates being different to being creative, he argues that if creativity doesn't deliver value there's no point.

"You have to believe it's possible and you have to have the motivation. And then gradually you find you're developing the habits of mind which underline creativity. It's a bit like an athlete who trains to be fit and then learns the techniques of the sport."

Born in Malta in 1933, the "pioneer in writing software for the brain" is still in demand around the world. So far this year he's lectured in Hong Kong, Singapore, Mexico City, New York, Los Angeles, Monterey, Budapest and Amsterdam. A Rhodes scholar, a graduate of Oxford and Cambridge universities, a doctor and psychologist, he has written more than 70 books translated into 40 languages.

His impact on the way we think is undeniable, but he tells awful blonde jokes - "How do you know a blonde's been using the computer? It has Wite-Out on the screen." - and regards sitting on a beach as "hard work".

He prefers to think. He never runs out of ideas.

Last year, he took full-page ads in the Hollywood Reporter and Variety announcing plans to set up a "happy film commission" that would rate films according to their happy content because "most films are nasty and violent". The industry was underwhelmed.

He can't look at anything without seeing potential. The humble omelet, filled with runny scrambled eggs, is one culinary concept. Cooking pasta by adding it to boiling water at three different times for texture is another.

He's also designed a new way of playing chess that, he says, is much quicker. And you thought it was a leisurely pursuit.

"In January I launched the World Council for New Thinking," he says. "Representative bodies like the United Nations can't easily have new ideas because they've got to represent current thinking, and new ideas are not current thinking, they're high risk. I've got six Nobel Prize winners working with me to provide a platform for putting forward new possibilities.

"For instance, in the Israel-Palestine situation, a way of allowing them to vote in each other's elections. The Israelis would never have elected Hamas and the Palestinians would never have elected Sharon. You elect more constructive people and you work together.

"China is short of 100 million women. My suggestion is instead of having a one child policy have a one-boy policy. Have as many children as you like till you have a boy, and then you stop."

The biggest audiences for de Bono, who earlier this year shared the stage with former US secretary of state Colin Powell in Dubai, are 8000 Mormons in Salt Lake City and 7400 children in Christchurch.

But it hasn't made him as wealthy as he thinks he should be.

Rock stars and footballers, he says, leave him for dead - but he can earn more in one hour than he did in a year when he started working all those years ago.

Graphic

PHOTO: Edward de Bono applies innovative thinking to everything, from omelets to peace in the Middle East.
Photo: MICHELE MOSSOP

Load-Date: April 6, 2012

End of Document

A Southerner opines

University Wire

May 11, 2007 Friday

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Section: COLUMN

Length: 1007 words

Byline: By Daniel Halper, Tufts Daily; **SOURCE:** Tufts U.

Dateline: MEDFORD, Mass.

Body

Aceh is a tropical paradise that attracted thousands of tourists per year until a devastating tsunami struck Indonesia on Dec. 26, 2004. The concomitant death and destruction is well known. Also well documented in the world press has been the slow pace of the clean up operation, which affects the recovery of the tourist industry - the mainstay of the province's economy.

A dramatic change of a very different sort, however, may have rendered Aceh permanently unrecognizable to those who enjoyed its sybaritic pleasures. Aceh has been governed by Sharia, the strict Islamic law that Islamic militants have sought to forcefully impose in Muslim nations worldwide.

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) has fought small-scale guerilla battles in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, over the past couple of years. JI is responsible for the bombings that shook Bali several years ago and is suspected of having strong ties to al-Qaida.

After the tsunami, activists declared a unilateral cease-fire and immediately hit the beach with offers of aid and support for the devastated population. (Both Hamas and Hezbollah, among several others, have employed this tactic to bolster their growth.)

The stratagem worked. The years of terror attacks were overshadowed by this act of seeming good will and the Acehnese voted into office lawmakers who would eventually pass legislation handing over rule to supporters of Sharia.

It may have been their last chance for free elections and the changes since then have been sweeping on all fronts. This further placed the liberty of free speech in jeopardy, as many scholars believe that those who oppose Sharia in the region are now fearful of speaking out. The men, women and children of Aceh are forced to conform to the Islamists' strict view of their faith, in stark contrast with the secularism that prevails through most of the rest of Indonesia. Everyone must cover themselves completely; however, this law is hardly enforced for men. Women are required to adhere to a strict curfew, wear hijabs (head scarves), and must have a male escort after a certain hour. Failure to comply with any law may lead to severe punishment. Additionally, Sharia is hardly compatible with the tourist industry that was the mainstay of the Island's economy.

The German Press Corporation (Deutsche Presse-Agentur) recently declared Aceh's Sharia police as "Taliban-style Islamic police terrorizing Indonesia's Aceh." Most recently, the International Crisis Group (ICG) reported that both

A Southerner opines

the poor and women in Aceh have had their rights taken away. To those who understand radical Islam, this comes as no surprise. Often, Sharia, but mainly the proponents of such ideas, leads to unruly side effects.

An Islamist state, while clearly favored by some in the region, impedes the civil liberties held so dearly by most other Indonesians. Aceh has become a Sharia police state ruled by the strong with the weak at their mercy. The strong have little regard for those with less power, thus it is necessary for the Sharia-grounded state to accept inalienable rights for all citizens if it wants to continue. Without this, atrocities will continue on a daily basis.

This not only impedes physical rights, but also intellectual ones. A primary problem with religion being forced upon citizens is that these individuals become unable to accept religion with the pure use of reason. A personal commitment demonstrates a person's true dedication. The faculty of reason allows individuals to act as humans. The attraction to religion stems from its ability to make people more human by guiding them to the realization of a higher being through the use of reason, not through imposition.

In order for Sharia to be a fully viable solution to the problems of citizens, it must take into account the imperfections of human beings. Thus, any interpretation of the Quran and Hadith (scholarly text) would have the possibility of being incorrect. Of course, any reasonable person would be able to recognize the fallibility of humans and realize that mistakes are unavoidable. Sharia-based states hardly allow this as a possibility. Rather, fatwas (religious mandates) are considered the final rule and all Muslims in such a state are required to follow these dictates. Radicalism must not be forced on those with different beliefs; rather, a systematic change is necessary. Humanity must be preserved, and in order to ensure this, people must be allowed to make their own decisions. In a liberal state, this as well as civil discussions would be widely accepted in a truly humane way.

This liberal state would allow for discourse and perhaps cause people to change their minds and accept Islam. That is the beauty of liberal democracy. A liberal state allows for people of different beliefs to come together, discuss their ideas, and eventually come to reasonable conclusions. This idea has become the model for states that promote freedom. However, the liberal state recognizes the fallibility of humans and thus implements basic rights that each citizen is guaranteed.

People whose actions differ from a given perception of Islam only affect those who make those decisions. Step back and put yourself in the shoes of the oppressed. Imagine for a second what your reaction would be if you were forced to live under such rule. It is hard to imagine life without inalienable rights. It is hard to imagine not being able to express yourself. It is hard to imagine not being able to say what is on your mind.

Of course the Indonesians are different from us.

Of course they have different customs.

But we share a commonality of being humans.

An Islamic state in Indonesia only weakens the religion and the region. It violates human rights and impedes lives. Without this much needed transition, Aceh and its Sharia governance must continue to face both international and domestic scrutiny.

The tsunami that struck Aceh has been chronicled worldwide as a disaster. However, the imposition of Sharia may prove to be an even larger one.

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Load-Date: May 11, 2007

God save our gracious queens

thespec.com

June 19, 2007 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: GO; Pg. G02

Length: 927 words

Byline: Jeff Mahoney, The Hamilton Spectator

Body

SUGGESTED MOVE: Queen mates in two? Game over?

One thing I've always loved about chess, aside from that horsie piece (I simply cannot move it without making a neighing sound and pawing the floor with my hoof), is the promise of upward mobility.

Every pawn can be a queen. If you don't know the game, keep in mind that the pawns are the lowliest piece on the board. They can move only one space at a time and only forward.

The queen, by contrast, is the most powerful piece. It can sweep across the board in any direction, many squares at a time, it has a platinum credit card and its own table at The Granite Club.

But if a pawn can make its way right across the board, to the first file of its opponent's side, it becomes a queen. It takes on all the power of a queen. (The other pieces throw a party for it, give it a sash, even though they're horribly jealous, and Bert Parks sings a song.)

A pawn becoming a queen is a little like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, except that it doesn't happen very often. Perhaps a better analogy is an ugly duckling becoming a swan, or Arthur pulling Excalibur out of the stone, or the old idea that every child can grow up to be president.

Just as every pawn, technically, can grow up to be a queen, I suppose that, technically, every child (or rather any child) can be president. As long as he or she is one of those children who can raise \$200 million in campaign donations at the drop of a promised favour. (I think these days, it would be more accurate, certainly more realistic, to say: Every child, no matter how pawnlike his or her circumstances, can grow up to be, if not a president, then at least a queen ... and land a job in a Legends show in Vegas.)

But, to get to my point, the beautiful lesson of chess is that everything is in play. And the smallest factor can leverage the most profound alteration in ever-intertwining systems of relative power.

As you're fixing your defences around the potential attack lines of your opponent's queen, rooks, bishops and horsies (clap-clap, clap-clap), some obscure little pawn from the public housing units could be crawling toward your first file, with a whole new paradigm strapped to its body.

God save our gracious queens

And now I'm referring, of course, to the honeybee, which is in the news so much. Nobody really knows why, but the honeybee population is declining at an alarming rate. They call it colony collapse disorder.

And that is horrible news if, like me, you enjoy honey-brown ales. (Already breweries around the world are trying to teach scorpions how to make honey; the scorpions can sting like a bee but they can't float like a butterfly, or fly at all, so it's hard for them to get to the tops of flowers. And you know Scorpios -- so secretive and obsessive.)

If you don't like honey and you don't like getting stung, you may welcome the news. But honeybees don't just make honey. They are critical to the pollination of all kinds of fruits, crops and foodstuffs that we depend on.

So, while we've been busy fortifying ourselves against the four horsie pieces of the apocalypse -- global warming, terrorism, nuclear escalation and trans fats -- a pawn has crept up the board. That pawn is the honeybee, droning inconspicuously in the background.

And now the drone has become a little too quiet. The bees are starting to sound like the cod off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, whose silence is deafening.

The growth of colony shrinkage has become a queen bee of a problem. Not in and of itself, perhaps, but for the ripple effect it is having and will have on the larger patterns within the macro-system of the planetary chess game.

Everything is inter-related, naturally, and who knows in what ways? Songbird populations are declining; the world's food fishes are being depleted (the oceans could all be fished out well before the end of this century, according to some); and species of animals, insects and plants are racing toward extinction, thanks to overharvesting, deforestation and habitat reduction.

It's happening, at least partly, because we humans are so voracious, in our hunger to dominate the board, that we've wandered into a trap of costly, revealed pins and checks.

We always have to be king bee, don't we? Actually, it should be queen bee -- there is no king in bee colonies. The males are all drones. But our main power suits-and-pants might not be comfortable with that metaphor. Would Conrad Black or George Bush want to be called queen bees? Too bad. You're queen bees. Or the ruling councils of Iran or China or Hamas?

It's interesting how in bees and chess, the queens rule and the male partners tend to be feeble. Kind of like the British Royal family.

In chess, a game of logic, they traditionally call the pieces "men," even though four are horses and two are queens. If those two queens are indeed men, maybe chess should be called The Crying Game.

In the insect world, queens are often dominant. A praying mantis female is larger than the male and she can actually eat him while they mate. (As in chess, mate is death.) After it's over she says, "So, was it good for you, too?" (I think I may have dated that praying mantis.)

You have to love the insect and the animal worlds, not to mention chess, for all the lessons they teach us about our human adventure on this planet. And for that reason, if no other, maybe we should take better care of them.

The honeybees are now saying, "OK, humans, your move."

Check Thursday's column for responses to last week's column asking for your choices of the best- and worst-smelling places in Hamilton.

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God save our gracious queens

Load-Date: June 19, 2007

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Labor Woes Hit Memorial to East Side Wage Slaves - Correction Appended

The Forward

May 18, 2007

Correction Appended

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Section: News; Pg. A1

Length: 937 words

Body

A few mornings a week, Tal Bar-Zemer dons a black floor-length skirt, white blouse, pinafore and lace-up leather boots in preparation for her job as a costumed interpreter at Manhattan's Lower East Side Tenement Museum. On any given afternoon, she spends six to eight hours sitting in an overheated, cramped apartment, talking in character to museum visitors about the life of a young Jewish immigrant struggling to make it in New York in 1916.

But these days, the life of the girl she portrays, Victoria Confino, a 14-year-old Sephardic Jew from Turkey, is beginning to resemble her own in ways she never could have imagined. Bar-Zemer, 23, a recent graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, is one of 40 educators at the museum a preserved tenement building that offers a glimpse into the lives of its earlier inhabitants who are fighting to establish a labor union there.

In a glaring irony, the very institution that commemorates the immigrants who formed the backbone of the American labor movement is now entrenched in a dispute over how it treats its employees.

For all of the workers, it really hits home because they're teaching labor history, and at the same time they're struggling to get a union themselves, said Eden Shulz, the recording secretary of Local 2110 United Auto Workers. I think everyone recognizes the hypocrisy of that. The union represents the museum workers in their organizing efforts.

The tussle pits the museum's per diem employees, who work flexible hours and get paid by the day,

against the museum's management, which, workers say, has put up roadblocks to their ongoing attempts to unionize. Management representatives counter that they are open to a collective bargaining unit, but one established through an election administered by the National Labor Relations Board.

The museum takes very seriously the right of its employees to form a union should they so choose in an appropriate unit, said Bob Liff, a spokesman for the Tenement Museum. We think it would be best done through an election, where you get an uncoerced and clear view of the desires of the employees, he said.

Earlier this month, the museum rebuffed efforts to create a collective bargaining unit through a card check, wherein a neutral third party certifies that a majority of workers want to join the union. According to Shulz, card check is a far more efficient way to establish a union than going through the NLRB. The NLRB, created in 1935 to help protect workers' rights, has become increasingly hostile toward labor in recent years, Shulz said, as President Bush has stacked the agency with his handpicked appointees.

Labor Woes Hit Memorial to East Side Wage Slaves

Employees of the museum, which last year drew more than 125,000 visitors, complain of unstable hours, a lack of health care benefits, no set breaks and the fact that they have not seen a pay hike in four years.

Maia Macek, 34, said that while she has received no wage increase in her two years working at the museum, administrators have given themselves pay hikes over the same period. Macek also complained that employees are sometimes repudiated, or even fired, at will a practice, she and other educators said, they would like to see change.

There have been times when an employee has been reprimanded seemingly at random, and there's no recourse for discussion, she said.

Like Bar-Zemer, Macek plays the role of Victoria Confino. As costumed interpreters, both women earn \$23 an hour. But that wage drops significantly to \$15 an hour when they work as educators, giving tours of the museum. Macek, a nonfiction writer who supports herself through her work at the museum, said that once she qualified to give tours, she was given far fewer hours in her role as Confino. She also described the difficulties of working at the whim of her employer. You can go from working eight hours a day for 12 days in a row, and then not be offered any hours, she said.

Museum representatives say that when talks with per diem workers began last November, educators and costumed interpreters were offered the option of taking full-time jobs, as well as more stable part-time employment. Those offers, they said, were flatly rejected. The per diems average on the order of 11 hours per week, and some had as little as three hours, Liff said. This is one of the reasons the museum reached out to them and continues to say 'Become full-timers.'

According to employees, they turned down the option of accepting the full-time positions because they viewed them as a shill for real negotiations. There was no dialogue about it; there was just suddenly a job posting, and it seemed we were being asked to reapply for the jobs we already had, said Macek, who added that the few educators who did take more permanent jobs came from the outside and were now being pressured to work extra hours.

A meeting between the parties is set to take place early next week.

Museum representatives said that one issue they would like to resolve is why the workers' organizing effort does not include the museum's existing full-time staff members, who are responsible for scheduling the tours.

But workers shot back that the question of whether to include the full-time employees, who work out of a different building and are subject to a different pay scale, was yet another ruse to stifle efforts to unionize. They're just creating a distraction and avoidance of the real issue, Macek said, which is that the per diem workers love the museum and want to see it working in alignment with its values.

Correction

In the May 18 article Labor Woes Hit Memorial to East Side Wage Slaves, the name of Eden Schulz, the recording secretary of Local 2110 United Auto Workers, was misspelled.

Correction-Date: May 25, 2007

Graphic

Labor Woes Hit Memorial to East Side Wage Slaves

IMAGE: Grief in Gaza: The mother of a Fatah security officer killed Tuesday in clashes with **Hamas** collapses at a Gaza City morgue. This week's violence in Gaza was the worst in months. Please see Page A6.; getty images

Load-Date: May 17, 2007

End of Document

California Lawmaker Becomes Highest-Ranking Official To Say He's a Nonbeliever - Correction Appended

New York Sun (Archive)

March 13, 2007 Tuesday

Correction Appended

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Section: NATIONAL; Pg. 6

Length: 935 words

Byline: JOSH GERSTEIN -, Staff Reporter of the Sun

Dateline: SAN FRANCISCO

Body

A California congressman is breaking a longstanding taboo by declaring himself a nonbeliever.

Fortney "Pete" Stark Jr., an 18-term Democratic veteran of the House, made the unusual declaration after being queried by secular groups running a contest to find the highest-ranking atheist in American politics.

"When the Secular Coalition asked me to complete a survey on my religious beliefs, I indicated I am a Unitarian who does not believe in a supreme being," Mr. Stark, 75, said in an statement emailed to The New York Sun.

Atheist groups hailed Mr. Stark yesterday as the first member of Congress to declare that he does not believe in God. "With Stark's courageous public announcement of his nontheism, it is our hope that he will become an inspiration for others who have hidden their conclusions for too long," the executive director of the American Humanist Association, Roy Speckhardt, said.

Mr. Stark's declaration notwithstanding, the contest sponsored by the Secular Coalition of America hardly had politicians clamoring to embrace nonbelief. A spokeswoman for the group, Lori Lipman Brown, said 47 people entered to win \$1,000 by identifying the highest-ranking politician who is an atheist. The only other politicians willing to identify themselves as nonbelievers were two school board members and one town meeting member. Aside from Mr. Stark, no state or federal official at any level agreed to be named as an atheist.

"That looks rather distressing, especially if we count 30 million people, or 10% of Americans, as nonbelievers," Ms. Brown said, citing figures from opinion polls. Still, she said she was "not at all surprised" that so few politicians said they were nonbelievers. "That could be political suicide," Ms. Brown, a former Nevada state senator, said.

Ms. Brown pointed to a recent USA Today/Gallup Poll that found 53% of Americans would not consider voting for an atheist presidential candidate. Homosexuals, the repeatedly divorced, Jews, Mormons, Catholics, and women all fared better, with a majority of Americans willing to consider them as candidates. "People who don't believe in God are the most distrusted minority in the United States," she said.

California Lawmaker Becomes Highest-Ranking Official To Say He's a Nonbeliever

The Senate's official historian, Donald Ritchie, said he thought the claim that Mr. Stark was the first avowed nonbeliever in Congress was probably correct.

"A lot of them don't list an affiliation but they don't say they don't believe or they're not religious," Mr. Ritchie said. "We've never had a Madalyn Murray O'Hair-type up here, somebody who made a crusade of it."

Mr. Stark's press secretary, Yoni Cohen, said the congressman was not available for an interview yesterday. Mr. Stark's statement suggested that he disclosed his religious views to promote the separation of church and state and to "stop the promotion of narrow religious beliefs in science, marriage contracts, the military and the provision of social services."

Mr. Stark, whose district covers suburban and rural areas southeast of Oakland, is one of the most liberal Democrats in Congress. Last year, he got a 95% score from Americans for Democratic Action. His voting record has caused concern among some pro-Israel activists.

During Israel's war with Hezbollah last summer, he was one of only eight members of Congress to vote against a resolution backing Israel and condemning Hamas and Hezbollah.

A blogger who discussed the issue with Mr. Stark, Amos Bitzan, said the congressman opposed the measure because he viewed it as unreasonably skewed toward Israel. However, Mr. Bitzan, a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley, said Mr. Stark rejected a report by two professors, Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, who argued that the American government is in the thrall of pro-Israel zealots. The congressman noted that a professor popular on the left, Noam Chomsky of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, also took issue with the paper, Mr. Bitzan said.

In a recent tally conducted by the Religion News Service, 393 House members described themselves as Christian or part of a denomination that considers itself Christian. Thirty said they were Jewish, two reported being Buddhists, and one was Muslim. On the opposite side of the Capitol, 87 senators reported being Christian, while 13 were Jewish.

The Sun contacted the six members of Congress found to be "unaffiliated" in that survey, Mark Udall of Colorado, Neil Abercrombie of Hawaii, John Olver and John Tierney of Massachusetts, Earl Blumenauer of Oregon, and Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin. All are Democrats.

A spokeswoman for Mr. Olver, Sara Burch, said her boss did not wish to expand on the unaffiliated designation. "He just thinks religion is a personal matter," she said. "'Non-affiliated,' that's just his way of saying, 'To me, it's personal.'"

A spokeswoman for Mr. Blumenauer, Erin Allweiss, said the Oregon native had no comment. Ms. Baldwin and Messrs. Udall, Abercrombie, and Tierney did not respond to the Sun's inquiry about whether their unaffiliated status should be viewed as a lack of religious belief.

A spokesman for the American Humanist Association, Fred Edwards, said the meager results of the contest undercut claims that secularists have taken over American society. "When people say there's a war on Christianity or there's a war on Christmas, they're talking through their hats," he said. Mr. Edwards said he regularly sees claims that atheists are dominating Congress, the bureaucracy, public schools, universities, and the courts. "The few of us that exist would be spread pretty thin if we're supposed to be overrepresented in so many places," he said.

Correction

Amos Bitzan is the spelling of the name of a blogger who met with Rep. Fortney "Pete" Stark last year. Mr. Bitzan's name was misspelled in an article on page 6 of the March 13 Sun.

California Lawmaker Becomes Highest-Ranking Official To Say He's a Nonbeliever

Correction-Date: March 15, 2007

Load-Date: October 10, 2007

End of Document

Another perspective, or jihad TV?: Al Jazeera English

The International Herald Tribune

January 18, 2007 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 6

Length: 1008 words

Byline: Judea Pearl - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: LOS ANGELES

Body

In late 2001, three months before my son, the Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, was kidnapped, he interviewed the influential Qatari cleric Sheik Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and asked him about suicide bombings against Israeli civilians. The sheik replied with a novel twist of logic. "Israeli society in general is armed," he said, implying that Israeli civilians including women and children, doctors and journalists are legitimate targets.

At the time, it was still surprising to see an authoritative Muslim cleric give religious license to the ideology of terror. Daniel would fall victim to that ideology when he was abducted and murdered in Pakistan.

After his death, I discovered that Sheik Qaradawi is the host of a weekly program on the Qatar-based TV news network Al Jazeera called "Sharia and Life." He uses this forum to preach to millions of Arabic-speaking viewers, including Hamas operatives, Al Qaeda recruits, schoolteachers and impressionable Muslim youths.

"We have the 'children bomb,' and these human bombs must continue until liberation," he told his audience in 2002. Consistent with this logic and morality, Sheik Qaradawi later extended his blessing to suicide bombing against American civilians in Iraq.

A few in the Arab world have taken issue with his calls for violence. Al Ittihad, a newspaper in the United Arab Emirates, editorialized in 2004 that the beheading of two American hostages in Iraq happened "in direct response to Qaradawi's fatwa and incitement, which permits the killing of American civilians." Yet few, in the Middle East or the West, seem willing to condemn Al Jazeera's management for giving the cleric regular airtime.

None of this might seem to matter much to Westerners except that for two months now Al Jazeera has been taking its mixture of news coverage and extremist propagandizing to our front door through an English-language station, Al Jazeera English.

The network can be received via satellite or streamed over the Internet. It has bureaus in London and Washington, and has recruited such high-profile Western journalists as David Frost as correspondents.

In part, this is promising. The Arabic version of Al Jazeera and its various spinoffs on satellite TV and the Internet are usually credited with having a positive influence on Arab society. Al Jazeera's coverage has placed an emphasis on younger leaders, reformers and successful businessmen who may serve as role models for today's Arab youth. And it has brought a degree of inquisitiveness and openness that could become a useful engine of reform in the region.

Another perspective, or jihad TV? Al Jazeera English

Westerners have been quick to point out these benefits. Time magazine wrote that "arguably nothing including the Bush administration's panoply of democratization programs has done more than Al Jazeera to open minds and challenge authority in the Middle East."

But what should concern Westerners is that the ideology of men like Sheik Qaradawi saturates many of the network's programs, and is gaining wider acceptance among Muslim youths in the West. In its "straight" news coverage on its Arabic TV broadcasts and Web sites, Al Jazeera's reports consistently amplify radical Islamist sentiments (although without endorsing violence explicitly).

For example, the words "terror" and "insurgency" are rarely uttered with a straight face, usually replaced with "resistance" or "struggle." The phrase "war in Iraq" is often replaced by "war on Iraq" or "war against Iraq." A suicide bombing is called a "commando attack" or, occasionally, a "paradise operation."

Al Jazeera's Web site can be less subtle. On Dec. 12, after religious leaders and heads of state all over the world condemned President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran for staging a Holocaust-denial conference in Tehran, the headline on the site read, "Ahmadinejad Praised by Participants of the Holocaust Conference in Tehran, but Condemned by Zionists in Europe."

In short, Al Jazeera's editors choreograph a worldview in which an irreconcilable struggle rages between an evil-meaning Western oppressor and its helpless, righteous Arab victims. Most worrisome, perhaps, it often reports on supposed Western conspiracies behind most Arab hardships or failings, thus fueling the sense of helplessness, humiliation and anger among Muslim youths and helping turn them into potential recruits for terrorist organizations.

The question is, to what extent will this pathological worldview infiltrate Al Jazeera's English channel? David Marash, a former "Nightline" correspondent who is the American anchor on Al Jazeera English, acknowledges such a possibility, but dismisses the responsibility of the network. "Undoubtedly, some Al Jazeera programs may have inspired some social misfits to undertake terrorism," he told The New York Sun. "The danger with information is that some people will take it the wrong way."

Still, with the growing number of social misfits in society, and the growing confusion between information and deception in the news media, the danger of fueling combustible anger in some viewers cannot be ignored, especially when pumped subliminally by well-respected Western anchors.

This is why, even if Al Jazeera English waters down its alarmist content, it should still be seen as a potential threat: it will bestow respectability upon the practices of its parent network in Qatar, which continues, among other things, to broadcast Sheik Qaradawi's teachings.

I wouldn't call for banning Al Jazeera English in the United States even if that were possible. It is important to extend a hand to the network because it can become a force for good. But it is as important for our news organizations to scrutinize its content and let its viewers know when anti-Western wishes are subverting objective truth.

As Al Jazeera on the whole feels the heat of world media attention, we can hope that it will learn to harness its popularity in the service of humanity, progress and moderation.

Judea Pearl is a professor of computer science at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Load-Date: February 1, 2007

The Best Boekes

Sunday Tribune (South Africa)

September 30, 2007

e1 Edition

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Section: THE SUNDAY MAGAZINE; Pg. 11

Length: 1089 words

Body

Exclusive Book's

annual Boeke Prize award was introduced as a tongue-in-cheek response to Britain's Man Booker award which honours worthy literature that few bother to read. In contrast, the Boeke award was established to acknowledge books of exceptional readability. This year the Boeke committee took itself a little too seriously.

A Thousand Splendid Suns, Khaled Hosseini (Jonathan Ball)

The story of Mariam, born a harami (bastard) in Afghanistan in 1959, who is married off at 15 to Rasheed, a middle-aged widower from Kabul. Rasheed is desperate for a son and turns violent when Mariam keeps having miscarriages.

Two decades later the beautiful Laila comes into their unloving household. Only 14, she has lost her entire family and her sweetheart to the civil wars of Afghanistan. Rasheed takes Laila as his second wife. At first the two women are bitter rivals, but slowly they forge a deep bond. By now the Taliban are in power and when the women decide to escape Rasheed's brutality, the outcome is inevitable.

A compelling, bleak story of courage, love and sacrifice set against the backdrop of 30 years of war that left no one untouched by its horrors.

The End of Mr Y, Scarlett Thomas (Penguin)

When Ariel Manto discovers a copy of the End of Mr Y in a secondhand bookshop it's the start of a fantastic journey. The author is an eccentric Victorian scientist and his book is said to be cursed. Undeterred, Ariel buys the book and discovers the recipe for a potion that has the power to transport her to an alternative world called the Troposphere, where she can travel back and forth in time and tune into people's thoughts. But the Troposphere is a dangerous world and there are those who will do anything to lay their hands on this potion. Mind experiments and theories on relatively, physics, gravity and time travel are explored in this highly original book, most of which went right over my head.

Exile, Richard North Patterson (Pan Macmillan)

Dark secrets emerge when David Wolf an ambitious Jewish lawyer who is planning to run for congress, takes on the case of Hana Ashawi, a Palestinian woman who is charged with assassinating the liberal Israeli Prime Minister during a visit to America. But, by taking on the case, David is betraying not only his own people but his devoutly

The Best Bookes

Jewish fiancée. David travels to Palestine and Israel to find out who had set up Hana to take the fall. Is it her husband who hates David, right wing Israelis, or Hamas?

An unputdownable thriller that offers fascinating insight into the Palestinian/ Israeli conflict. |Read it.

The Book Thief, Markus Zusak (Random House)

An enchanting and moving story as told by the Angel of Death himself. Set in Germany in World War 2, 9-year-old Liesel is sent to live with a foster family when her mother can no longer feed her.

Liesel clings to her only possession, a book she stole called the Gravediggers Handbook. Slowly she is brought to life by the love of her gentle accordion-playing foster father, Hans Hubermann, and his wife Rosa, her friendship with Rudy, the boy next door, and the books she steals.

Despite the war, life is relatively uneventful until Hans and Rosa decide to hide a young Jewish boxer, Max, who is the son of the man who saved Hans's life in the World War 1.

From Hans, Liesel learns the power of words, from Max, courage and compassion, all of which she will need for what the Angel of Death has in store for her.

The Emperor's Children, Claire Messud (Pan Macmillan, R140)

Claire Messud writes an elegant chronicle of a year in the lives of three 30-year best friends who are living in Manhattan in 2001. Danielle is an ambitious TV producer, Marina the indulged daughter of a legendary liberal journalist, who is trying to move out of his considerable shadow. Julius is a freelancer writer who has few morals and little money, neither of which hinder his social ambitions. Their tight little world is shattered when Bootie, Marina's young cousin turns up unexpectedly. A college drop-out with delusions of grandeur, Bootie, along with the September 11 tragedy, changes their lives forever. A slow-moving book with a cast of characters so narcissistic it's hard to care what happens to them.

Measuring the World, Daniel Kehlmann ((Book Promotions)

This book, a literary sensation in Germany, its country of origin, tells of the contrasting lives of two real-life geniuses of German enlightenment in the 18th century.

One was naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humbolt, a Prussian aristocrat who sets out to measure the world against enormous odds.

The other is the mathematician and physicist Carl Fredrich Gauss, a man born out of poverty but who made his first ground-breaking mathematical discoveries while still a teenager. He wrote Disquisitiones Arithmeticae, his magnum opus, at the age of 21. Maybe it lost something in the translation, but I couldn't finish this book.

No Country For Old Men, Cormac McCarthy (Pan Macmillan)

"Who must think that he thought that they thought that he thought they were very dumb. He thought about that." Once you become attuned to this style of writing and the lack of punctuation, this is a chilling insight into the nature of contemporary crime. Llewellyn Moss is hunting antelope near the US's Rio Grande, when he stumbles across several bullet-ridden bodies, a load of heroin and \$2 million in cash. He takes the money and runs. Bodies begin to pile up when an ex-special forces officer and a mercenary killer so cold-blooded he chills your blood, go after the money.

In their wake comes Sheriff Bell, a dedicated lawman who is nearing retirement and who soon realises this is no country for old men with old sensibilities. No happy ending in this bleakest of books.

Salmon Fishing in the Yemen, Paul Torday (Jonathan Ball)

The Best Boekes

Dr Alfred Jones, is a fisheries scientist working for the British government when he is asked to look at the viability of introducing salmon farming in the highlands of Yemen. Despite this being totally unfeasible, the British government is keen to boost relations between the two countries and Dr Jones is ordered to make it happen.

Inevitably he falls foul of the government and his high-powered wife. But when he eventually meets the visionary Sheikh Muhammad, who's dream this is, and the project's manager, the beautiful Harriett, his life changes dramatically.

From the enigmatic sheikh he learns that faith is about believing in possibilities, and from Harriet that love can never be rational. A wry, witty book about redemption that charmed me to the last page.

Load-Date: September 30, 2007

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I Will Stand Up for the Muslim Brotherhood

The Forward

September 21, 2007

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Section: Forward Forum; Pg. A11

Length: 1068 words

Byline:

Mona Eltahawy is a New York-based writer.

Body

The first time I went to interview the Muslim Brotherhood, in 1995, an officer manager at their headquarters on the Nile opened the door with one hand and gave me a headscarf to wear with the other. The second time I went to interview the Muslim Brotherhood, in 2005, no headscarf awaited me.

I was intrigued. I had been living in the United States since 2000, but had heard during visits to Egypt that the Brotherhood, or Al-Ikhwan as they're known in Arabic, were changing. They'd become fluent in the lingo of reform and democracy. Phrases like political pluralism were creeping into interviews they gave to the press.

Was this new Brotherhood for real? The story, as the good ones always are, was a bit more complicated something worth keeping in mind while reading the seemingly daily reports of government crackdowns against the Muslim Brotherhood and other Egyptian opposition figures.

The Muslim Brotherhood's leader, Supreme Guide Mohammed Mahdi Akef, started our meeting two years ago by saying all the right things about rejecting violence and choosing instead to take part in elections and other peaceful ways of bringing about change. I admit, I was impressed until I asked him whether the Muslim Brotherhood, if it ever came to power, would change anything in the Egyptian constitution regarding women's rights.

Arab Islamists may face different challenges, but when it comes to women's rights, they're fairly united in their conservative views. In Kuwait they blocked women's right to vote and run for office until last year. In Jordan they struck down legislation giving women the right to initiate divorce and stood in the way of laws that would toughen sentences handed down for so-called honor crimes. So, I asked the Brotherhood leader, would the Egyptian Islamists be just as bad for women?

No, Akef replied, and my proof is that although you're naked, you were allowed to enter my office. I was wearing a short-sleeved t-shirt and pants.

The word naked was particularly grating to my ears because I had worn a headscarf, or hijab, for nine years as a young woman. I chose to wear a hijab at the age of 16, thinking it was a religious requirement, but chose to take it off at 25 after my reading into the issue had convinced me that it was not.

Nevertheless, it took me years to shake off the guilt at rejecting a way of dressing that over the past 15 years has become the uniform of Muslim womanhood in Egypt thanks in no small part to the Muslim Brotherhood's efforts. As many as 80% of Egyptian women wear the hijab today.

I Will Stand Up for the Muslim Brotherhood

Maybe if I hadn't had my own experience with the hijab I might've demurred and brushed off Akef's naked jab with a common utterance of many Muslim women who have never covered their hair but believe they should: When God enlightens me. But I'd been there, done that, and I was supposedly in the presence of the new and improved Muslim Brotherhood, political pluralism and all. The guilt-trip wasn't going to work on me.

I am not naked, I reminded him. The verses in the Koran concerning women's dress have been interpreted differently.

According to God's law, you are naked, he replied. Your arms are naked, your head is naked. There is only one interpretation.

One interpretation? So much for pluralism. Clearly, the Muslim Brotherhood had quite some way to go.

Akef's position struck at the heart of my concerns over the process of reform and political openness in Egypt. As a secular, liberal Egyptian Muslim who defends the right of everyone to take part in the political process, I am painfully aware of the irony of defending the rights of someone whose principles do not extend me such a courtesy. That one interpretation that Akef mentioned was clear proof to my ears that the Muslim Brotherhood continue to act as the guardians of Islam and that anyone who dares to criticize them stands accused of criticizing the religion itself.

But as that same secular, liberal Egyptian Muslim, I believe I must defend the Brotherhood's presence on Egypt's political stage. If I don't, then I am just as guilty as the regime that has for decades sucked the oxygen out of the body politic and with Gamal Mubarak being groomed to take over the presidency from his aging father, the regime seems set to rule for another generation.

Besides the state, the Brotherhood is the last man standing in Egypt. We're down to the state and the mosque. The Muslim Brotherhood must remain on Egypt's political stage, not least so that its ideas are out in the open and can be challenged.

I was in Egypt in 2005 when the Muslim Brotherhood won 88 seats in parliamentary elections, and I remain unconvinced that the majority of Egyptians would vote for them in free and fair elections. Less than 22% of Egyptians turned out to vote in 2005, which to me says most Egyptians want neither the state nor the mosque. They want a real choice.

Those elections capped a year of frenetic activity on the reform front in Egypt, the likes of which I'd never seen in my lifetime. I moved back to Egypt for four months to be a part of it.

Pressured internally by various opponents and street demonstrations and externally by a Washington bent on Arab democratization, the Egyptian regime seemed to bend ever so slightly. But as soon as the Muslim Brotherhood secured a fifth of the seats in parliament, President Hosni Mubarak played his bogeyman card, to great success.

The electoral success in 2005 of the Muslim Brotherhood and in 2006 of its offshoot in Gaza, Hamas, were two main reasons behind the Bush administration's shelving its push for democracy and reform in the Middle East. With Washington off its back, the Egyptian regime no longer had to play the reform game.

It has spent the past two years imprisoning and hounding its critics. Just this week, it banned the Muslim Brotherhood's largest annual social gathering a gala dinner during Ramadan, the month when Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset for the first time in 20 years. Some 40 members of the group are currently on trial in military court on terrorism and money laundering charges.

That bogeyman card will continue to be a sure bet for the Egyptian regime, so long as there's not enough room for everyone on Egypt's political stage. So, naked as I am, I'll continue to defend the Muslim Brotherhood's right to be on that stage.

Graphic

IMAGE: ap wideworld

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Lofty Goals Are Scaled Down at Meetings on Mideast Democracy

The New York Times
December 2, 2006 Saturday
Late Edition - Final

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Length: 979 words

Byline: By HELENE COOPER

Dateline: DEAD SEA, Jordan, Dec. 1

Body

Two years ago, when Western governments conjured a conference on democracy in the Middle East and North Africa, an air of optimism and promise held sway. The Iraqis and Afghans soon held elections. So did the Palestinians, who voted in the moderate Mahmoud Abbas as their president. Change was on its way to Egypt and Lebanon, too.

But with the recent setbacks to democracy throughout the region, the goals at this year's conference here on Friday were often smaller and, presumably, a bit more attainable.

"They actually have a paragraph in there that says, 'We support increasing literacy for women,' " said Sanem Gunes, a program officer for a Turkish advocacy group, rolling her eyes and dismissing the line as "almost like a beauty pageant answer." She added, "It doesn't take scores of foreign ministers coming from all over the region to come up with 'education for women.' "

Such was the Forum for the Future's third annual meeting. When the Group of 8 summit meeting took place a few years ago in Sea Island, Ga., the Bush administration and its European allies came up with the idea for the conference. An offspring of the Sept. 11 attacks, the idea was to prod the Arab and Muslim world's autocratic governments toward democracy and stronger civil society, as sort of a bulwark against the hopelessness and disenchantment that could lead to extremism.

It was an ambitious goal, and things seemed promising at first. Democracy protests pushed Syria out of Lebanon. In Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak allowed opposition candidates on the ballot.

But that was the new Middle East, before the old one quickly reasserted itself. After the Muslim Brotherhood won a lot of seats in Egypt's parliamentary elections last year, Mr. Mubarak's government put off municipal elections for another two years. Parliamentary elections in Qatar were postponed.

Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon? All are struggling desperately against violence or sectarian division.

The Palestinians had another election and voted in Hamas, promptly setting off a Western aid boycott. Yemen's government cracked down on the news media that had criticized the government. Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah

Lofty Goals Are Scaled Down at Meetings on Mideast Democracy

refused calls to have the country's consultative council be elected. This summer, Bahrain, host to the conference last year, unceremoniously kicked out of the country a representative of an American democracy advocacy group.

On Friday, security was ultratight, the road in front of the King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Center virtually empty. After making their scheduled -- and brief -- speeches in the convention hall to the 40 or so nongovernmental representatives who showed up, most of the foreign dignitaries quickly retired to private salons to talk to one another.

A session on political participation, elections and the news media was under way in the main hall, while in a nearby hall, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice held talks with a steady succession of her counterparts from Britain, Italy and the European Union on matters like how to rein in Iran's nuclear ambitions.

On the other side of the convention center, in front of the darkened and empty Aqaba Hall, Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov of Russia, a host of the conference, and his retinue of six dark-suited aides chatted among themselves, then sauntered to the terrace for a smoking break.

A few yards away, under a giant framed photo of the conference's other host, King Abdullah II of Jordan -- who skipped the festivities and flew to India -- Mansour Ahmad Khan, representing Pakistan's foreign ministry, was talking up his country's democratic record to a reporter.

Mr. Khan had just gotten to the part about how much Pakistan's military dictator, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, has been doing to encourage democracy and women's rights when his boss, Khusro Bakhtyar, the foreign affairs minister, appeared, interrupting the conversation to expound further. "Reform is not just an option, but a necessity in this part of the world," Mr. Bakhtyar said. "Our governments are heeding the winds of change."

Ms. Rice had been diplomatic the night before when a reporter asked her whether it was incongruous that Russia, which passed a law restricting nongovernmental organizations, was a host of a democracy conference in Jordan. "We're using this international forum to push political change," she said, delicately. "It doesn't mean everybody that's sitting around the table is a perfect example of democratic development."

As much as they criticized the lack of progress at the conference, the nongovernmental organizations were quick to say that they were glad to be there and supported its ideals, though some were unable to speak with the foreign dignitaries. "We don't get too much access to the officials, actually," said Jamil Mouawad, a youth organizer and program manager for the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. "And an action plan would be nice." The conference did not issue such a plan.

"Hey, is that Elliott Abrams?" asked Khalil Gebara, an executive director of No Corruption, a Lebanese organization, pointing to Mr. Abrams, the top White House adviser for Middle East affairs, who was standing near the coffee-and-Danish table talking to two fellow American officials. "Can you introduce me to him? He's a big guy, I hear."

But the Abrams retinue quickly swept around the corner, back into the embrace of the American officials and accompanying Secret Service agents outside the hall where Ms. Rice was holding her meetings.

Mr. Gebara shook his head. "They all just walk around in groups, so you have to chase after them, but you can never catch them," he said. "This is supposed to be the venue where people actually get heard."

Perhaps another time. Diplomats said Qatar, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates are jostling to be the host of next year's conference.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Lofty Goals Are Scaled Down at Meetings on Mideast Democracy

End of Document

News Summary

The New York Times
November 25, 2006 Saturday
Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2006 The New York Times Company

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

Length: 987 words

Body

INTERNATIONAL A3-9

Shiite Militiamen Avenge Bombings in Baghdad

Shiite militiamen stormed Sunni mosques in Baghdad and Baquba, shooting guards and burning down buildings apparently in retaliation for the bombings that killed more than 200 Shiites the day before in the capital, police officials said. A1

Radiation Cited in Spy's Death

Radiation poisoning killed Alexander V. Litvinenko, the former Russian K.G.B. officer and foe of the Kremlin, authorities said. Alarm spread across London after the police found traces of radiation in three places the former spy had been. A1

Taiwanese Democracy Tested

Taiwan's young democracy remains a work in progress, demonstrated a number of times during the six-year tenure of President Chen Shui-bian. Prosecutors have implicated him and his wife in a fake receipts scandal, and the rival Nationalist Party is facing its own scandal, with its presumptive 2008 presidential candidate involved in his own fake receipts scandal. A6

Talk of Peace in Israel and Gaza

After a surge of violence in and around the Gaza Strip over the past month, Israel and the Palestinians moved toward reinstating their often-broken cease-fire. Prime Minister Ismail Haniya of **Hamas** confirmed that the Palestinian factions would halt their rocket fire if Israel halted its military operations in the West Bank and Gaza. A3

China Upholds Spying Verdict

A Beijing appeals court upheld a spying conviction against Ching Cheong, a Hong Kong journalist charged with taking payoffs for gathering information for Taiwan, in a case that has elicited criticism of China from human rights and press advocacy groups. A6

Negotiations on Ireland's Fate

Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain held on to his hopes of restoring local rule across Northern Ireland, despite a day in which Protestant and Roman Catholic politicians failed to agree on nominating leaders to a future power-

News Summary

sharing executive. The meeting was cut short after a notorious Protestant militant attacked the lobby of the parliament buildings, carrying a gun and tossing inside a bag of homemade explosives. A6

ARTS B7-16

Selling Graphic Novels to Girls

DC, the comics powerhouse best known as home to Superman and Batman, plans to introduce Minx, a line of graphic novels aimed at young adult **female** readers. The line is positioned as an alternative for teenage girls who have, especially in bookstores, become increasingly smitten with the Japanese comics known as manga. B7

When It's O.K. to be Rude

In an article published in the fall in The Journal of Applied Philosophy, a professor at Alfred University in Alfred, N.Y., says that sometimes, it's perfectly all right to be rude. In fact, sometimes rudeness can even be a good thing. B7

NATIONAL A10-12

Cities Forced to Compete For Young and Educated

The latest population trends have forced cities into a competition over college-educated 25- to 34-year-olds, a narrow demographic group increasingly viewed as the key to an economic future. A1

Spy Program Splits Democrats

While the Democrats have vowed to press for more facts about the National Security Agency's wiretapping program, it continues uninterrupted with no definitive action by either Congress or the courts on what, if anything, to do about it. A1

Suit Filed on Gay Union Ban

Governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts filed suit asking the state's highest court to order the legislature to vote on a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage or to place it on the 2008 ballot if lawmakers do not take up the provision. A10

Cartoonist Storms Newspaper

A political cartoonist for the Spanish-language counterpart of The Miami Herald stormed the newspaper armed with a fake semiautomatic weapon, issued threats against the paper's editor and others and held officers at bay for three hours before surrendering, the police said. A10

Scarred Neighborhood Revived

After decades of decay in Over-the-Rhine, a neighborhood in Cincinnati built by German immigrants from 1865 to the 1880's, gentrification is spreading with new condominiums, art galleries, theaters and cafes bringing people and investment. But poverty remains, as do drugs. A10

Seeking to Bar Data Review

The New York Times asked the Supreme Court to bar a federal prosecutor from reviewing the phone records of two of its reporters. A12

NEW YORK/REGION B1-5

Diabetes Charity Juggles Ethics and Fund-Raising

The American Diabetes Association, fighting an uphill battle against Type 2 diabetes, which is associated with obesity, is rethinking how it raises money from corporations, especially those whose primary business is selling

News Summary

high-calorie foods and beverages. The effort has increasingly become an exercise in balancing the need to raise money with core matters of conscience. A1

Beliefs B5

Neediest Cases B5

SPORTSSATURDAY D1-7

L.S.U. Defeats Arkansas

The Louisiana State University Tigers defeated the Arkansas Razorbacks, 31-26, ending No. 5 Arkansas' 10-game undefeated season. D3

Miami Seeks New Direction

In the wake of a 6-6 regular season and the firing of Larry Coker as its head coach, the University of Miami is looking for someone to regain the luster of a program that has won five national championships. D3

OBITUARIES C9-10

Robert Lockwood Jr.

A Mississippi Delta bluesman who was taught by Robert Johnson and became a mentor to generations of blues musicians, he was 91. C9

Willie Pep

One of boxing's pre-eminent figures and a longtime featherweight champion remembered most for his four title bouts against Sandy Saddler, he was 84. C10

BUSINESS DAY C1-9

U.S. Dollar Drops Sharply

The dollar dropped sharply against a range of major currencies, with the euro breaking through \$1.30 for the first time in a year and a half. C1

Business Digest C2

EDITORIAL A14-15

Editorials: Taming King Coal; sensing you're too drunk to drive; foreign aid, revised; all that's missing is Mr. Whipple.

Columns: Maureen Dowd, Thomas B. Edsall.

Bridge B15

Crossword B12

TV Listings B16

Weather D8

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Load-Date: November 25, 2006

News Summary

End of Document

Talk yes, but don't dare trust these two pariahs

Daily Mail (London)

November 15, 2006 Wednesday

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Section: ED 1ST; Pg. 12

Length: 934 words

Byline: ANN LESLIE

Body

HOW hypocritical can you be? Here's Tony Blair, a man who signed up to every jot and tittle of George Bush's 'axis of evil' theology, now saying that, in the cause of Middle East and, especially, Iraqi peace, we must negotiate with Syria and Iran, two of the world's biggest pariah states.

But leaving the 'hypocrisy' accusations aside, will dealing with these two slippery regimes actually help sort out the crisis in Iraq, let alone the 58-yearold Israeli/Palestine problem?

Blair clearly hopes that, in the last desperate spasms of his premiership, he can count success in the Middle East as his chief 'legacy'. Some hope.

Let's deal with Syria first. It feels thoroughly aggrieved: after 9/11 it did provide large amounts of intelligence to the West. 'And what did we get in return?' one of its leading diplomats in the West complained to me over dinner one evening. 'Nothing but threats and abuse.' I pointed out that Syria has been and still is a way-station for foreign jihadists to cross the border and create mayhem in Iraq. 'Look, we have a very long border and we can't control everyone crossing over: even America can't control its border with Mexico.' Syria also feels aggrieved because it was driven out of Lebanon by Western pressure and the so-called Cedar Revolution.

I stood in Beirut's Martyrs' Square last year when huge anti-Syrian demonstrations were being held: placards declared ' KIFAYA! Syria go home!' (KIFAYAis Arabic for 'Enough!') and the crowds in Martyrs' Square were shouting out that they'd had enough of Syria's presence in Lebanon.

Syria was widely believed to have been responsible for the assassination of Rafik Hariri, an extremely popular former prime minister who had turned against Syrian control; its army and its security services had been in Lebanon for 28 years.

Syria also supports the Islamist terrorist group **Hamas** which is now the government of Palestine and Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Shia militia in southern Lebanon that provoked the latest blood-soaked battle with Israel.

Israel, with reason, accuses Syria of funnelling Iranian-made weapons to Hezbollah. BOTH Syria and Hezbollah, of course, hate Israel. So much so that when I was in Beirut before the Syrians pulled out, I was warned by Lebanese friends not to mention Israel in phone conversations: 'Phones are bugged, so if we want to refer to Israel, we use the word "Dixie" or "the place to the south of here".' Despite all this I believe that negotiating with Syria might work. It is not in Syria's interest to have a country in turmoil, like Iraq, on its borders; Syria is not a rich country and it

Talk yes, but don't dare trust these two pariahs

already has to deal with around 400,000 Iraqi refugees. If Iraq collapses completely, Syria will bear the immediate brunt.

The fact is that Syria is a secular dictatorship, run by a minority Muslim sect called the Alawites, and its only interest is in keeping the Assad family and its Alawite clan in power and, of course, in regaining the Golan heights captured by Israel in 1967. Unlike Iran, it is not a theocracy bent on spreading Islamic revolution throughout the world.

And Syria is desperate for foreign investment and longs to join the outside world: if it doesn't, the regime is in danger from its own people.

Now let's look at Iran. Here, I'm afraid, there's zilch chance of any accommodation. Anyone like me who has been to Friday prayers in Tehran has had to listen to endless attacks on the West and Israel and chants of: 'Death to Israel!' 'Death to America!' Iran has said it wants to talk to America, but lays down endless conditions that it knows are nonnegotiable.

'Frankly, Iran thinks it's on a roll,' I was told over lunch recently by one of the most experienced of American diplomats.

He had been a leading Middle East negotiator for three administrations: 'America has got rid of Iran's chief Middle East enemy Saddam and the Iranians now believe that the U.S. can't attack them militarily because of the mess in Iraq, military "overstretch", and public opinion.

'You have to try and convince Iran that if it doesn't play ball over its nuclear weapons programme (and it's nonsense for it to keep insisting that it's only for peaceful nuclear power), Israel will attack if the Americans won't.

'Iran's President Ahmadinejad has promised to "wipe Israel off the map" and if Israel feels its very existence is in danger if Iran gets its nuclear bomb, it won't wait for U.S. permission to attack. When Saddam built a nuclear facility at Osirak in 1981 the Israelis didn't ask for American permission when they went in and destroyed it.' The problem in dealing with Iran is that according to another negotiator I talked to 'they are the most sinuous and deceitful negotiators I've ever come across.

It's partly that their mindset operates under TAQQIYA, religiously sanctioned deception, which is a particularly strong strain in Shia theology.

SHIITES, a minority in Islam, have always been oppressed by outsiders and by the dominant Sunnis of the Arab world, so they've always used TAQQIYA (frankly, telling lies) in order to survive'.

So even if the Iranians agree to cease meddling in Iraq, to cease supplying weapons (and even manpower) to the Shia militias in the south who are killing our servicemen and women, and to cease sponsoring terror in Lebanon and Israel, I'm afraid we're still on to a loser. As long as the current regime exists, Iran simply cannot be trusted.

Bush's 'change of direction' and Blair's assertion that Iran must be 'engaged' will, I'm afraid, end up with massive loss of face and another proof to gleeful Iran that it is still, triumphantly, 'on a roll'.

Load-Date: November 15, 2006

Q&A WITH SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
PRESIDENT: 'People don't want to be violent'

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

August 4, 2007 Saturday

Main Edition

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**The Atlanta
Journal-Constitution**

Section: NEWS; Pg. 10A

Length: 905 words

Byline: ERNIE SUGGS

Staff

Body

It wasn't that long ago that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference --- which the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. helped found --- was saddled with financial problems and crippled by infighting. Then, three years ago, Charles Steele became president. He started fund-raising, reminding citizens and corporate America of the SCLC's role in the civil rights era.

Today, the organization appears to be back on its feet financially and the bickering has subsided. Steele, a former Alabama state senator, talked with reporter Ernie Suggs about the turnaround, its future and current events.

Q: How has the SCLC survived for 50 years?

It has been a hard struggle. Many people have told us that it is time for SCLC to go into the sunset, that we were not needed anymore. But the fact is, we are needed now more than ever before.

Q: You have been vocal about the fact that, when you became president in 2004, the lights were literally out. Now you are completing a \$3 million headquarters. How hard was it to get the SCLC from where it was to where it is now?

It has been very difficult due to the fact that, when I left Alabama three years ago, I gave it all up on a vision. I was being led spiritually. All of the headlines said SCLC was on the verge of collapse. I tell people, it was all in selling a vision. First you must possess the vision, then you have to have the selling skills to get people to become attached to it. But you must first of all have the faith. I left my hometown. My business. My family. The Alabama state Senate with two years remaining on my third term. ...When it is your time to move, you don't debate the issue. You go out on faith.

Q: What did [your wife, Catholean] say when you said you were going to give everything up to chase a vision?

Q&A WITH SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE PRESIDENT: 'People don't want to be violent'

She said, "Have you gone crazy?" I told my wife ... that God had spoken to me, and I know it was the right thing to do. She said I understand, and I support you, and I believe this is what you need to do. But I ask you one favor --- when God talks to you again, ask him to talk to me too.

Q: You speak a lot about faith and God. Along with Martin III, you are the only SCLC leader who was not a minister. Does the word Christian in the organization's name still mean something?

Even though I am not a traditional pastor or minister, I do have a ministry. Even though I don't have a pulpit or a church, I am a member of a church. The fact is I am a Christian first, and I have a relationship with God.

Q: Is the SCLC a financially healthy organization?

We are just as healthy as any nonprofit. But things are tough. The unemployment [rate] in any given African-American community is [high]. We have our young people coming out of college who can't get jobs. It is very difficult in terms of flow of resources. But it is also an opportunity to ... establish relationships with people who say, "Even though it is tough, it is also imperative to keep SCLC." The fact that we have sold that concept to corporate America is the reason we are here today.

Q: Now what do you have to do to make it another 50 years?

Five hours before he was assassinated, Dr. King told Bernard LaFayette, "Now is the time for us to internationalize and institutionalize SCLC in the nonviolent struggle and movement, which we have been successful at." That is what we are doing currently. ... We set up our first conflict resolution center in Israel. We had our first workshop in Bethlehem with Hamas. We are finding out that where there is violence, people don't want to be violent, but they know no other alternative.

Q: Has there been any resistance to the international focus, to focus more on traditional civil rights fights?

We made a mistake when we left the streets. We rested on our laurels. We have not been criticized for going international, but we have been questioned. "Why are you going to the Middle East? Why are you going to Africa? We are going all over the world, wherever we are needed.

Q: You were technically founded in New Orleans, but Atlanta has been SCLC's home since the beginning. What does Atlanta mean to the organization?

Atlanta is the home of Martin Luther King Jr. and part of the international spirit. Atlanta has been SCLC's base for 50 years. I don't think we could have come to a better place.

Q: We have a very Atlanta story --- Michael Vick. Why is the SCLC still supporting him?

With no reservations, we are asking people not to rush to judgment against him. We are in the business of saving lives. We are a safety valve. This is not just about Michael Vick, but anyone who might have made mistakes. We can't throw a life away.

Q: But he has been charged in dog fighting, which many condemn as a heinous crime.

It is not as much about the issue and we are not condoning the act. But we are still not going to throw him away.

Q: What if he is found guilty?

If that judgment comes, we are still going to be there for him.

Q: How long do you plan on sticking around?

Spiritually, we have been blessed. All of the goals we have set, we have met them in terms of sustaining the organization. But we all must collaborate. You can't live here by yourself, and this is about building an institution. I

Q&A WITH SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE PRESIDENT: 'People don't want to be violent'

have been here three years, and I see three to seven years, for an organization like this, is fine. But you should be happy to turn it over to someone else.

TODAY'S MAIN EVENT

7 p.m. --- **Women**'s Awards Dinner, with U.S. Sen. Barack Obama. Marriott Marquis. Tickets \$75 at the door.

Graphic

Photo: W.A. BRIDGES JR. / StaffSCLC President Charles Steele says his immediate goals for the organization have been met but that he wants to bring its nonviolent struggle expertise to the world, wherever it's needed./ImageData*

Load-Date: August 4, 2007

End of Document

Egypt: A country in crisis as fearful government cracks down on Islamist opposition: Mubaraks obsession with Muslim Brotherhood deals blow to multiparty politics - Correction Appended

The Guardian - Final Edition

July 19, 2007 Thursday

 **Correction Appended**

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Length: 963 words

Byline: Ian Black, Cairo

Body

It was 3am when armed security agents hammered on the door of Khairat al-Shater's flat in Nasser City; his daughter Zahra could only watch and comfort her distraught children while her father and husband, Ayman, were detained as Hosni Mubarak's latest crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood got under way.

"The Brotherhood are good people," insisted Zahra, in a hijab of the kind increasingly seen on the streets of Cairo. "We believe in peaceful change and the regime is crushing us. Ordinary criminals are freed quickly and are treated better than political prisoners in Egypt." Seven months on, the two men were up before a military court again this week on charges of money-laundering and membership of a proscribed organisation. Mr Shater, a wealthy businessman, is No 3 in the Brotherhood hierarchy. Some 450 activists remain locked up under emergency laws.

In one sense, November's "dawn visitors" to Nasser City were rounding up the usual suspects in a decades-long cat-and-mouse game between the Egyptian state and the world's oldest Islamist organisation. But the confrontation is deepening - alarming for the 79 million people of the most populous Arab country and for anyone who hopes for democratic change in the Middle East and North Africa.

Egyptians laugh wryly when they recall the US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice's bold talk two years ago of a post-Saddam "forward strategy of freedom" for promoting democracy instead of bolstering the authoritarian status quo. In the blowback from Iraq, America's watchword today is "stability". Reform, especially anything involving Islamists, is off the agenda.

None of this seems to have affected morale at the Brotherhood's HQ, a shabby flat decorated with posters saying: "Allah is our goal, the Messenger is our leader, the Qur'an is our constitution, Jihad is our path and death in the service of Allah our highest hope."

"The Americans are allowing Mubarak to oppress us in return for him doing what they want over Palestine, Iraq, Sudan and Lebanon," said Dr Mohammed Habib, the deputy leader, a geologist. "The government is using security to further suppress the people. It is getting dangerous."

Egypt : A country in crisis as fearful government cracks down on Islamist opposition: Mubaraks obsession with Muslim Brotherhood deals blow to multiparty politi....

Mr Mubarak is said to be obsessed by the Brotherhood. It is easy to see why: without vote-rigging it would have won even more than the 88 seats (20% of the total) it took in the 2005 parliamentary elections - its candidates running as independents to evade the constitutional ban on religion-based parties. The Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections shortly afterwards confirmed that Islamists were on a winning streak.

That was the trigger for the current wave of repression, including constitutional amendments billed as reforms but largely intended to stop the Brotherhood advancing any further.

But its popularity is based on a reputation for not being corrupt and extensive charity work in clinics, nurseries and after-school tutoring. Its volunteers fill the gaps left by a state system that has seen illiteracy rise and services fail as liberal economic reforms enrich businesses close to the regime.

Protests over water supplies and industrial strikes have sharpened the sense of a country in crisis. "Egypt is on the edge of a volcano," said the editor of al-Usbua, an opposition magazine.

Even government loyalists agree with much of the criticism. "It is true there is corruption in this country, and that there is a link between wealth and power," said Mustafa al-Feki, of the ruling National Democratic party. "But the link between politics and religion is more dangerous."

The government plays on long-standing suspicions that the Brotherhood gets financial support from abroad. It is troubled too by its hardline views on Israel, and Egypt's 10 million Coptic Christians worry about safeguarding their minority status under Islamist rule.

Nor, charge critics, does the Brotherhood have a political programme beyond its simplistic slogan that "Islam is the solution". "They talk about the hijab, and not wanting women judges, but not about the economy or privatisation and issues that matter to millions of ordinary people," said George Ishaq of the grassroots Kifaya movement, which came from nowhere in 2004 to campaign against another presidential term for Mr Mubarak. "I think they have a hidden agenda. They don't say what they want exactly."

Members of Kifaya and other opposition secularists, such as Gassar Abdel-Razzak from the Egyptian Association of Human Rights, worry about the Brotherhood's views but insist it must have the right to take part in a viable democratic system. Yet the only way to do it would be by becoming a normal party - the subject of scepticism within the Brotherhood. "Even if we did decide to become a party they wouldn't let us," said Zahra al-Shater. "It's not a matter of being religious - it's being against Hosni Mubarak."

And genuine multiparty politics is exactly what the 79-year-old president is resisting. "In theory they do want a stronger party system," said a senior western diplomat. "But in practice the knee-jerk reaction is to diminish anyone who looks strong."

"I wonder if the regime wants to give the impression that the choice is between the status quo or the unacceptable alternative - the Islamists," said Munir Abdel-Nour, deputy leader of the Wafd party.

"The secular parties are prevented from doing any real political work - they are groups of demagogues besieged in their headquarters by thuggery and harassment," is the brutal summary of Hisham Qassem, a former newspaper editor. "The Brotherhood can function because they operate out of mosques and the government can't close the mosques. If this continues into the next elections - unless there is a massacre - the Brotherhood will win a majority. At the moment there is no other alternative to it."

Correction

In the caption to a photograph accompanying a story headlined A country in crisis as fearful government cracks down on Islamist opposition (page 23, July 19) we mistranslated the slogan on a headband worn by an Egyptian

Egypt : A country in crisis as fearful government cracks down on Islamist opposition: Mubaraks obsession with Muslim Brotherhood deals blow to multiparty politi....

girl. The visible part of the slogan reads "reform", not "Islam is the solution" as we said. The translation was wrong in the caption supplied by the picture agency.

Correction-Date: July 23, 2007 Monday

Load-Date: July 19, 2007

End of Document

The Road to Justice in Argentina Leads to Iran

The Forward

November 3, 2006

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Section: News; Pg. A13

Length: 1006 words

Body

In 1994 Buenos Aires bombing, a prosecutor points a finger at Tehran.

On July 18, 1994, the deadliest postwar terrorist attack against a Jewish target took place in Buenos Aires. The seven-story headquarters of the AMIA, the Argentine Jewish community's central welfare body, was destroyed. Eighty-five people, Jews and non-Jews alike, were killed; hundreds were wounded. It followed in the wake of another deadly terrorist assault in Buenos Aires two years earlier, against the Israeli Embassy.

Suspicion surrounding the 1994 attack immediately focused on Iran and Hezbollah, which presumably acted with the assistance of local accomplices, possibly drawn from

the tri-border region where Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay meet. There, a large Arab community thrives in a largely lawless region of mounting concern to Western intelligence agencies. But the ensuing official investigations went nowhere. As a result, many families of the AMIA victims and others succumbed to wellfounded cynicism about Argentina's will and capacity to pursue the inquiry.

Despite repeated promises by Argentina's leaders to get to the bottom of the attack so as to ensure justice and also to dispel the impression that Argentina was a soft target for terrorists more smoke than fire was generated. Indeed, for 12 years, a trail of incompetence, corruption and false starts was all there was to show for the official effort.

Now, at long last, there has been a major breakthrough in the case. Argentine prosecutors, led by AMIA special prosecutor Alberto Nisman, have just released a longawaited report calling for the issuance of arrest warrants for seven Iranian leaders, including former president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, former foreign minister Ali Akbar Velayati and former intelligence chief Ali Fallahian. One of America's most wanted men, Imad Mughniyeh of Hezbollah, is also on the list. Nisman's bottom-line finding is that Hezbollah carried out the attack in the center of Argentina's capital city at the behest of the highest authorities of the government of Iran.

Though it took 12 years during which the AMIA and its partner, the American Jewish Committee, left no stone unturned in demanding justice the news comes as a bombshell. Let's be absolutely clear: The government behind the attack, Iran, is a member state of the United Nations. It ordered an attack on another U.N. member state. And, as the Nisman report makes clear, the decision was taken at the very highest level of the Iranian government. There is no room here for plausible deniability by any top Iranian official serving at the time.

Will those named in the arrest warrants be seized and extradited to Argentina? If any of them sets foot outside of Iran, that could become theoretically possible. It is up to the international community to ensure that theory becomes reality.

The Road to Justice in Argentina Leads to Iran

Needless to say, Tehran has denounced the report's findings. Care to guess who is behind the Argentine effort, according to the Iranians? Yes, an Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman revealed that the new fabrications are conducted within the framework of a Zionist plot. Why? To divert world attention from the perpetration of crimes by the Zionists against women and children in Palestine, of course.

Yes, it always comes back to the Zionists and their plots in this dark conspiratorial world, the same mindset that also churned out the bizarre theory that Israel and its sympathizers were behind 9/11 and, more recently, that they are to blame for the Sudanese genocide in Darfur. Any lie will do to get the real perpetrators off the hook.

It's high time for the world to face up to three stark realities about Iran:

First, as the 800-page Argentine report amply documents, Iran is complicit in international terrorism. Indeed, the U.S. State Department has repeatedly referred to Iran as the primary state sponsor of terrorism in the world. Iran trains, protects and supports Hezbollah, as well as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, to serve as proxies and accessories. Perhaps the Nisman report will help encourage those European nations that have resisted placing Hezbollah on the European Union terrorism list to reconsider their position.

Second, Iran's nuclear weapons program continues at full speed in violation of U.N. Security Council and International Atomic Energy Agency resolutions. Iran could one day seek to use those weapons or provide them in some form to a group like Hezbollah to project power and attack perceived enemies, whether in the Middle East, South America or elsewhere. Sound far-fetched? Given the violent messianism of Iran's current crop of top leaders, exemplified by its president, such a possibility is surely within the realm of realistic scenarios.

And third, Iran to date believes that it can have its yellow cake and eat it too. In other words, the country's leaders have concluded, erroneously I hope, that they can order terrorist attacks and simultaneously defy the world community on nuclear weapons matters and get away with it. By dint of Iran's size, energy reserves and long reach, its leadership believes today, as it did in 1994, that it can bully, intimidate and outmaneuver those who dare to consider punitive measures against it.

Argentina has now taken an important indeed principled and courageous step in standing up to Iran and Hezbollah. Yes, it came late in the day, but in this case late is far better than never. Will Argentina now stand alone while other countries uncomfortably avert their eyes from the prosecutor's report? Or will the community of nations rally around Argentina, demand the arrest of the eight named in the warrants and, once and for all, declare Iran a pariah nation that poses a clear and present danger to global harmony and prospects for peaceful conflict resolution in the Middle East? Twelve years later, justice and the preservation of the memory of the AMIA victims call for nothing less.

Graphic

IMAGE; Getty Images

Load-Date: November 6, 2006

World Journal

The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)

May 17, 2007 Thursday

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Body

Mideast

Palestine on brink of civil war

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Sixteen Palestinians were killed in Palestinian in- fighting Wednesday - the bloodiest day since violence broke out in the Gaza Strip four days ago. In four days of fighting, a least 41 people have been killed and dozens more injured. The violence threatened to bring down the Palestinians' two-month-old unity government - and brought the Palestinians dangerously close to all-out civil war. Hamas announced Wednesday it would begin observing a unilateral ceasefire to stop the violence. Ceasefires were also announced on Monday and Tuesday, but neither held.

War

Prince Harry will not be sent to Iraq

LONDON - Prince Harry will not be sent with his unit to Iraq, Britain's top general said Wednesday, citing specific threats to the third in line to the throne and the risks to his fellow soldiers. Gen. Sir Richard Dannatt, the army chief of staff, said the changing situation on the ground exposed the prince to too much danger. Media scrutiny of Harry's potential deployment exacerbated the situation, he said. In a statement issued by Clarence House, Harry said he was disappointed that "he will not be able to go to Iraq with his troop deployment as he had hoped."

Politics

New president of France takes office

PARIS - Nicolas Sarkozy took office as the new president of France on Wednesday, promising to move quickly and boldly to equip the nation for a new era. Outgoing leader Jacques Chirac, ending 12 years in power, transferred the country's nuclear codes to President Sarkozy in a behind-closed-doors meeting that was a highpoint of the transfer of power. Sarkozy, 52, was elected on May six on pledges of market reforms and a break with the past.

Scotland

Pro-independence party takes over

EDINBURGH, Scotland - The leader of the pro-independence Scottish National Party was installed Wednesday at the head of the new government in Scotland. Alex Salmond won a vote in Parliament on Wednesday to form a new

government after gaining the support of two Green Party legislators. His party won legislative elections May 3 In the campaign, the party promised to hold a referendum on independence from the rest of the United Kingdom by 2010.

Inquiry

Cost the key to letting doomed plane depart

OTTAWA - Cost may have been a factor in letting Air India Flight 182 leave Montreal on its doomed journey without a full-scale baggage check, says a former airport security guard. Daniel Lalonde told a public inquiry Wednesday that officials at Montreal's Mirabel airport decided delaying the plane would have been too expensive. He said he overheard an Air India security officer and another man discussing the matter. Lalonde could only identify the Air India man he overheard as "John," but inquiry lawyers believe he was John D'Souza, the airline's security chief. He is dead now, but gave a statement shortly after the June 1985 bombing in which he made no reference to cost issues.

Election

P.E.I. premier feeling the heat

CHARLOTTETOWN - As candidates sprint for the finish line in the Prince Edward Island election campaign, Premier Pat Binns is feeling the heat from his political opponents. Observers said Wednesday that Binns, Canada's longest- serving premier, is becoming a little less genial as he targets Liberal Leader Robert Ghiz and his Opposition members in what appears to be a tightening race for the May 28 election. Binns and his Conservatives have been in office on the Island since 1996. "I think both major parties on Prince Edward Island are realizing this election is much closer than they may have anticipated on the first day of the campaign," said political commentator Ian Dowbiggin, a history professor at the University of Prince Edward Island.

Crime

Man charged with 23-year-old murder

WINNIPEG - Mark Edward Grant, 43, faces a first-degree murder charge in the death of a Winnipeg teenager who vanished on her way home from school more than two decades ago. Candace Derksen, 13, disappeared on Nov. 30, 1984. Her body was found weeks later, on Jan. 17, 1985. Winnipeg Police Chief Jack Ewatski said Grant, who was 21 at the time Candace died, lived in the general area and was known to police. He had been interviewed along with at least 100 other people, but not as a suspect.

Politics

Tories move to keep out foreign strippers

OTTAWA - The Conservative government has tabled legislation aimed at barring foreign strippers from working in Canada. Immigration Minister Diane Finley introduced Bill C-57 on Wednesday, which says foreigners applying to work in Canada should be rejected if they risk being humiliated, degraded or sexually exploited. It would allow immigration officers to reject people under what it calls "public policy considerations" dictated by the minister. Finley cast the move as a response to the Liberals' so-called Strippergate scandal. Judy Sgro, the former Liberal immigration minister, resigned amid accusations that she fast-tracked the immigration papers of a Romanian stripper who worked on her election campaign.

Justice

Man faces charge of assisting uncle's suicide

ALMA, Que. - A Quebec man is facing criminal charges for allegedly helping his sick uncle kill himself. Stephan Dufour, 29, is out on bail and awaiting trial on a charge of assisting the suicide of Chantal Maltais, who had muscular dystrophy. Police say the 49-year-old Maltais hanged himself Sept. 8, 2006. Dufour was arrested Tuesday

and released on a promise to appear in court July 17 in Alma, about 250 kilometres north of Quebec City in the Lac-St-Jean region. It's only the latest case of assisted suicide in Quebec. In separate cases in the past two years, two women were each sentenced to three years probation for helping end the lives of ill relatives.

Health

Canada stockpiling vaccine for poultry

TORONTO - Canada is putting together a stockpile of 10 million doses of avian flu vaccine. But this one isn't for people. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has purchased five million doses apiece of poultry vaccines against H5 and H7 avian influenza viruses as a hedge against a possible outbreak of H5N1 or another highly pathogenic strain in domestic flocks. Dr. Jim Clark, the national manager of the agency's avian influenza working group, explained that while Canada's preference would be to control an avian flu outbreak in poultry by culling infected birds, the vaccine could serve as an insurance policy of sorts against the spread of the disease. The vaccine is being purchased for US\$468,300.

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End of Document

Novel approach to history

Weekend Australian

June 16, 2007 Saturday

All-round Review Edition

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Byline: DEBORAH HOPE

Body

MATP

WHEN Miles Franklin award-winning author Roger McDonald took a job as a shearers' cook he was intending to take a break from his writing career. Instead the experience planted the seed for his 1992 book on the shearing industry, *Shearers' Motel*.

Although he changed the names of many of the people and places that provided his source material for the book, McDonald insists *Shearers' Motel* is "unarguably a work of nonfiction". So he was surprised when he received a phone call from author and journalist David Marr the following year asking whether he was aware *Shearers' Motel* had been shortlisted for Australia's principal prize for fiction.

McDonald wasn't, and the book was subsequently removed from contention. A couple of weeks later, he observed wryly at this month's Sydney Writers Festival, *Shearers' Motel* won the Banjo award for nonfiction.

McDonald's anecdote says much about the slippery nature of history and fiction and where the two intersect. It helps explain why, like the history wars, this debate continues to simmer just beneath the surface of our public discourse.

Throughout much of last year Australian historians including Mark McKenna and Inga Clendinnen, authors of historical fiction such as McDonald, Kate Grenville and Alex Miller, and literary critics such as Stella Clarke staked out positions over where to draw the lines between fiction and history. At the heart of the matter was Grenville's *The Secret River*, the novel she built around her research into the life of her ancestor Solomon Wiseman, who settled on the banks of the Hawkesbury River, north of Sydney, early in the 19th century.

The University of Sydney's McKenna was among those who saw red when Grenville commented in a radio interview that she viewed her novel as "up on a ladder, looking down on the history wars".

The historians "are doing their thing," she said, "but let me, as a novelist, come to it in a different way, which is the way of empathy and imaginative understanding."

All involved seemed to take a cold shower at the end of 2006, but a session at the writers festival titled *Making a Fiction of History* guaranteed a renewal of hostilities. The heat had been turned up even before the festival opened,

Novel approach to history

with Grenville objecting to program notes stating she had "upset historians by suggesting The Secret River was a new form of history writing".

Grenville, who is working on another historical novel, insists she has never said anything "remotely like that". Her decision to pull out of the festival, according to the author to attend her daughter's induction as a school prefect, was seen by some as a protest at the offending sentence. "I know the difference between fiction and history," she told me.

Back at the festival, things were warming up in the packed Sydney Theatre as McDonald, Clendinnen and historian Tom Griffiths replayed the argument over familiar, fraught terrain.

Griffiths, author of a new book on the Antarctic, *Slicing the Silence*, got things off to a contentious start by declaring that "history and fiction weave an intriguing and complex dance" and labelling Eleanor Dark's 1941 novel *The Timeless Land* as "the most widely read text of Australian history".

Dark, he said, had annotated her own copy of the volume with footnotes documenting her historical sources. "Her fiction was disciplined with referenced facts ... yet it had been the freedom of her fiction that had allowed her to write into a great silence. These silences and this uncertainty are the historian's creative opportunity -- and should be part of any story we tell."

Griffiths went on to describe the factual inventions in Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* as "relatively trivial", praised the "authenticity of its voice" and concluded: "I think we cannot now write the history of the Kelly outbreak without learning from the extraordinary ventriloquism of the novel."

Clendinnen's slender frame and white hair disguise for less than an instant her intellectual ferocity: Griffiths was not going to get away with this blurring of the lines: "Tom's rules for history are too elastic!" she protested, rejecting his claims for Dark as a literary historian.

"There is no middle ground between fiction and history. They are mutually enriching; they are also conflicting. Fiction writing is very thrilling and uses qualities of the imagination that historians have to keep on a tight leash."

What still holds her "in thrall", she told her rapt audience, is "the intellectual and the emotional and the imaginative exercise of 'doing history'", the hunt for historical details to breathe life into people such as Bennelong's wife Barangaroo, a Cameragal woman living on the shores of Sydney Harbour in 1788 and a central character in *Dancing with Strangers*, Clendinnen's masterpiece on early contact between Aborigines and Europeans.

What first drew the historian to Barangaroo was governor Arthur Phillip's record of a **female** Aborigine who wore a male ornament -- a narrow bone through her septum -- a sure sign of individualism. Barangaroo has been dead for more than 200 years and "had left no physical trace of her being ... But there she is. It's certainly a recognisable person, where before there was only a fleeing shadow."

"I agree with Tom," opened McDonald, the last to enter the fray. "I'm also on Inga's side -- like someone from Israel's Likud Party might be surprised to find themselves in agreement with **Hamas**," he added.

Fictional, not historical, motives drive his work, he said, "even if it does overlap with historians' questions". And he argued that "fictional truth" comes out of the work itself.

So what is fictional truth? McDonald: "I would say a sense of conviction in a writer and reader that the world described inside the pages of the novel actually exists. All that is relevant to the plot decides fictional truth. This is no history."

A novel, he continued, "is a living experience of potential shapes. Those shapes demand names, faces, voices, wills. They must be dressed, fed, loved, nurtured or resisted. Diaries, letters and documents uncovered by historians in a lifetime's work can be the afternoon playthings of a novelist diving into the dress-up trunk."

Novel approach to history

"History, no matter how imaginative it is, is a forensic art having its day in court. A novel must appear more real than life itself even while aiming for redemption and reconciliation of opposites.

"When the novel is there it is up to the reader to decide how it will expand the truth they know." When I gathered up the speakers' papers at the end of the session, I noticed Clendinnen had scribbled two words from Griffith's address on the front of hers: relatively trivial. Stay tuned.

* review@theaustralian.com

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**Arab regimes have been cracking down on human rights advocates;
MIDEAST: Paying Lip Service to Human Rights**

IPS (Latin America)

May 23, 2007 Wednesday

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Byline: Ellen Massey

Body

But despite the actions of governments, human rights continue to have relevance and a growing impact on the region, according to a group of experts based in the United States.

“Human rights have come to frame in part how certain issues are thought about and debated,” said Anthony Chase, assistant professor of diplomacy and world affairs at Occidental College, at an event to launch the book “Human Rights in the Arab World: Independent Voices.” Chase and Amr Hamzawy, co-editors of the volume, argued that it is no longer debatable that human rights are applicable to the Arab world.

Instead, they believe there is a “legitimate human rights debate within the Arab region that is separate from the externally supported human rights regime” and that debate is also shaping other political and social debates. “A new pattern of actors is emerging in the past few years, informal networks and ad hoc initiatives that take the debate to a new stage,” Hamzawy said.

At a panel discussion on Tuesday, they and other experts said that both Arab governments and the movements that oppose them have embraced at least the human rights rhetoric in their platforms. Most governments in the region have established national councils on human rights, indicating that there is at least nominally a government-controlled body to address this issue.

Groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, a banned Islamist group and the leading opposition party to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's government, have also become advocates for human rights in countries like Egypt and Syria, where dissenting voices are regularly silenced.

For both Islamist and non-Islamist groups, “human rights is a slogan that is used by all of them but it is not used for popular consumption, it is not used to mobilise people,” said Hamzawy, “it is a way to hit the right tone when interacting with international counterparts.”

A sign of progress in the past 10 years, Hamzawy explained, is that the call for at least political rights has become less ideological and more universally applicable across different political movements. One example is the Islamist voices that have spoken out for secular Egyptian blogger Kareem Amer, who was sentenced to four years in jail for criticising President Mubarak.

Though human rights might inform political, economic and even religious debates in the region, the abuses are still glaring. “Human rights is just a slogan. Practically, there's no human rights,” said Sameer Jarrah, a visiting fellow at the Washington-based think tank Brookings Institution.

Arab regimes have been cracking down on human rights advocates MIDEAST: Paying Lip Service to Human Rights

According to Human Rights Watch, a New York-based advocacy group, four additional people in Syria were charged this week for signing the Beirut Damascus Declaration calling for the normalisation of relations between Syria and Lebanon. This brings to six the number of prominent human rights activists who have been jailed by the Syrian government in May.

In Iran, the women's movement has been quashed and some its most prominent activists are serving jail time for their activities. Meanwhile in Egypt, Al-Jazeera journalist Huwaida Taha Mitwalli was sentenced to six months in prison for reporting on torture taking place in Egypt and more than 300 members of the Muslim Brotherhood have been arrested since December in a crackdown following a parade staged by Brotherhood students in Cairo.

Syria, Iran and Egypt are all signatories to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees that everyone has 'the right to hold opinions without interference' and 'the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers'.

The repression by Arab regimes is just one of the challenges that face human rights activists in the region though. Beyond the question of whether or not human rights are applicable to the Arab world is the question being raised, especially in the west, about the intersection of human rights and Islamist movements. Despite the presence of a local human rights community, the question of cultural relativism is repeatedly raised, asking if human rights law can be taken out of the historical and cultural context of the west.

But Joe Stork, deputy director of the Middle East division at Human Rights Watch, pointed to Turkey and Egypt, where 'there are serious human rights abuses in both countries, but in different ways the human rights communities are flourishing'. He noted that there are 'areas of tension' like freedom of belief and gender equality, 'where many Islamists have disagreements with the international or western standards', Stork told IPS.

'Islamists themselves represent a formal challenge because of their very existence and the unwillingness of existing regimes to incorporate them into the existing order,' said Nathan Brown, senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The existence and actions of these outliers, like the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas in Palestine, continues to be used as a justification for current abuses.

While the United States has been deeply entrenched in the region for the past six years and longer, it has been relatively absent from the human rights debate in the Arab world.

'In the case of Iran and Syria, there's no dialogue on anything,' Stork said, 'In the case of Egypt, where the U.S. does have very close relations, there isn't really a dialogue, or when there is it's pretty lame'.

Even in the areas in which the U.S. used to be able to influence human rights, like tying aid money to human rights records, Washington is considering ways to forfeit some of its control. The White House has submitted a bill to Congress, called the 'Building Global Partnerships Act of 2007', which would allocate up to 750 million dollars to help foreign governments set up security and military forces to 'combat terrorism and enhance stability'.

In the past, this sort of aid was based on compliance with the Foreign Assistance Act which, among other restrictions, demands that foreign aid recipients comply with strict human rights standards. The proposed legislation eliminates the Foreign Assistance Act restrictions and almost completely eliminates congressional oversight. © 2007 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

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Arab regimes have been cracking down on human rights advocates MIDEAST: Paying Lip Service to Human Rights

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LETTERS

The Tampa Tribune (Florida)

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Body

LETTER OF THE DAY

Al-Arian Guilty Of Association

Regarding "Film On Al-Arian Next Week" (Metro, May 11):

The announcement of a documentary claiming to tell the Arian "family side of the story" for \$8.50 a ticket is the latest bit of gall emanating from the manipulative Al-Arians. Sami Al-Arian remains in jail convicted of raising money for terrorist groups such as Hamas and others. A federal judge declared him unfit for citizenship. Currently he is in contempt for failing to testify before a federal grand jury.

The Al-Arians have taken advantage of our freedoms since their arrival. He repaid us by persuading the University of South Florida to establish a think tank - the World Islamic Studies Enterprise - to explore the "fastest growing religion in the world." Instead of Islamic scholars he brought over terrorists such as Ramadan Abdullah Shallah, the current head of Islamic Jihad and Hassan Turabi, a leader of the Darfur genocide. Al-Arian is not guilty by association with terrorists; he is guilty in association with them.

NORMAN N. GROSS

Palm Harbor

The writer is president of Promoting Responsibility in Middle East Reporting.

Pet Volunteers Needed

Regarding "Sickening Stats At Animal Shelter Are A Call To Community Action" (Our Opinion, May 12):

I am a volunteer for a breed-specific rescue group with foster homes throughout the Southeast and have fostered dogs for Animal Services. Your editorial is right on point. Our community, and more specifically, animal owners, must step up to the plate by volunteering time and/or money. No amount of either is too small. It would be wonderful to see a low-cost animal clinic in eastern Hillsborough area similar to that run by the Humane Society in Tampa and the SPCA in Polk County. However, I don't see this happening without the strong volunteer base mentioned in your editorial.

LETTERS

Lack of responsible pet ownership plays a large part in the number of animals received daily at Animal Services. If someone is thinking about adopting a pet, it is very important to consider that a dog or cat can live 15 years or more. And, like humans, they will need more care as they age. This is a big commitment and, if you are not reasonably sure that you can provide such care, another type of pet would be more suitable.

M. DENNEY

Brandon

Effort Requires Funding

Without knowing the actual amount, but using the number that has appeared in your paper, the budget for the Hillsborough County Animal Shelter is now \$8.4 million. If they take in 30,000 animals per year, that's only \$280 per animal to cover all its expenses while at HCAS, without considering payroll and other non-animal direct expenses.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Tribune think the solution to this is to somehow get additional volunteers (unpaid) to help out. This suggestion has become extremely stale over the last decade or so as the solution for all government's budgetary shortfalls.

If the powers that be in Hillsborough County want to be serious about animal care and reduce euthanasia while increasing adoptions, it is going to take a commitment to appropriately fund the effort, not blame the community because volunteers are not lining up begging to work for free.

ROBERT OMARK

Apollo Beach

Fireflies Have Flown Away

Regarding "City Lights Turn Off Fireflies' Love Lives" (Metro, May 11):

Thank you for bringing back an oft-forgotten childhood memory: Hot summer nights in rural Riverview catching fireflies and watching them for a few hours in an old mayonnaise jar. We'd always marvel at their beautiful glow and wonder how they could do "their thing."

I was saddened to read how the species may be being driven out of our midst by how we light our homes and streets.

Too bad the same can't be said for another summertime mating ritual: Lovebugs!

SCOTT KJEER

Riverview

They Don't Live Here

Fireflies do not live in this state. I know because I have lived here since the early 70's. I have camped in many places here in Florida where it is very dark and never seen one in this state.

Please find an area that they live in here. They do not live in this state.

NORMAN THOMPSON

Seffner

No Serious Discourse

LETTERS

As a veterinarian who likely has a considerable edge in math and science education over the estimable Tom Teepen, does the fact that I question the validity of the theories of evolution and man-made global warming make me an anti-intellectual?

The lack of a religious conviction to these theories - not facts -as seen by many in the media and on the left does not reveal a lack of education or scientific training. Critical thinking, not just math and science education, is what is truly required to think through and challenge ideas and proposals to see if they can stand on their own.

Unfortunately in today's society, questioning the "Gods" of the left is met with swift ridicule and retribution instead of serious discourse. In a way it makes you wonder if they truly understand their position or if they just accept it on faith.

PAUL H. LANGSTON

Tampa

Theory, Not Science

Regarding "Science Stumps GOP" (Other Views, May 9):

Tom Teepen incorrectly identifies evolution as science. It is the theory of evolution, so if theory, then not science.

The question was inappropriately presented at the so-called debate and the candidates should have had the presence of mind to ignore the question. Whether a candidate of either party has a belief in evolution or not has nothing to do with his or her ability to govern the nation.

ALTHEA BRANDON

Zephyrhills

Most Plausible Belief

Tom Teepen implies that some Republicans are uneducated in their belief of creationism. I differ with him. Has he considered what scientific evidence there is for evolution?

Name a machine more complex than the human body and I would venture to say that you would never argue that it evolved. It took ingenuity to design it. Yet he wants me to believe that DNA evolved, somehow became alive, decided to become male and female and mutated over and over until living organisms (some with millions of cells) came into being?

Charles Darwin himself would not believe in the present theory of evolution. He said that evolution could not be defended unless numerous transitional forms could be found - and they have not been found.

Every fossil purported to be a missing link has been proven to be a hoax, showing the dishonesty and persistence of scientists to disprove God as creator.

The question then becomes which belief seems more plausible and has more supporting evidence?

REXINE DULEY

Largo

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LETTERS

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Your view

The Sun Herald (Sydney, Australia)

April 29, 2007 Sunday

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Body

Spare us the deja vu

WITH Mandarin [and Italian] lessons costing taxpayers \$41,717.46 for Amanda Vanstone ("Vanstone's Rome posting an electoral headache for Howard", The Sun-Herald, April 22), will Rod Kemp require us, the taxpayers, to pay \$50,000 for French lessons if he decides to move to Paris?

I know both parties award plum ambassadorial postings to party hacks, but these important positions should be carried out by skilled public servants who've had years of training and postings before they attain the top job. Look how we reacted when US President George Bush sent two of his cronies here.

What have the Italians and French done to deserve Vanstone (pictured) and Kemp?ROBERT PALLISTER

Punchbowl

Grooming terrorists

THE Sun-Herald reported (April 22) that a bunch of murderers in Goulburn jail have converted to Islam and jihad.

Nice thinking. They will be unemployable in Australia by the time they emerge from prison but they will probably be welcomed by **Hamas** or Hezbollah or the Taliban or the Chechen child-killers or the South Philippines decapitators or the Indonesian bombers or whatever Muslim murder groups are still then in business.

NORMAN RICH

Newport

Browned off

BOB Brown's expulsion from the ALP for writing to the The Herald in Newcastle criticising the ALP's failure to hold rank-and-file preselection (The Sun-Herald, April 22) is a sad reflection on the founding principles of the party.

People like Bob Brown are the essence of the ALP, and his treatment at the hands of the current party powerbrokers only serves to highlight why many people have failed to renew their ALP membership in recent years.

RICHARD TALBOT

Your view

Cheltenham

Losing my religion

AFTER decades of deliberations, the great minds in the Vatican have bowed to the limited evidence and come to the conclusion that limbo does not exist ("Unbaptised go straight to heaven," The Sun-Herald, April 22).

I don't hold much faith in the notions of heaven, hell and purgatory receiving the same time-consuming scrutiny and, once all the evidence is collated, a similar response being broadcast.

MAX FISCHER

Scarborough

Cleaning up an ice mess

IN your editorial "Rehabilitation is the key to control of ice" (The Sun-Herald, April 22) you claim that much of my Government's spending under the Tough on Drugs strategy has been focused on law enforcement and abstinence.

The Tough on Drugs strategy is a comprehensive and balanced approach to the problems of drug abuse. Law enforcement measures are needed, but so is rehabilitation and education. Of my Government's \$1.4 billion investment, about two-thirds has been directly targeted at rehabilitation, education and prevention as well as about one-third for law enforcement measures.

In my recent announcement to combat ice and other illicit drugs, more than \$100 million is being provided for drug rehabilitation services. However, disrupting the supply of illicit drugs is also fundamental to the strategy and an additional \$38 million will be invested to stop these dangerous drugs from reaching the streets in the first place.

JOHN HOWARD

Kirribilli

A dry argument

IT is absolute nonsense for people to blame either the present or previous governments for the current drought. Australia produces only about 1 per cent of global emissions, and anything we could have done in previous years would have had no discernible effect on the current situation. Nothing we do in the future will have any worthwhile effect either. In Australia droughts are a regular occurrence, a fact of life.

BRIAN CALLER

Willoughby

Jones wrist slap a joke

SURELY there was a mistake in The Sun-Herald - "Jones back in court as libel fight resumes" (April 22)?

Surely no magistrate would fine Alan Jones \$1000 for breaking the rules and broadcasting the name of a juvenile witness in 2005. I can't believe it - \$1000 is probably the amount Jones would tip a waiter. And putting him on a bond is the next joke. How many times is he charged with various offences before the courts will treat him as they would a person not as well known?

G HEALEY

Condell Park

Celebration of debacles

Your view

IT has been pointed out by numerous observers that we and the English have a tendency to remember military disasters - Gallipoli is an excellent example of this phenomenon as the hordes of pilgrims each year demonstrate.

Another bumper crowd last week and most of them probably could not tell you the names of the 1918 battles that smashed the German armies. No ballad about El Alamein, either.

As far as I know there are no stirring battle poems to match The Charge Of The Light Brigade, which again is about another disaster - the cavalry charged the wrong way and most of them got quickly killed.

Do other nationalities have this tradition of literary disaster/stuff-up glorification?

If I ever make it to Anzac Cove I will have my Siegfried Sassoon handy, if he is allowed there. Especially the following, which he wrote about the same time he chucked his Military Cross in the River Mersey after winning it for suicidal bravery, on numerous occasions, on the Western Front:

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye

Who cheer when soldier lads march by,

Sneak home and pray you'll never know

The hell where youth and laughter go.

BILL McLEAN

Kingsford

PM blind to the horror

WITH more than half a million dead since the US invasion, many Iraqis must be thinking that Saddam Hussein wasn't such a bad bloke after all. At least they could go shopping without the risk of being blown to bits, yet our Prime Minister refuses to see our involvement in this debacle as the mother of all mistakes.

How refreshing that Kevin Rudd at least admits his errors. Incredibly, John Howard still defends our role in the Vietnam War that cost 500 Australians their lives.

TERRY PADLEY

Beacon Hill

No reason AWB should be let off

MICHELLE Grattan is correct to emphasise the dubious political influence of AWB in this election year (The Sun-Herald, April 22) but she lets that company off very lightly with such phrases as "bad behaviour". As the Cole inquiry found, it was far worse than merely "bribes" and "kickbacks": it was theft. When people or companies pay bribes, unsavoury though their behaviour is, it is with their own money. What AWB did was to steal money from the trust ("escrow") fund that the United Nations had set up as part of its "Oil for Food" program, which was to minimise the adverse effects of trading sanctions on the women and children of Iraq.

The behaviour was worse than "bad" and warrants criminal charges, not "forgiving and forgetting" election-time rewards.

JOHN CARMODY

Roseville

Graphic

TWO PHOTOS: SCANDAL: Michael Long; and (inset) Trevor Flugge, both formerly of AWB. CARTOON: By David Pope

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It is better to be governed by old, nodding Lords than by cash-for-honours addicts

The Independent (London)

March 10, 2007 Saturday

First Edition

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The  INDEPENDENT

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Byline: HOWARD JACOBSON

Body

I have just been listening to a man on the radio explaining how he managed to run up a bill of £9,000 ringing into television quiz programmes. His argument was that someone should have stopped him. The night before, I heard a bedridden woman weighing 40 stone make the same argument. Someone should have stopped her ringing up the takeaway.

Suggest that the quiz-freak and the guzzler should have stopped themselves and you sound like an old Tory. No one is obliged to stop himself. The reason we cannot stop whatever it is we cannot stop - drugs, sex, answering inane questions, pork scratchings - is that we are in the grip of an addiction, and whoever is in the grip of an addiction is outside himself, and whoever is outside himself can no longer be considered responsible for his actions, and whoever is not responsible for his actions becomes the obligation of society, and whoever is the obligation of society is within his rights to complain when society does nothing to save him.

For television companies to be making quite so much money overcharging people who ring in - I am not concerned with the money made by takeaways - an awful lot of people must be ringing in. And they are not all ringing in to answer inane questions. Many of the addicted and the overcharged are ringing in to exercise their democratic right: to vote for which celebrity should leave the Big Brother House or be dropped head first into a slithery tank of Ants and Decs.

It's a proud boast of these programmes that more people cast a vote for them than turn out for an election. How long it will be before Simon Cowell or Endemol buys the rights to a general election and turns it into a game show - The X Factor would have been the perfect name for it were The X Factor not already taken - is anybody's guess.

But if we want Universal Suffrage to mean what it says, telly is the only place it's going to happen. Text your vote to ITV, wait for someone in a strapless evening dress to say "And the winner is ????" while Gordon Brown and David Cameron sweat it out in front of the cameras and Sharon Osbourne makes ready to swear in the new government. The right to vote is wasted on the voter, we all know that. Not only is it exercised, more often than not, in a worthless cause, it is exercised, more often than not, unwisely. Driven by emotionalism rather than reason, an

It is better to be governed by old, nodding Lords than by cash-for-honours addicts

ingrained hostility to intelligence, a mistrust of women with strong opinions, a sentimental fondness for people of colour so long as their colour is only just off-white, and the sexual preferences of 13-year-old girls, the television voter, like the electoral voter, can be relied on to deliver the wrong verdict.

And yet we continue not only to sing the praises of democracy in our own backyard, but we also go to war to deliver it to other people's. Should Iraqis finally decide that the only way to restore order to their country is to vote for al-Qa'ida we will be in a pretty pickle. Democracy is good so long as it delivers what we want it to deliver. When it delivers what we don't want it to deliver, as in the instance of the Palestinians voting for Hamas, we are suddenly not as keen on it as we were. And why should we be? Democracy is no more a promise of a sweet life to the neighbours of democracy than it is a guarantee of a fair one to those whose democracy it is.

Let us consider only ourselves. Our loathing of our Prime Minister - expressed in vitriolic cartoons, diatribes in newspapers of every political persuasion, scurrilously unamusing biofarces on television, the picking over every grey hair and grimace - is now a national pathology. Our feelings about other senior ministers are scarcely more charitable. We delight in their indiscretions though the same indiscretions among ourselves we treat with fond indulgence; we lambast them for evincing the very greed we consider perfectly normal, not to say desirable, in our own places of work. It is as though the country is convulsed with a form of mass masochism, for these are our elected representatives, and the worse their performances in the jobs for which we elected them, the worse electors we show ourselves to be. In our hearts, it seems to me, we aren't democrats at all: in our hearts we want democracy to be seen to have made fools of us.

So why are we pressing for an elected House of Lords? If Tony Blair is as bad as we say he is, what benefits have the fact that we voted for him brought us? The benefit of being able to vote him out again, is one answer. But in the case of the Lords such men as Tony Blair would never have fronted up in the first place. What would the Lords have held for him? What power, what glory, what promises of remuneration and fame? Remember Bagehot's words - and I know every believer in a non-elected chamber quotes Bagehot, but there is good reason for it - "The order of nobility is of great use, too, not only in what it creates, but in what it prevents. It prevents the rule of wealth - the religion of gold."

Isn't the practising of that religion, together with an unseemly devotion to its fellow adherents, among the strongest of our cases against Blair? He believes we have voted him into the right to wealth. That comes with being elected now - elected prime minister or elected winner of Big Brother - wealth. So let us be at least partly governed, I say, by people philosophically above or materially beyond the religion of gold. And if there are cash-for-honours addicts mad enough to pay to sit in the Lords, what is that but proof of their disinterestedness?

Better to be governed by those already rich, than by those who mean to grow rich by governing.

Bagehot likens members of the Lords to old leaves lingering on November trees - they give assurance of kind weather and civil peace. If we are sick of young, uncultured career politicians in a hurry, we should be more grateful for those nodding November peers - mannerly, impartial, with nothing to gain or lose, neither compromised nor impeded by the interests of a constituency, free to criticise, trained to read and argue, unimpressed by the allure of riches, celebrity or office. And indifferent to our vote.

Load-Date: March 10, 2007

**Sharon's legacy tarnished: Ex-prime minister, in coma for more than a year,
has legacy linked to corruption, analysts say.**

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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Main Edition

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Byline: CRAIG NELSON

For the Journal-Constitution

Body

Jerusalem --- Ariel Sharon, still bedridden and deep in a coma after a massive stroke nearly 14 months ago, turns 79 on Tuesday.

Israelis will mark the former prime minister's birthday with sadness at the unlikelihood that Sharon will ever recover. Few, however, will be nostalgic.

Sharon's legacy no longer seems quite as shiny as the image of the endearing patriarch of his latter years.

Israel's government is awash in charges of corruption and sexual scandal. Its vaunted military and intelligence services are under investigation after last summer's performance against Lebanon's radical Islamist Hezbollah militants. **Hamas**, an organization sworn to Israel's destruction, is a leading political and military force in the Palestinian territories.

The blame for these predicaments falls partly --- and, in some instances, mainly --- on Sharon, said analysts and ordinary Israelis.

"I don't miss Sharon. Look at Gaza! Look at Lebanon! Look at the corruption!" said Nuriel Zarifi, 35, a Jerusalem coffee shop owner who said he had supported Sharon but now regretted it. "I feel cheated."

Sharon's legacy is clouded in part by the scent of corruption that tinged his ascent to the premiership in the 1990s and lingered after he was elected prime minister in 2001.

His eldest son Omri, 42, pleaded guilty last year to illegally raising more than \$1.3 million for his father's campaign for leadership of the Likud party in 1999. A Tel Aviv court has granted him a delay in serving his nine-month jail sentence, citing his father's medical condition.

Sharon's legacy tarnished: Ex-prime minister, in coma for more than a year, has legacy linked to corruption, analysts say.

Sharon's youngest son Gilad, 36, was investigated but never indicted on charges of bribe-taking, though he admitted to destroying documents and tape recordings sought as potential evidence by an Israeli court.

Sharon himself was the subject of at least three corruption probes during his premiership, though charges were never filed.

"In terms of proper government, the Sharon era will be remembered as a very dark era and the damage he caused is still being felt," said Barak Calev, head of the legal department of the nonprofit, nonpartisan Movement for Quality Government in Israel.

Since Sharon suffered a stroke and lapsed into a coma, investigations of his political heirs and appointees have reinforced the impression that under his rule insider dealing and conflicts of interest were normal, and loyalty was valued more highly than competence and rectitude.

The list includes his former deputy and protege, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who is under investigation about his role in the privatization of a bank two years ago when he was finance minister.

Moshe Karadi, Israel's chief of police, resigned last week after an independent commission accused him of failing to investigate the department's links to organized crime.

The retired judge who headed the commission, Vardi Zeiler, warned that Israel's police and the rest of the country are at risk of becoming another "Sicily" due to the rising influence of organized crime in Israeli institutions.

Analysts hasten to say that corruption in Israel was not born under Sharon's leadership. They point to Yitzhak Rabin, who resigned in embarrassment as prime minister in 1977 after his wife was discovered to have a U.S. bank account in violation of Israeli currency laws.

But the leading newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth described the current state of affairs in Israel as "Sodom and Gomorrah" after the disclosure of another investigation into corruption in upper reaches of government --- this one a bribes-for-tax-breaks scheme involving Olmert's longtime private secretary.

And that was before President Moshe Katsav, whose bid for the largely ceremonial office Sharon supported, vacated his official residence last month to fight possible indictment on charges of rape and abuse of power. Another official, former justice minister Haim Ramon, was convicted of sexual misconduct for forcibly kissing a female soldier.

"Sharon and all his family were responsible for the deterioration of public standards and values that you see in Israel today," said Eyal Naveh, a professor of history at Tel Aviv University.

Sharon's political and military image also has suffered since his illness. Rocket firings from Gaza, the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers and the war with Hezbollah have taken their toll.

The Sharon doctrine of "unilateralism" --- the policy that led to Israel's painful withdrawal of soldiers and settlers from the Gaza Strip in 2005 --- is dead, said Gerald Steinberg, a professor of political studies at Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan.

Certainly, Israelis across the political spectrum pined for Sharon last summer, when their government retaliated for the kidnapping of two soldiers and the killing of three others with a massive military offensive across Lebanon.

With Sharon at the helm, few Israelis believe he would have given the appearance of bumbling, as the Olmert-led government did.

Yet even out of power and bedridden, Sharon shares partial blame for the war's failures because of appointments to the military command made while he was still in power, said Efraim Inbar, director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies in Ramat Gan.

Sharon's legacy tarnished: Ex-prime minister, in coma for more than a year, has legacy linked to corruption, analysts say.

But the reassessment of Sharon's legacy does not mean he is held in wide disrepute.

Most Israelis do not speak ill of Sharon, as he remains on a mechanical respirator and intravenous feeding tube in the long-term-care wing of Sheba Medical Center near Tel Aviv. Instead, most speak of him in the past tense, if they speak of him at all.

"The chance of recovery is one-in-a-million," said Dr. Moti Ravid, a professor of medicine at Tel Aviv University who has not been directly involved in Sharon's treatment. Arrangements for Sharon's state funeral and his burial next to his late wife, Lily, at his ranch in southern Israel were completed long ago.

When he is eulogized, Sharon is likely to be remembered as the last of Israel's charismatic, powerful leaders --- a man with a strategic vision.

He was "a hero in the 1972 Yom Kippur war, promoted settlements in the 1970s and 1980s and defeated [Palestinian leader Yasser] Arafat in the 2001-2005 terror war," Steinberg said.

"Regardless of what he has done, he will be remembered as the last founding father of the generation present at the creation of the state. Everyone else is their son," Naveh said.

Graphic

Photo: Despite his critics, former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon likely also will be remembered as the last of Israel's charismatic, powerful leaders./ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: Associated Press / 2001 photoPrime Minister Ariel Sharon (left) was probed for corruption three times but never charged. His son Omri Sharon (second left) was sentenced for illegally raising money for his campaign./ImageData*

Load-Date: February 25, 2007

CARTOONS & COMMENT Viewpoints from around the world No obvious answers

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

February 2, 2007 Friday

THIRD EDITION

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Body

NO OBVIOUS ANSWERS

The suicide bombing in Eilat on Monday was a painful reminder of a reality that has been pushed to the periphery of public debate. . . .

The Shin Bet and the IDF have had great success in preventing attacks, to the point that this success is almost taken for granted, but there is no happy end to every case in this constant struggle. The Israel-Egypt border is porous, for the use of both terrorists and criminals, and no Israeli community is immune to attack either by Katyusha rockets or by suicide bombers.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the hastily reached conclusion - that it is necessary to invest billions of shekels in a border fence, with sophisticated electronic equipment, from Eilat to Kerem Shalom, a total of 240 kilometers across desert and mountainous terrain - should be adopted. . . .

Overall, the Israeli security services have managed to limit the number of both attacks and casualties. They employ the proper tactics, and the proof of this is the decreasing frequency of the attacks.

This does not mean that the Palestinians and Egypt - either directly or indirectly - have no responsibility for the bombing in Eilat. The divided Palestinian government is not trying to prevent attacks. **Hamas**, the Resistance Committees and Islamic Jihad cooperated in the abduction of Corporal Gilad Shalit, and they continue to plan attacks and carry them out. Some sources allege that Fatah, which prides itself on its moderation and aspires to return to power, was also involved in the attack in Eilat.

Egypt does not insist on exercising its sovereignty over its territory or along its borders, neither that with the Gaza Strip nor that with Israel. A diplomatic effort to demand from these parties to assume their responsibility, in addition to maintaining the intelligence and military efforts to prevent attacks, will be more useful than the illusion of a costly fence. - Haaretz, Jerusalem

CLUSTER OF VIOLATIONS

It seems an Amnesty International report criticizing Israel for using cluster bombs in Lebanon's civilian areas in the final days of last summer's conflict with Hezbollah was right. After looking into the matter, the U.S. State Department has forwarded a preliminary report to the Congress. And the word coming from Washington indicates

CARTOONS & COMMENT Viewpoints from around the world No obvious answers

that Israel is "likely" to have violated terms of its arms deals with the former, which place restrictions on the use of such bombs.

Organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross have rightly called for a complete ban on cluster bombs in populated areas. The main reason is that upon use they scatter into hundreds of small bomblets over a wide range, causing indiscriminate deaths. . . .

As the U.S. Congress mulls an appropriate course of action, it will no doubt bear in mind that at \$2 billion per annum, America is by far Israel's biggest military donor. As such, much of the responsibility of Israel's excesses comes to eventually rest on Uncle Sam's shoulders.

That case is made stronger since Washington has been Israel's chief veto-cover in the U.N. and diplomatic shelter in the international community, defending its actions regardless of ground realities and humanitarian/political fallout. But with things falling apart across the Middle East, and American authority being called into question, surely it is time to re-evaluate the cost-benefit equation with such an upstart nation-state.

- Khaleej Times, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

HONOR DENIED

For the second time now, Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir has missed the chance to take over the mantle as chairman of the African Union. Instead, Ghanaian President, John Kufuor, is the new AU boss. Bashir has been denied the top post for the second time because of the protracted conflict in [Sudan's] Darfur region.

This, in our view, is the needed pressure by the continental body to get the Sudanese government more committed to ending one of Africa's embarrassing conflicts. Far too many people have been killed. . . .

Bashir's government has been accused of backing killer militias called the Janjaweed. Though his administration has persistently denied the allegations, independent groups including aid agencies have floated evidence suggesting that the Janjaweed are state-backed.

As it has been argued before, Africa needs to lead the way toward resolving some of the continent's wars. It does not make sense to glorify people working against African unity or the principles of the AU. It is good to see that there was pressure from African countries meeting in the Ethiopian capital.

This is the kind of pressure needed in other conflict areas elsewhere in Africa. Dictators and other wayward leaders flouting the general principles of oneness and [who] lack respect for human rights should know that they will never be left to have their way. They should be isolated as a measure to get them to realize that what they are doing is wrong. . . .

- Times of Zambia

TRUE OUTRAGE

There is a far greater scandal in our criminal justice system than the small number of men who are victims of malicious accusations: the vast number of men who are committing rape and getting away with it.

Less than six per cent of rape allegations in the UK result in conviction, one of the lowest rates in Europe. Few would suggest that 94 per cent of allegations of rape are false. This failure by our courts to hold so many to account must therefore be acknowledged as an outrage. It is certainly difficult to prove the charge of rape. But our courts should be doing far better than they are. . . .

According to a joint report by the Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, police forces are dismissing rape allegations in nearly one third of cases when they should be investigated further.

CARTOONS & COMMENT Viewpoints from around the world No obvious answers

The report shines a bright light on where the system is failing rape victims. For instance, it argues there is little consistency in the way forensic doctors are employed to examine victims. Call-out lists . . . for police officers who have been specially trained to deal with such crimes are poorly managed. Front-line police officers have very little training to deal with the crime before specialists arrive.

Proper police work at an early stage is essential to the prosecution case. All of these failures decrease the likelihood of conviction. The police and the prosecuting authorities must be made to understand by the government that their underperformance will not be tolerated. . . .

More women than ever are reporting rapes to the police. But anonymous surveys still suggest that only a small proportion of women who have been abused in this way are coming forward. Our criminal justice system is still not securing justice for the victims of rape. Ministers should devote their energies to putting this right before they turn their attention to other problems.

- The Independent, London

Notes

OTHER VIEWS

Graphic

GRAPHIC

GRAPHIC - (6 EDITORIAL CARTOONS)

Load-Date: February 3, 2007

The problem with al-Jazeera

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

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National Edition

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Length: 1127 words

Byline: JUDEA PEARL in Los Angeles, The New York Times

Body

In late 2001, three months before my son, Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, was kidnapped, he interviewed the influential Qatari cleric Sheik Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and asked him about suicide bombings against Israeli civilians. The sheik replied with a novel twist of logic. "Israeli society in general is armed," he said, implying that Israeli civilians -- including women and children, doctors and journalists -- are legitimate targets.

At the time, it was still surprising to see an authoritative Muslim cleric give religious license to the ideology of terror - - granting the faithful permission to elevate their own grievances above the norms of civilized society.

Daniel would fall victim to that same ideology when he was abducted and murdered in Pakistan. After his death, I discovered that Sheik Qaradawi is the host of a weekly program on the Qatar-based TV news network al-Jazeera called Sharia and Life. He uses this forum to preach his new morality to millions of Arabic-speaking viewers, including Hamas operatives, al-Qaeda recruits, schoolteachers and impressionable Muslim youths. "We have the 'children bomb,' and these human bombs must continue until liberation," he told his audience in 2002. Consistent with this logic and morality, Sheik Qaradawi later extended his Koranic blessing to suicide bombing against American civilians in Iraq.

A few in the Arab world have taken issue with his calls for violence. Al Ittihad, a newspaper in the United Arab Emirates, editorialized in 2004 that the beheading of two American hostages in Iraq happened "in direct response to Qaradawi's fatwa and incitement, which permits the killing of American civilians." Yet few, in the Middle East or the West, seem willing to condemn al-Jazeera's management for giving the cleric regular airtime.

None of this might seem to matter much to us except that for two months now al-Jazeera has been taking its mixture of news coverage and extremist propagandizing to the West's front door through an English-language station. Called al-Jazeera English, the network can be received via satellite or streamed over the Internet. It has bureaus in London and Washington, and has recruited such high-profile Western journalists as Sir David Frost as correspondents.

In part, this is promising. The Arabic version of al-Jazeera and its various spinoffs on satellite TV and the Internet are usually credited with having a positive influence on Arab society. In particular, al-Jazeera's coverage has placed an emphasis on younger leaders, reformers and successful businessmen who may serve as role models for today's Arab youth. And it has brought --as the press usually does -- a degree of inquisitiveness and openness that could become a useful engine of reform in the region.

The problem with al-Jazeera

Westerners have been quick to point out these benefits. A critic for The New York Times said that "though al-Jazeera English looks at news events through a non-Western prism, it also points to where East and West actually meet." Time magazine noted, "arguably nothing -- including the Bush administration's panoply of democratization programs -- has done more than al-Jazeera to open minds and challenge authority in the Middle East."

But what should concern Westerners is that the ideology of men like Sheik Qaradawi saturates many of the network's programs, and is gaining wider acceptance among Muslim youths in the West. In its "straight" news coverage on its Arabic TV broadcasts and Web sites, al-Jazeera's reports consistently amplify radical Islamist sentiments (although without endorsing violence explicitly).

For example, the phrase "war on terror" is invariably preceded by the contemptuous prefix "so-called." The words "terror" and "insurgency" are rarely uttered with a straight face, usually replaced with "resistance" or "struggle." The phrase "war in Iraq" is often replaced by "war on Iraq" or "war against Iraq." A suicide bombing is called a "commando attack" or, occasionally, a "paradise operation."

Al-Jazeera's Web site can be less subtle. On Dec. 12, after religious leaders and heads of state all over the world condemned President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran for staging a Holocaust denial conference in Tehran, the headline on the site read, "Ahmadinejad Praised by Participants of the Holocaust Conference in Tehran, but Condemned by Zionists in Europe."

In short, al-Jazeera's editors choreograph a worldview in which an irreconcilable struggle rages between an evil meaning Western oppressor and its helpless, righteous Arab victims. Most worrisome, perhaps, it often reports on supposed Western conspiracies behind most Arab hardships or failings, thus fuelling the sense of helplessness, humiliation and anger among Muslim youths and helping turn them into potential recruits for terrorist organizations.

The question is, to what extent will this pathological worldview infiltrate al-Jazeera's English channel, which is still trying to find its voice? David Marash, a former Nightline correspondent who is the American anchor on al-Jazeera English, acknowledges such a possibility, but dismisses the responsibility of the network. "Undoubtedly, some al-Jazeera programs may have inspired some social misfits to undertake terrorism," he told The New York Sun. "The danger with information is that some people will take it the wrong way."

Still, with the growing number of social misfits in society, and the growing confusion between "information" and deception in the news media, the danger of fuelling combustible anger in some viewers cannot be ignored, especially when pumped subliminally by well-respected Western anchors.

Let's face it: When a terrorist attack is described as a "martyrdom" in a thick Middle Eastern accent, it can be dismissed by Americans as a peculiarity of cultural differences. But imagine the effect of the word if spoken in David Frost's cultured British tones. This is why, even if al-Jazeera English waters down its alarmist content, it should still be seen as a potential threat: it will bestow respectability upon the practices of its parent network in Qatar, which continues, among other things, to broadcast Sheik Qaradawi's teachings.

I wouldn't call for banning al-Jazeera English, even if that were possible. It is important to extend a hand to the network because it can become a force for good; but it is as important for our news organizations to scrutinize its content and let its viewers know when anti-Western wishes are subverting objective truth. As al-Jazeera on the whole feels the heat of world media attention, we can hope that it will learn to harness its popularity in the service of humanity, progress and moderation.

- Judea Pearl is a professor of computer science at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Graphic

Color Photo : Karim Jaafar, Afp, Getty Images; News anchors at al-Jazeera's English channel in Doha, Qatar.;

The problem with al-Jazeera

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U.S. Gives Tour of Family Detention Center That Critics Liken to a Prison

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Byline: By RALPH BLUMENTHAL; Gretel C. Kovach contributed reporting from Dallas.

Dateline: TAYLOR, Tex., Feb. 9

Body

Responding to complaints about conditions at the nation's main family detention center for illegal immigrants, officials threw open the gates on Friday for a first news media tour.

They portrayed the privately run converted prison, open since May, as a model facility "primarily focused on the safety of the children."

Once all the barbed wire comes down, Gary Mead, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement official, said, "it's going to look more like a community college with a very high chain-link fence."

Among other things, critics have complained about the prisonlike conditions, the food and the limited amount of schooling and recreation provided for children.

Inside the fluorescent-lighted corridors, plastic plants had been hurriedly installed and some areas repainted, lawyers for some detainees said, and officials acknowledged that pizza was on the lunch menu for the first time. The detainees could not be interviewed.

The facility, the T. Don Hutto Family Detention Center near Austin, is operated for the government by the Corrections Corporation of America, under a \$2.8-million-a-month contract with Williamson County. It is named for a founder of the company, which runs 64 facilities in 19 states.

It now holds about 400 illegal immigrants, including 170 children, in family groups from nearly 30 countries, Mr. Mead said. He called it a humane alternative to splitting up families while insuring their presence at legal proceedings.

There is only one other family detention center in the country, the Berks Family Shelter Care Facility in Leesport, Pa.

Critics said the picture presented on Friday conflicted with what they had observed.

"At Hutto, we found prisonlike conditions imposed on families with no criminal background, including asylum seekers," said Michelle Brane, a lawyer for the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service who co-authored a report on family detention to be released on Feb. 22.

U.S. Gives Tour of Family Detention Center That Critics Liken to a Prison

Barbara Hines, clinical professor of law at the University of Texas at Austin who runs an immigration clinic and has visited clients inside, said Friday that "I don't think children should be incarcerated at all."

The law required the government to hold families in the least restrictive conditions possible, Ms. Hines said, adding, "I was shocked, and I have been doing this 30 years."

The American Civil Liberties Union has also been studying conditions as it considers filing a lawsuit contending that the government was violating a 1997 settlement on the treatment of detained juveniles.

"To call it a family residential center is to mask what's going on," said Vanita Gupta, a lawyer with the A.C.L.U. "They may be cleaning up conditions, but at the end of the day it still begs the question of why they are using such a Draconian system."

Another A.C.L.U. lawyer, Lisa Graybill, legal director, said after visiting, "I can't describe how depressed people are in there."

Outside the blocky buildings with thin slit windows, protesters from a local group called Texans United for Families held up signs saying, "Don't Jail Children for Profit."

"If they can put an ankle bracelet on Martha Stewart so she doesn't run off to Jamaica," said a protester, Jose Ortan, a computer technician, "they can find ways to do it for immigrant families."

Some of the harshest criticism came last week from members of a Palestinian family held for three months for overstaying a visa. They were released after an appeals board unexpectedly reopened their plea for amnesty based on new conditions -- danger from the Hamas takeover in the Palestinian territories.

Hamzeh Ibrahim, 15, said his father was sent to a facility in West Texas while his pregnant mother shared a cell-like room with the family's 5-year-old girl; two other girls, 7 and 13, shared another room. He said they had to clean their rooms and the communal shower. "I cleaned for me and my mom because she is pregnant and her back hurt," he said.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials who traveled from Washington to lead the tour with company staff members showed off one of the 11 dormitory areas, or pods, lined by bare pastel-tinted detainee rooms, each with a metal bunk bed, a sink and a toilet.

The rooms are not locked at night, but a laser beam alerts guards if anyone leaves a room after bedtime -- 9 p.m. for children and 10 for adults. The detainees wear outfits of green and blue, which Danny Coronado, a spokesman for the corrections company, likened to scrubs but critics described as prison garb.

Officials say stays at the center are now averaging a little more than a month.

In the dining area, which has plastic tables with stools attached, Mr. Mead said, "All of our meals are planned by dietitians with calories of 3,200 a day, 3,500 for children."

Disputing claims by some lawyers that many detainees had lost weight there, Dr. Leroy T. Soto, the chief physician on duty, said a study had actually documented weight gains. There is a medical staff of 20.

Lawyers said detainees were rushed through meals in 15 or 20 minutes. Mr. Mead acknowledged "they can't linger," but said it was because of classes or other activities.

Showing off a classroom with computers, Jean Bellinger, assistant administrator for programs, said children were divided into three age groups comparable to elementary, middle and high school for four hours a day of instruction plus an hour of recreation and lunch. But she acknowledged that for several months a staff shortage limited class time to an hour a day.

U.S. Gives Tour of Family Detention Center That Critics Liken to a Prison

That was far too little, said Scott Medlock, a prison rights lawyer for the Texas Civil Rights Project, which has been negotiating with the government for longer school days.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: Gary Mead, an Immigration and Customs official, left, speaking yesterday at the T. Don Hutto Family Detention Center for illegal immigrants. Detainees, right, wear uniforms that officials compared to scrubs. (Photo by Charles Reed/Department of Homeland Security, via Associated Press)

(Pool photo by L.M. Otero)

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Letters to the editor

Lincoln Journal Star (Nebraska)

January 29, 2007 Monday

City Edition

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Dateline: Lincoln, NE

Body

SIMPLE PARTIES BETTER

I have been waiting for the article in the Jan. 22 Lincoln Journal Star regarding the movement to simplify children's birthday parties. My husband and I have been talking about this for years!

Having four children ages 6-15, there have been months where our children combined have been invited to five parties in a month - pretty hard on the budget since gifts have moved from \$5 to \$10-\$15! Since schools encourage inviting the whole classroom to not exclude anyone, many children are mere acquaintances to our kids. I have been relieved to be invited to the rare few who ask that donations to charity be accepted in lieu of gifts.

As far as the grand themes go, last year we attended a fifth birthday where the parents had rented a big bounce house. This was preceded by their trip to Disneyland. A few weeks later, the friend called to ask if we could loan them money until payday. My children have never been to Disneyland or had a bounce house. We didn't loan the money.

Our children have rarely had "kid" parties - probably a handful between them. We prefer to have family parties, and invite a few close friends over for a slumber party. I am happy to report our children do not feel deprived.

Why are parents pressured to make each year bigger and better? Every "big" party we've attended has made the birthday child crabby and whiny and the parents flustered and irritated. Wouldn't it be great if the trend for simple parties started now?

Liz Hopkins, Lincoln

ABOUT MONEY, NOT CARE

Danelle Brown of Seward (LJS, Jan. 22) is just one of many victims of insurance health care management. It's not just Blue Cross/Blue Shield, it's Midland, Medicare, Medicaid, or any other health care insurance.

It's not about the care, it's about the almighty dollar. They tell you it's not, but take some time and drive by an office of BC/BS or any other insurance company office. They have state-of-the-art buildings, nicest yards, drive the nicest business cars. Makes you wonder how they get by, huh?

Letters to the editor

I've been in the same boat as Danelle Brown, and it is very stressful, and then have your illness on top of it all. It's a game where the patient loses always.

Do we need to see change? Yes, so people don't have to suffer.

By the way, if you don't pay premiums they can cut off insurance, but the insured don't have that right, do we?

Lee Carr, Wymore

ALWAYS DEFENDING ISRAEL

Albert Weiss' response (letter, Jan. 19) to Sitaram Jaswal's comments on the Israel/Palestinian conflict (letter, Jan. 5) seems to be his stock response to any criticism of Israel about that conflict. In his letter to the Lincoln Journal Star of July 13, 2003 (about 31/2 years ago), Weiss responded to Ruth Thone's criticism of Israel as follows: "If the Arabs of the British Mandate of Palestine had accepted partition in 1947 â? they already would have marked the 55th anniversary of a Palestinian state."

Now, in his current letter, although he does not express such certainty about the anniversary of a Palestinian state, he uses the same idea to suggest a happy outcome when he writes, "Had the Palestinians accepted this partition plan and live in peace, rather than go to war in 1948, one can only imagine how different this region would be today." And as I did when I then responded (letter, July 20, 2003), I ask again, "But how can he be any more certain of such a positive outcome than what might have happened had the British 'white paper' in May 1939, proposing an independent binational state in Palestine, been accepted by the Jews and Arabs?"

Weiss' continued simple expression of blame on the Palestinians, only, is grossly unfair, and I suspect he knows it. The history of the present Israeli/Palestinian conflict is severely complicated by events that occurred long before 1948, by events that occurred in Europe over a span of hundreds of years culminating in the horrors of the Holocaust and by promises and decisions made during and after World Wars I and II, events that accrued to the detriment of both Jews and Palestinians.

Equally or more troublesome is Weiss' subtle attempt at character assassination by writing that Sitaram Jaswal "hides the true intent of his message," suggesting that he has a hidden agenda, and then by linking Jaswal's position to "Hamas, Hezbollah or Iran," politically loaded language designed to mislead the reader into finding Jaswal guilty by association of ideas rather than considering the merit of his ideas, precisely what Weiss avoided completely in his response to Jaswal. Nothing in any of Jaswal's stated past positions has ever evidenced any agenda other than a desire for peace, justice, and fairness. I wish I could feel as confident about Weiss' agenda.

Eli Zietz, Lincoln

MAKE NEBRASKA A PLAYER

Here's an issue that Democrats and Republicans can agree on: an early presidential primary.

Currently, the Nebraska presidential primary coincides with the state primary, which is always held on the second Tuesday of May during every even year.

During the presidential election year, almost half the states (24 in 2004) hold their presidential primaries on the second Tuesday in March or up to two months earlier. If you include caucuses, it's around 30.

With nearly two-thirds of the states itching to choose their party's favorite candidates during the first three months of a presidential election year, the likelihood is quite high that by the time the current presidential primary occurs in Nebraska, the mystery is over. Everything is "cut and dried."

I conclude by saying: Let's put the presidential primary on or before the second Tuesday of March every fourth year.

Letters to the editor

Merlin L.Marlowe, Wilber

AN INSIGHTFUL COINCIDENCE

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Lincoln Journal Star for the story written by Colleen Kenney titled "Objects of Desire & Denigration" on Sunday, Jan. 14.

I found the story well written and especially poignant. The importance and challenges of choices and expectations were very well presented.

Also well presented and part of the same theme of "expectations and choices" was the article by Jonathan Peterson of the Los Angeles Times, "Women worry about price tag of retirement."

I am assuming the printing of the stories on the same day was an unplanned coincidence. I found the coincidence insightful. They worked well together.

Travis A. Wagner, Lincoln

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End of Document

Another Perspective, or Jihad TV?

The New York Times

January 17, 2007 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 1; Editorial Desk; Pg. 19

Length: 1125 words

Byline: By Judea Pearl

Judea Pearl is a professor of computer science at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Dateline: LOS ANGELES

Body

IN late 2001, three months before my son, the Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, was kidnapped, he interviewed the influential Qatari cleric Sheik Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and asked him about suicide bombings against Israeli civilians. The sheik replied with a novel twist of logic. "Israeli society in general is armed," he said, implying that Israeli civilians -- including women and children, doctors and journalists -- are legitimate targets.

At the time, it was still surprising to see an authoritative Muslim cleric give religious license to the ideology of terror -- granting the faithful permission to elevate their own grievances above the norms of civilized society.

Daniel would fall victim to that same ideology when he was abducted and murdered in Pakistan. After his death, I discovered that Sheik Qaradawi is the host of a weekly program on the Qatar-based TV news network Al Jazeera called "Sharia and Life." He uses this forum to preach his new morality to millions of Arabic-speaking viewers, including Hamas operatives, Al Qaeda recruits, schoolteachers and impressionable Muslim youths. "We have the 'children bomb,' and these human bombs must continue until liberation," he told his audience in 2002. Consistent with this logic and morality, Sheik Qaradawi later extended his Koranic blessing to suicide bombing against American civilians in Iraq.

A few in the Arab world have taken issue with his calls for violence. Al Ittihad, a newspaper in the United Arab Emirates, editorialized in 2004 that the beheading of two American hostages in Iraq happened "in direct response to Qaradawi's fatwa and incitement, which permits the killing of American civilians." Yet few, in the Middle East or the West, seem willing to condemn Al Jazeera's management for giving the cleric regular airtime.

None of this might seem to matter much to Americans except that for two months now Al Jazeera has been taking its mixture of news coverage and extremist propagandizing to our front door through an English-language station. Called Al Jazeera English, the network can be received via satellite or streamed over the Internet. It has bureaus in London and Washington, and has recruited such high-profile Western journalists as Sir David Frost as correspondents.

In part, this is promising. The Arabic version of Al Jazeera and its various spinoffs on satellite TV and the Internet are usually credited with having a positive influence on Arab society. True, Al Jazeera's coverage has placed an

Another Perspective, or Jihad TV?

emphasis on younger leaders, reformers and successful businessmen who may serve as role models for today's Arab youth. And it has brought -- as the press usually does -- a degree of inquisitiveness and openness that could become a useful engine of reform in the region.

Westerners have been quick to point out these benefits. A critic for The Times said that "though Al Jazeera English looks at news events through a non-Western prism, it also points to where East and West actually meet." Time magazine noted, "arguably nothing -- including the Bush administration's panoply of democratization programs -- has done more than Al Jazeera to open minds and challenge authority in the Middle East."

But what should concern Westerners is that the ideology of men like Sheik Qaradawi saturates many of the network's programs, and is gaining wider acceptance among Muslim youths in the West. In its "straight" news coverage on its Arabic TV broadcasts and Web sites, Al Jazeera's reports consistently amplify radical Islamist sentiments (although without endorsing violence explicitly).

For example, the phrase "war on terror" is invariably preceded by the contemptuous prefix "so-called." The words "terror" and "insurgency" are rarely uttered with a straight face, usually replaced with "resistance" or "struggle." The phrase "war in Iraq" is often replaced by "war on Iraq" or "war against Iraq." A suicide bombing is called a "commando attack" or, occasionally, a "paradise operation."

Al Jazeera's Web site can be less subtle. On Dec. 12, after religious leaders and heads of state all over the world condemned President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran for staging a Holocaust denial conference in Tehran, the headline on the site read, "Ahmadinejad Praised by Participants of the Holocaust Conference in Tehran, but Condemned by Zionists in Europe."

In short, Al Jazeera's editors choreograph a worldview in which an irreconcilable struggle rages between an evil-meaning Western oppressor and its helpless, righteous Arab victims. Most worrisome, perhaps, it often reports on supposed Western conspiracies behind most Arab hardships or failings, thus fueling the sense of helplessness, humiliation and anger among Muslim youths and helping turn them into potential recruits for terrorist organizations.

The question is, to what extent will this pathological worldview infiltrate Al Jazeera's English channel, which is still trying to find its voice? David Marash, a former "Nightline" correspondent who is the American anchor on Al Jazeera English, acknowledges such a possibility, but dismisses the responsibility of the network. "Undoubtedly, some Al Jazeera programs may have inspired some social misfits to undertake terrorism," he told The New York Sun. "The danger with information is that some people will take it the wrong way."

Still, with the growing number of social misfits in society, and the growing confusion between "information" and deception in the news media, the danger of fueling combustible anger in some viewers cannot be ignored, especially when pumped subliminally by well-respected Western anchors.

Let's face it: when a terrorist attack is described as a "martyrdom" in a thick Middle Eastern accent, it can be dismissed by Americans as a peculiarity of cultural differences. But imagine the effect of the word if spoken in David Frost's cultured British tones. This is why, even if Al Jazeera English waters down its alarmist content, it should still be seen as a potential threat: it will bestow respectability upon the practices of its parent network in Qatar, which continues, among other things, to broadcast Sheik Qaradawi's teachings.

I wouldn't call for banning Al Jazeera English in the United States even if that were possible. It is important to extend a hand to the network because it can become a force for good; but it is as important for our news organizations to scrutinize its content and let its viewers know when anti-Western wishes are subverting objective truth. As Al Jazeera on the whole feels the heat of world media attention, we can hope that it will learn to harness its popularity in the service of humanity, progress and moderation.

Another Perspective, or Jihad TV?

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The House That a Hope for Peace Built

The New York Times

December 2, 2006 Saturday

Late Edition - Final

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Length: 1086 words

Byline: By MAREK FUCHS

Body

Muslim and Jewish women, with an atheist, a Buddhist and an agnostic included for good measure, pored over their notebooks on a couch and on chairs in their shared college dormitory. Most nights they study together and then visit in one another's rooms to sort out the differences and seek commonalities in their religions and cultures.

The growing relationships between Jewish and Muslim students on the Douglass College campus of Rutgers University is the result of an idea of Danielle Josephs, a senior from Teaneck, N.J.

When she first arrived at Rutgers, Ms. Josephs recalled, she felt a high degree of tension between Jewish and Muslim or Arab students on the 35,000-student campus, which stretches across the Raritan River in New Brunswick and Piscataway, N.J. And when they were not shunning one another, Ms. Joseph found, the approximately 5,000 Jews and 4,500 Muslims and Arabs could turn contentious.

Ms. Josephs, whose father is an Iraqi Jew, grew up attending the mostly black public schools in Teaneck, in northern New Jersey. She said that experience led to the notion that if Jews and Muslims could just be put together and forced to interact, something -- and hopefully something good -- could come of it. Both groups had their own truths, she said, something close quarters tend to challenge.

"The goal was to get in each others' face a little bit and see if we could work together," Ms. Josephs said. She added, "The purpose was not to sit down and sing 'Kumbaya.' "

She pitched the idea to the college last academic year to have a house where Jews and Muslims could live together to quarrel and, with luck, to laugh and try to understand one another.

Much to her surprise, the Mid-East Coexistence House was quickly approved as a special dormitory in the Global Village program on the 3,000-student campus of Douglass College, the women's college in New Brunswick that is part of Rutgers. That led to a slightly more difficult challenge: getting students to live there.

Sara Elnakib, a senior who moved to New Jersey from Egypt when she was 3 and attended an Islamic high school, said that when she broached the idea of living in the house with her mother, she got resistance.

"It was my first dorm experience," Ms. Elnakib said, adding that she wanted to join the house to show others that although Muslim extremists get most of the attention, there are many moderates. "But she knows me, and she was afraid that I'd get in very heated discussions."

The House That a Hope for Peace Built

That was when her father, an imam in Paterson, N.J., encouraged her. "He has traveled around the world," Ms. Elnakib said, "and said that he always learned the most by just sitting around with a group of people drinking tea."

The Mid-East Coexistence House opened this academic year and houses 10 women on the first floor of a larger dormitory. Three of the students are not Jewish or Muslim or Arab, and Ms. Josephs said they were brought in by design; outside perspectives, she said, can help tame passions.

The first weeks of school there was much deference, the women said, with students circling one another and choosing their words carefully so as not to offend. But there was also training in the art of listening.

The women take a class together on conflict resolution in the Middle East, given in the house on Monday nights by Miranda Vata, a graduate assistant who grew up in the former Yugoslavia during its civil war in the 1990s.

Leila Halwani, an American-born Muslim sophomore in the house and one of several psychology majors, said that in the first class, the topic of the recent war in Lebanon came up and provoked an intense argument. The dispute continued as the students went back to their rooms. But, Ms. Halwani said, the women eventually decided that this was "what they do in the Middle East, why do it here?" She added, "How are you going to hate someone if you are going to live with them?"

Another resident, Samantha Shanni, the daughter of Jewish and Christian parents, shook her head at the heat of the discussions over whether Hamas used proper tactics in the hostilities between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and Ms. Elnakib recalled conversations with Ms. Josephs lasting until 2 a.m. on the appropriateness of suicide bombings.

Anything can get the discussions going -- the pope's comments about Islam, news from Iraq, even their nightly television rituals. "We've had some very serious discussions sitting together watching Anderson Cooper," Ms. Josephs said.

Ms. Halwani added: "It gets a little hectic. We're not walking around with peace signs saying, let's be jolly."

She said it was a good thing that there were so many psychology majors in the house. "The best way to communicate these issues is with a therapist in tow," she said.

But there are encouraging signs.

Ms. Elnakib said that like many in the house, she was surprised that in looking at the larger sweep of history, in part through the conflict resolution class, she discovered large blocks of time when Jews and Muslims had lived side by side in peace.

And there are small understandings.

Some of the Jewish women learned that the Muslim head scarf was not always a sign of oppression, but a choice. And some of the Muslim women were taken aback by the range of opinions held by Israelis on many issues, a fact that was unknown in some of their homelands. Several noticed how similar some of their family photos look.

Forced beyond their initial detachment by their shared circumstance (and bathroom), the women began to connect.

"There is no stomping out of the room," said Estee Atzbi, a Jewish sophomore born in the United States, speaking of how relationships have progressed, "just clenching a seat or sitting on the edge of it twitching."

What defines success when it comes to the house is an open question. The women have high goals of serving as an example for other students -- at Rutgers, across the nation and around the world. They also hope to help train women to take leadership roles to help solve the seemingly intractable problems of the Middle East.

The House That a Hope for Peace Built

Whether anything so large will come from their effort will not be known for a long time. But at the very least, inside the house, over serious issues, everyday TV-watching, a class about conflict and shared boyfriend worries, friendships have been forged. And complications are increasingly shrugged off, though not completely ignored.

"Sometimes," Ms. Josephs said, "we simply agree to disagree."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photo: Sara Elnakib, left, discussed an issue recently with Danielle Josephs, Nadia Sheikh and Leila Halwani. (Photo by Sylwia Kapuscinski for The New York Times)

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News Summary

The New York Times
December 7, 2006 Thursday
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Section: Section A; Column 3; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 2

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Body

INTERNATIONAL A3-25

Iraq Panel Rebukes Bush And Offers Different Tack

A bipartisan commission warned that "the situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating," and handed President Bush both a rebuke for his current strategy and a detailed blueprint for a fundamentally different approach, including the pullback of all American combat brigades over the next 15 months. A1

Reaction to the commission's recommendations varied among Iraqi politicians, who expressed appreciation, anger and ambivalence at sections of the report.

A25

Senate Confirms Gates, 95-2

The Senate voted overwhelmingly to confirm Robert M. Gates as defense secretary in a 95-to-2 vote. The decision came after a confirmation hearing and floor debate that unfolded in less than 48 hours, reflecting the bipartisan sentiment that a course change in Iraq is vital. A24

Israeli Official Discusses Iran

Israel's new minister for strategic affairs, Avigdor Lieberman, left, is a West Bank settler who has advocated killing the leaders of Hamas and reducing the number of Arabs who are Israeli citizens. Yet his portfolio is among the country's most sensitive -- developing Israel's strategy for dealing with Iran. A10

Captive Israelis Were Wounded

The two Israeli Army reservists whose capture in a cross-border raid set off Israel's war with Hezbollah last summer were seriously wounded in the attack, an Israeli military report was quoted as saying. The report was the first official word since the capture on July 12 on what may have happened to the reservists. A8

British Call Poisoning Murder

News Summary

Russian and British investigators jointly questioned at least one of two Russian businessmen who met the former K.G.B. agent Alexander V. Litvinenko on the day he became ill, officials said. In London, the police said they were treating the death as a case of murder. A3

U.S. Anti-Torture Law Invoked

The son of Charles G. Taylor, Liberia's former president, was charged with two counts of torture during interrogation of an opposition figure in Monrovia, according to a federal indictment brought in Miami. The case is the first to invoke the anti-torture law, which bans extreme interrogation methods. A5

THURSDAY STYLES G1-14

Art of the Online R.S.V.P.

Each month, more than 10 million invitations are sent through Evite.com, and a number of them encourage people to not only reply, but to also write a personal comment that can be viewed by everyone on the guest list. Such transparency has transformed the private act of declining an invitation into a public performance. G1

NATIONAL A26-37

Jewish Group to Allow Ordination of Gay Rabbis

The highest legal body in Conservative Judaism, the centrist movement in worldwide Jewry, voted to allow the ordination of openly gay rabbis and the celebration of same-sex commitment ceremonies. A26

Anti-Abortion Bill is Rejected

The House rejected a Republican-backed anti-abortion measure, a bill requiring medical personnel to inform women that a fetus could experience pain and offer the option of anesthesia for the fetus. A36

Louisiana Disputes FEMA Bill

Louisiana officials have gone to court to try to prevent the Federal Emergency Management Agency from collecting about \$60 million from the state, saying they are not responsible for the federal government's mistakes in handing out disaster aid to the wrong people. A34

Democrats Set to Press Bush

Leading Senate Democrats put the Bush administration on notice that they intend to press for a fuller accounting on a wide range of counter-terrorism programs, including wiretapping and data-mining operations and the interrogation and treatment of detainees. A37

Debate Over Cheney Pregnancy

Mary Cheney, the daughter of Vice President Dick Cheney, is expecting a baby with her partner of 15 years, Heather Poe, Mr. Cheney's office said, prompting new debate over the administration's opposition to gay marriage. A36

Missing Man Found Dead

A California man missing for 11 days in the snowy mountains of Oregon's Coast Range was found dead four days after he set out alone in the cold wilderness to seek help for his stranded family. A35

SCIENCE/HEALTH

News Summary

New Signs of Water On Mars

Pictures of Martian gullies taken several years apart strongly suggest that water still flows at least occasionally on the surface of the planet, scientists announced. A30

NEW YORK/REGION B1-10

Green Onions Identified As Source of E. Coli Cases

Government investigators began an intensive search to identify the source of contaminated green onions used at Taco Bell restaurants that have been linked to an E. coli outbreak. The outbreak continued to spread, with the total number of cases across in three Northeastern states swelling to 99. A1

9/11 Cleanup to Resume

The federal Environmental Protection Agency announced plans to start a final indoor cleanup of sites contaminated by dust from the collapsing World Trade Center more than five years ago. But critics said the plan was seriously flawed. B1

New Heights in Real Estate

Tishman Speyer Properties has agreed to sell the 41-story skyscraper at 666 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan for \$1.8 billion, the highest price ever paid for a single office building in the United States. B1

Neediest Cases B5

SPORTSTHURSDAY D1-7

Pettitte Plans to Play

Andy Pettitte has decided to play in 2007, his agent said. If Pettitte wants to stay home, he will continue to pitch for the Houston Astros. But if he wants the most money -- and a reunion with his former teammates -- he will return to the Yankees. D1

HOUSE & HOME F1-12

Computer-Guided Christmas

A growing number of Christmas decorators are using computerized displays of synchronized lighting and sound to produce a kind of musical extravaganza, pushing the ever-mounting stakes in the competitive sport of decking the halls. F1

OBITUARIES C15

David Bronstein

A Ukrainian-born grandmaster who played bold and intuitive chess and came within one draw of becoming world champion, he was 82. C15

BUSINESS DAY C1-14

Oil Royalty Payment Errors

News Summary

An investigation by the Interior Department's chief watchdog has found pervasive problems in the government's program for ensuring that companies pay the royalties they owe on billions of dollars of oil and gas pumped on federal land and in coastal waters. C1

Fannie Mae Lowers Earnings

Fannie Mae said that it would reduce its earnings by \$6.3 billion to correct several years worth of accounting problems in one of the nation's biggest financial scandals. C1

Business Digest C2

EDITORIAL A38-39

Editorials: Welcome political cover; cherry-picking campaign promises; at the end of the book; Lawrence Downes on fighting a war from Pearl Harbor.

Column: Bob Herbert.

Bridge E6

Crossword E6

TV Listings E11

Weather D8

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photo

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Readers Write

Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN)

September 23, 2007 Sunday

Metro Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4AA; Opinion Exchange

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Body

A SLAP AT MOVEON.ORG

And the Constitution

Last week's U.S. Senate condemnation of a political advertisement in a newspaper is a blatant effort to use the power of the federal government to stifle dissent. Whatever you think of the MoveOn.org ad, this vote should frighten you.

Last I checked, the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution forbids Congress from passing laws like this. Do we really want to become a country where the citizens are afraid to challenge the military? Where citizens are afraid to speak out at all?

I am especially ashamed of my Sen. Amy Klobuchar for supporting this bill.

Bob Treumann, St. Paul

POVERTY IN THE U.S.

Lewis isn't looking

It's not too difficult to find poverty in Minnesota, let alone the United States. Thank goodness there are organizations like the Heritage Foundation, cited by Jason Lewis ("Give us your poor - if you can find them," Sept. 16), to manipulate figures and tell us that starvation doesn't actually exist in our country. In fact, it's a relief to hear that most poor people can actually afford a VCR (I sold mine at a garage sale last summer for 25 cents).

Now that we have the real information about poverty in the United States I can sleep soundly, knowing the next time I drive by, I can just smile and wave at those people holding cardboard signs at every busy intersection in Minneapolis and St. Paul. But I'm wondering if there are outlets under the bridges where they can plug in their VCRs.

Aaron Blechert, Minneapolis

A white advantage

Readers Write

Notable in Jason Lewis' good news review on poverty is the absence of data on people of color. The historic advantages of whites, built in no small measure on the enslavement of blacks and the genocide of American Indians, are still visible in the form of gross disparities in our welfare, education, child protection, shelter and corrections systems.

If we are to have an accounting, let's at least be honest about it. For some segments of America, poverty is still ugly and real.

Greg Owen, Minneapolis

BEING GAY

In religious community

God bless Charlotte Sullivan. Her column of Sept. 16 ("An unavoidable truth") was one of the best written articles about coming out and being authentically gay I have ever read.

But it saddens me deeply to also read her statement, "Some churches make it clear that simply being a homosexual or daring to fall in love as a gay person is a horrid perversity. The option is to remove yourself from your religious community or to seek to destroy one of the most integral parts of yourself."

This couldn't be further from the truth, not in Minneapolis. Belonging to a religious community and being gay are not mutually exclusive.

For example, last year Plymouth Congregational Church in Minneapolis had on staff five ministers: a "G" (gay), an "L" (lesbian), a "B" (bisexual), a "T" (transsexual) and an "A" (ally). My sister was on the search committee back when we were wondering whether we could hire a female minister who was a lesbian when we already had a male minister who was gay. I said to her, "Hire the best one for the job." And she did. Doing so did not hurt our church. To this day Plymouth remains a vibrant, God-loving church of 1,600.

I could list over 20 churches in the Twin Cities that are happy to open their doors to GLBT people, just as they are. These lovely churches would accept every integral part of Sullivan because they are "doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God."

Beverly Gores, Minneapolis

Or 'doing' gay

It's arguably base for Charlotte Sullivan to assume that Larry Craig - and anyone experiencing a homosexual feeling - is "oriented" in an unchangeable direction. Consider that Craig chose to both marry a woman and to solicit homosexual activity in a public restroom. Though these two instances are monumentally different in extent, Craig could have chosen otherwise.

Anyone who has felt physical or emotional attraction to someone of the same gender can attest to the fact that he or she did not choose the feelings over heterosexual ones. But a matter of choice does exist. That is the most freeing thing to understand.

Benjamin Frank, Minneapolis

Spouses left behind

Charlotte Sullivan's description of the heartbreak caused when gay and lesbian folks are driven into marriage with members of the opposite sex was a moving statement about the devastation that occurs to entire families by the attitudes fostered by the "conservative cultural movement" and the religious right.

Readers Write

As the ex-spouse of a gay man, I watched as the grip of denial was gradually broken and he became aware that he could no longer "live a lie." His need to be honest threw me into despair, with the inference that 17 years of marriage had been a lie. It is far more complex; I know that now.

It's estimated that up to 2 million straight Americans are/have been in marriages to a gay or lesbian spouse. That's a lot of anguish caused by the fears of the homophobes among us. Straight Spouses needing to talk with someone who "has been there" can go to www.straightspouse.org.

Mary Austin, Duluth

Spouses in waiting

Kudos to Charlotte Sullivan for sticking up for her true self as a lesbian, and to a Sept. 17 letter writer for standing up for her gay son against Star Tribune columnist Katherine Kersten.

We, in case Kersten is interested, are an opposite-sex couple who exchanged vows in a lovely church ceremony. But just as we would not join a country club that excluded on the basis of race or religion, we won't be applying for a government marriage license until the institution is open to same-sex couples.

When that day arrives, the supposedly fragile tradition of male-female marriage will be bolstered by the participation of many who feel as we do.

Anne Hamre and Gerald Hopkins, Roseville

LETTER OF THE DAY

Terrorist has U.S. platform for propaganda

On Sept. 24, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will speak at the United Nations and Columbia University. Distinguished audiences will listen politely to a terrorist who supplies weapons and training to Hezbollah, Hamas and insurgents who kill civilians and U.S. soldiers in Iraq. They'll applaud a despot who is illegally pursuing nuclear weapons, has repeatedly called for Israel to be destroyed and denies that the Holocaust happened.

It's doubtful that in his remarks, Ahmadinejad will mention how he has initiated an intensive crackdown on human rights on his own people with more than 150,000 women and men arrested for violations of the compulsory Islamic dress code. Or even more ominous, that there have been dozens of "disappearances" of opposition figures, from journalists to students to labor union leaders; or that women are treated as second-class citizens.

Providing Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a platform to spout propaganda does nothing to promote peace and security in the Middle East. It only legitimizes his dangerous agenda.

Steve Hunegs, Minneapolis; executive director,

Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas

Graphic

PHOTO

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Readers Write

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Letters

South China Morning Post
August 29, 2007 Wednesday

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Body

Fact-finding trip is no junket for Legco members

I refer to Jake van der Kamp's Monitor column, "Legco junketeers make an exhibition of wasted funds" (August 22).

To do justice to the proper procedure followed strictly by the Legislative Council as well as to the members on the visit, I must set the record straight and correct his inaccuracies.

The purpose of our visit ("a 12-day overseas duty visit to Dubai, Europe and the United States") is to study in depth the development of cruise terminals and conference/exhibition facilities in internationally-recognised successful centres of such services. Study visits enable Legco members to have more in-depth discussions and deliberations on government policies in Legco relating to issues of public concern. This visit is no exception. We need first-hand information of and exposure to established successes of others in order that we can generate informed public debate before taking important decisions.

This visit proposal was fully discussed and endorsed by members of the two panels. Its schedule and budget proposals were scrutinised and passed by Legco's House Committee. No member questioned the purpose of this visit in any of the meetings.

In addition, this visit was not restricted to members of the two panels.

Participation was open to all Legco members.

It is indeed curious for van der Kamp to suggest that members' first-hand research efforts by conducting duty visits can be substituted by our simply looking it up on the web.

Can he not appreciate the need for direct dialogue with professionals and experts in order to gain in-depth knowledge through face-to-face discussions?

Is he indeed advocating that no one, whether it is Legco members or government officials, would need to conduct any duty visits so long as they have access to a computer?

Most people would agree that such a research method would be too superficial to benefit intelligent discussion. Legco duty visits have become a necessary part of our work. For instance, in 2005, the subcommittee on the West Kowloon Cultural District, chaired by Alan Leong Kah-kit, went to Bilbao, Spain, to study its museum operations. The list goes on.

Letters

Why would van der Kamp make unfounded accusations of members' seriousness of purpose on this particular visit?

Vincent Fang, leader, Legco joint-panel duty visit to study cruise terminals and convention and exhibition facilities

Pay-TV users get raw deal

I think Garmen Chan from i-Cable ("All the rugby will be televised", August 23) is missing the point.

While i-Cable may be televising the Rugby World Cup, Mr Chan seems to be ignoring the reasons why sports fans are increasingly angered by the people who run pay-TV services in Hong Kong.

ESPN/Star Sports broadcast the Six Nations rugby, most of the European internationals, most of the Sevens Circuit and the Heineken Cup, with the Tri-Nations being televised on another Now TV channel, Australia Network. The 2003 World Cup was also broadcast on ESPN/Star Sports if I remember correctly. Was it fair for rugby fans in Hong Kong to assume that either ESPN/Star Sports or another Now TV channel would broadcast the 2007 Rugby World Cup? Strangely, ESPN/Star Sports are broadcasting it in other Asian countries.

Secondly - and this is more of a general sports gripe - what does Mr Chan have to say about the division of major sporting events across two different pay-TV providers? To see all four tennis grand slams and all the golf majors, you have to subscribe to both Now TV and i-Cable.

Now we find out that a 12 plus month subscription to i-Cable is necessary, in order to watch the premier tournament of a sport that is primarily televised on Now TV.

With pay-TV services run by companies rolling about in cash, they don't need to rely on subscribers to fund the purchase of further broadcasting rights, and it is this sad fact that makes the consumer the ultimate loser.

Montgomery Pawson, Pok Fu Lam

No need for us all to rush home

Regarding the letters on the storm warning signal, the No 8 signal is just a reference for us.

Our response will vary depending on our circumstances.

If we are in the urban area, where the strength of the wind is minimised by tall buildings, we don't need to rush back home. We can go to the cinema, or relax in a coffee shop.

If we do not need to, it is foolish to try and squeeze on to buses and trains, to get home quickly. People whose homes are in the countryside, should stay in the urban areas, or find a shelter.

Shannon Lee, Tsing Yi

Muslims must embrace peace

I refer to Pauline Bunce's letter ("Many Muslims preach peace", August 21).

In answer to her first question, I have been fortunate, "as a male" to travel extensively within Islamic society and I have been treated with nothing but respect and hospitality. Secondly my letter was not about comparing the tragic history of religious conflict throughout history.

I said there would be no peace until all the people of Islam demand it. It seems that when it comes to the crunch, it is the voice of radicals who control the actions of the masses. When we see the peaceful leaders of Islam, walking up to and disarming the gunmen of Hamas or Hezbollah and mothers leading their children away from martyrdom, we might see a beginning to the end of sectarian violence in the Islamic world. Only then, will we see peace and prosperity in the Islamic world. This can only happen when the people of Islam take action themselves.

Letters

Finally, some day women in Islamic society may be allowed to be more than just second class people ferreted away, simply for being the wrong gender.

Stephen Anderson, Wan Chai

Simple solution

May Wong's response ("Travellers have plenty of choice", August 22) to my concern about the MTR Corporation's inconsistent discounting policy ("Octopus and MTR must end price anomaly", August 16), tries to misdirect readers into believing that the MTRC provides users with a wonderful plethora of choices.

If passengers truly have plenty of choice then why not allow Octopus users on the Airport Express the 10 per cent discount given to non-Octopus users? This is only fair, if the Octopus card holders choose not to use the little-known free rides on other MTR lines, that non-Octopus users are denied. This can be easily programmed into the system, along with many other discount schemes that are little-advertised by the MTRC.

What Ms Wong is saying is that the MTRC and Octopus control what the public should pay, and will do pretty much anything to keep things the way they are.

Will Lai, Western

Club says sorry

Following my letter regarding my disappointment at not being able to visit the Hong Kong Football Club, while on holiday in the city ("Disappointed by club's snub, August 10), I received a phone call from the club's honorary secretary, extending his and the club's apology for this incident which I accepted in the spirit that it was given.

I was further assured that should I visit Hong Kong in the future I would be more than welcome at the club's premises.

John Taylor, Runaway Bay, Queensland, Australia

Load-Date: August 29, 2007

Ivory tower chutzpah

University Wire

August 28, 2007 Tuesday

Copyright 2007 Cornell Daily Sun via U-Wire

Section: COLUMN

Length: 1204 words

Byline: By Ben Birnbaum, Cornell Daily Sun; **SOURCE:** Cornell U.

Dateline: ITHACA, N.Y.

Body

Here's a thought experiment. Try it on some friends today, preferably your less intelligent ones. Inform them that of the 6.6 billion people in the world, there are 2.1 billion Christians, 1.3 billion Muslims, 900 million Hindus and 350 million Buddhists. Then ask them to guesstimate the number of Jews.

The answers I get (from Cornell students) usually range from 100 to 500 million, sometimes higher. The real number, of course, is orders of magnitude lower - somewhere in the neighborhood of 13 million, or .2 percent of the world's population - though even I sometimes have trouble believing it.

That people overshoot the mark on this one is understandable. Jews have always been disproportionately visible in the world (winning at least 1/5 of Nobel Prizes, for example), and thus many fall prey to the illusion that Jews are more numerous and powerful than in reality. In America, home to the largest Jewish population outside Israel, the illusion is particularly acute. Among American academics, who find themselves surrounded by Jewish colleagues, it's unavoidable.

Consider the new book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, by Harvard's Stephen Walt and UChicago's John Mearsheimer (W&M), based on an article of the same name that the duo published last year in the *London Review of Books*. The book and the original article, which better resembles a college term paper, allege a loose cabal of Zionist organizations and individuals that has somehow managed to hijack American foreign policy to Israel's exclusive benefit (and America's sole detriment) for four decades without anybody noticing (except, of course, the perceptive authors).

W&M's chain of reasoning goes something as follows: Surely nobody but the most ardent Zionist is convinced by the bogus moral and strategic arguments for America to support Israel; thus, most professed supporters of the Jewish state must be either willing or unwilling dupes of the Israel lobby - how else to explain American backing of this racist colonialist apartheid Nazi state? (If you, dear reader, aren't Jewish and yet support Israel, W&M are talking about you. You fool.)

As always, there's a grain of truth in every lie, and this one is no different. Jews are active and successful players in the realm of American politics (as they are in pretty much every realm but sports). And Jews in America tend to pay special attention to Israel - just as blacks do to racism, Latinos to immigration, women to abortion, senior citizens to social security and gays to same-sex marriage. (The only difference, according to polls, is that Jewish Americans seem to care less about "their" issue than the other groups do about theirs.)

Ivory tower chutzpah

Each of these demographics (or at least the majority thereof) leverages whatever resources it has, be that in money or votes, to steer American policy in its direction. For many women, it means lobbying their senators to vote against bills (and Supreme Court justices) that threaten a woman's right to choose; for many Latinos, it means showing up at rallies calling for the legalization of undocumented workers from Latin America; for many blacks, it means voting for candidates who support affirmative action. And for many Jews, it means doing all of the above to preserve and strengthen America's relationship with the Jewish state. Nothing remarkable about any of it -- just democracy at work.

Nobody writes academic papers and hardcover books about the "black lobby" or the "gay lobby" and expects to be taken seriously. But W&M consider the Jewish lobby alone worthy of such scrutiny. Their prime target: The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

AIPAC, for the uninitiated, is the primary pro-Israel organization in America. In terms of political muscle, it's in the same league as the AARP, the NRA and the AFL-CIO. But it's not somehow unique among those and other interest groups, as W&M insinuate. While its policy objectives are different from the AARP's or the NRA's, its tactics are not. Read the following paragraph from W&M's paper and, for fun, mentally substitute "Planned Parenthood" for "AIPAC" and "choice" for "Israel."

Cue ominous music:

"AIPAC's success is due to its ability to reward legislators and congressional candidates who support its agenda and to punish those who challenge it. Money is critical to U.S. elections (as the recent scandal over lobbyist Jack Abramoff's various shady dealings reminds us), and AIPAC makes sure that its friends get financial support from the myriad pro-Israel political action committees. Those seen as hostile to Israel, on the other hand, can be sure that AIPAC will direct campaign contributions to their political opponents. AIPAC also organizes letter-writing campaigns and encourages newspaper editors to endorse pro-Israel candidates."

Groundbreaking scholarship, indeed. What's more noteworthy: the fact that AIPAC organizes letter-writing campaigns, encourages newspaper editors to endorse pro-Israel candidates and directs money to opponents of those hostile to Israel, or the fact that W&M actually find this noteworthy?

Alan Dershowitz said it best in *The Case for Israel*:

"A good working definition of anti-Semitism is taking a trait or an action that is widespread and blaming only the Jews for it. That is what Hitler and Stalin did, and that is what former Harvard University president A. Lawrence Lowell did in the 1920s when he tried to limit the number of Jews admitted to Harvard because 'Jews cheat.' When a distinguished alumnus objected on the grounds that non-Jews also cheat, Lowell replied, 'You're changing the subject. I'm talking about Jews.'"

W&M aren't just talking about Jews, to be sure. The lobby, they note, includes many Christian evangelicals and other non-Jewish supporters of Israel. They also implicate a vast network of supposedly pro-Israel accomplices, such as the Brookings Institution and The New York Times (to the editorial board's surprise, I'm sure).

And W&M are also correct that the overwhelming majority of elected officials across America (save Berkeley, Dearborn and Ithaca) would identify themselves at some level as pro-Israel. That is, they support Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and to defend itself from terrorist organizations (i.e. Hamas, Hezbollah) and rogue nations (i.e. Iran, Syria). Some may disagree with this or that Israeli policy, but still believe at the end of the day that for America to ally itself with the only democracy in the Middle East is in line with both its interests and values.

One need not imagine the invisible hand of some nefarious lobby to account for that. Most congressmen are pro-Israel because most Americans are pro-Israel. According to a recent Gallup poll, 63 percent of Americans view Israel favorably, making the country more popular than Barack Obama, Rudy Giuliani or any other American politician. And that support cuts across party lines.

No conspiracy here. Just democracy.

Ivory tower chutzpah

And in this democracy, W&M are free to publish whatever they please, no matter how vile or unfounded. Such is their prerogative under the first amendment, as they're apt to remind us. It takes real chutzpah to begrudge others for exercising the same rights.

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Load-Date: August 28, 2007

End of Document

5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

July 24, 2007 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. B12

Length: 1135 words

Byline: Compiled by Frankie Thornhill, Calgary Herald

Body

Commuter Weather

6 A.M. Off to Work: Mainly sunny.

Temperature: 13 C

12Noon Lunch: Sunny.

Temperature: 20 C

5P.M. Heading Home: Sunny.

Temperature: 21 C

Overnight: Mainly clear. Low: 12 C

Wednesday: Sunny.

High: 24 C Low: 11 C

Monday: High: 29.6 C Low: 13.5 C

- - -

Traffic

- Lane closure: Northbound Elbow Drive between 67th and 69th avenues S.W. The right lane is closed until Aug. 6.
- Road closure: Eastbound Airport Trail east of 19th Street N.E. The road is closed in the eastbound direction until Aug. 7.
- Road closure: Local Traffic only on 12th Street between Memorial Drive and 8th Avenue S.E. until Sept. 30.
- Lane closure: Nose Hill Drive between Crowchild Trail and Scenic Acres Boulevard N.W. The right lane is closed southbound; the left lane is closed northbound until July 31.

- - -

Top Stories

Family of Calgarian Killed by Bear Seeks Answers

The family of a Calgary woman likely killed by a black bear at Panorama Mountain Village is questioning why the hill was allowed to remain open despite reports of an aggressive bear in the area.

Page A1

Molester Pleads Guilty

A tale of depravity was revealed Monday in a packed Regina courtroom as notorious child molester Peter Robert Whitmore accepted a controversial plea bargain that could see him parolled in as few as six years.

Page A1

West Nile Arrives

West Nile has arrived in Calgary after mosquitoes in the city's southeast tested positive for the virus. Heat, humidity and rain have provided the ideal environment for the mosquito that carries the virus.

Page B7

- - -

News Sections -- A and B

City & Region

EMS Gives Strike Notice

The Stelmach cabinet will be asked today to intervene in the escalating labour dispute between the city and its paramedics, after Calgary EMS staff issued strike notice Monday.

Page B1

King Pulls Motion for Mustard Seed Proposal

Ald. Madeleine King has pulled a contentious motion that asked the Mustard Seed to consider building its proposed affordable housing complex as smaller buildings in several locations, rather than a planned 28-storey tower. Construction is to start in the spring.

Page B2

Canada

\$8M In Aid Restored to Palestinian Government

The federal government has restored \$8 million in aid to the Palestinian government, more than a year after it cut funding following the surprise victory of **Hamas** in parliamentary elections.

Page A5

World

Taliban Give Hostages 24 Hours to Live

The Taliban on Monday gave 23 Korean hostages another 24 hours to live to allow the South Korean government to open direct talks with the kidnappers, a Taliban spokesman said on Monday.

Page A9

Clinton In First YouTube Debate

Democratic White House hopeful Hillary Clinton Monday faced Barack Obama, John Edwards and her other challengers in a unique campaign debate in South Carolina sponsored by video-sharing website YouTube and CNN.

Page A8

Increased Rainfall Linked to Human Activity

A Canadian-led study has drawn a clear link between human activity since the early 20th century and increased rainfall across much of the Northern Hemisphere, a finding that appears to confirm a key argument about human-induced global climate change.

Page A10

Editorial -- A12

Optimistic Afghanistan Exit Prediction Premature

NATO is a coalition. That means all members are expected to pull their weight equally on overseas missions. It would be unjust for the other countries -- after Canada has done the bulk of the front-line work and suffered casualties while doing it -- to refuse to take the reins.

Page A12

Letter Of the Day

"Shouldn't it be common sense not to drive with something on your lap that is impeding your driving skills, obstructing your view and distracting you?"

Jodie Cadman, Page A13

- - -

Calgary Business -- D1

Markets

- TSX Composite 42.89 14582.87
- Dow Jones 149.33 13851.08
- Nasdaq 32.44 2687.6
- TSX Venture 6.87 3325.86

Workers' Strike May Bring Fort Mac Oilsands to Halt

Five oilsands construction unions have voted to strike in a move that could halt work at oilsands projects in Fort McMurray as early as next week. The results of the July 4 votes -- the first in almost three decades -- were presented to the Alberta Labour Relations board on Monday.

Page D1

Pipeline Settlement Nears

Under an agreement announced Monday, the Dene Tha' will drop court action against the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline, in exchange for the \$25 million from Ottawa to help address socio-economic impacts of the pipeline. The agreement will also set out a timeframe for the review of the aboriginal band's land claim.

Page D4

- - -

Sports -- F1

Iginla in on Bid to Buy Blazers

Calgary Flames captain Jarome Iginla has joined fellow Kamloops Blazers alumni Shane Doan, Mark Recchi and Darryl Sydor in an attempt to purchase the Western Hockey League junior club.

Page F1

Crowds Not Nice at Games

As 2004 Olympic silver medallist and 2006 world champion diver Alexandre Despatie prepared for the Pan American Games diving competition at the rock 'n' roll, outdoor Maria Lenk Aquatic Park, he talked about the prospect of performing in front of a hostile crowd.

Page F6

- - -

Real Life -- E1

Fashion Gets Serious

"Stealth wealth" is Holt Renfrew fashion director Barbara Atkin's way of describing a new attitude to luxury. It means no flash, no bling, no logos, no ostentatious displays. Instead, it's all about luscious fabrics and exquisite tailoring as interpreted by expensive but relatively unknown labels such as Akris, Malo and Loro Piana.

Page E1

Abs Diet Targets Women

Complete with real-life success stories, menus, recipes and exercise instructions, David Zinczenko's book, The Abs Diet for Women, promises you'll lose up to 20 pounds of fat and gain several pounds of lean muscle after six weeks on the plan.

Page E3

- - -

Entertainment -- C1

Celebrating Rock T-Shirts

Rock T-shirts are as much about fashion as fans showing allegiance. That's the message in The Art of the Band T-Shirt, by Amber Easby and Henry Oliver.

Page C1

Tonight's TV Picks:

- America's Got Talent: 9 p.m. on CTV (Ch. 3).

- House: 9 p.m. on Global (Ch. 7).

- - -

It's An Odd World

Fearing the Wrong Enemy

Brady Barr, a reptile specialist with the National Geographic TV channel, needed to get close enough to seven-metre crocodiles in Tanzania to attach data monitors to their tails. He decided to dress up as a croc and crawl over. With a crocodile suit, a prosthetic head, a metal cage and a smattering of hippopotamus dung to mask his scent, he applied the tags, with video to prove it. The scariest moment came not from crocodiles but when a hippo wandered by, attracted by the dung scent.

- - -

Quote of the Day

Climate scientists have clearly detected the human fingerprint on changing global precipitation patterns

Canadian researchers, who, for the first time, have drawn a clear link between human activity since the early 20th century and increased rainfall across much of the Northern Hemisphere. See story, Page A10.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Cheryl Ravelo, Reuters; Picture of the Day: Protesters burn an effigy of Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo during a rally near the venue of the president's state of the nation address in Quezon City, Manila, on Monday. ;

Colour Photo: Robin Kochorek ;

Colour Photo: Mosquito ;

Colour Photo: Picketing paramedic ;

Colour Photo: Hillary Clinton ;

Colour Photo: Jarome Iginla ;

Colour Photo: David Zinczenko ;

Colour Photo: T-shirt ;

Load-Date: July 24, 2007

Growing Talk of Jordanian Role in Palestinian Affairs - Correction Appended

The New York Times

July 10, 2007 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

Correction Appended

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 10

Length: 1126 words

Byline: By HASSAN M. FATTAH

Dateline: AMMAN, Jordan, July 6

Body

Inside a drab cellphone shop, set deep inside the sprawling Baqaa refugee camp on the outskirts of this city, Muhammad Khalil and his friends were as gloomy as the fluorescent lights that flickered on the ceiling.

"Everything has been ruined for us -- we've been fighting for 60 years and nothing is left," Mr. Khalil said, speaking of the Palestinian cause. Just weeks earlier, he might have been speaking enthusiastically to his friends here, in their usual hangout, about resistance, of fighting for his rights as a Palestinian and of one day returning to a Palestinian state.

Last Wednesday, however, he spoke of what he saw as a less satisfying goal for the Palestinians here and one that raises concerns for many other Jordanians: Palestinian union with Jordan.

"It would be better if Jordan ran things in Palestine, if King Abdullah could take control of the West Bank," Mr. Khalil said, as his friends nodded. "The issue would be over if Jordan just took control."

Even a few months ago, talk of some kind of Palestinian union with Jordan would have sounded quaint or even conspiratorial, 40 years after Jordan lost control of the West Bank in the 1967 war and nearly two decades after King Abdullah's father, King Hussein, formally ceded administrative control of the territory to the Palestinians.

But as the Palestinian territories have been engulfed in turmoil, with Gaza and the West Bank now divided economically and politically, as well as physically, talk of a less ambitious, but no less delicate, federation between Jordan and the West Bank has begun rippling through many Jordanian and Palestinian circles.

Some Palestinians who have begun speaking of the subject see Jordan as a last resort to bring about security and stability to the West Bank and to prevent it from falling under the control of the militant **Hamas** faction, as Gaza has. Israeli officials who have spoken of the idea also say Jordan could help peace efforts by taking over security conditions -- shorthand, many fear, for Jordan inheriting Israeli responsibility for security there. In any event, when Israel and the United States have spoken of a Palestinian state, they have talked of a demilitarized one, so some solution for Palestinian national security would be needed.

Growing Talk of Jordanian Role in Palestinian Affairs

Jordanian commentators also have begun warning that talk of a union could put an end to the Palestinian national project and put Jordan itself in peril.

"You have a scenario-building exercise going on; Jordan is dealing with complex politics and they are trying to see where they will land and where it will leave the country," said Oraib al-Rantawi, director of the Al Quds Center for Political Studies in Amman, speaking of the debate about federation. "Jordan has not yet decided on this issue, but it's clear the debate has begun."

The nature of any possible union has many iterations. Some see it as possible oversight of the Palestinian territories by Jordan while others see it as a partnership between two nations. But King Abdullah's position was clear.

In an interview with the daily newspaper Al Ghad on July 1, he sought to put to rest rumors of a possible change in policy on the matter. "I say clearly that the idea of confederation or federation, or what is called administrative responsibility, is a conspiracy against the Palestinian cause, and Jordan will not involve itself in it," he said. "The Jordanians refuse any settlement of the Palestinian issue at their expense."

Ayman Safadi, editor in chief of al Ghad, who interviewed the king, said: "He was extremely blunt in the interview. No discussion. It's a no-go."

Some analysts, however, said the king's response helped underscore the level of pressure Jordan may be facing.

"King Abdullah made himself clear on more than one occasion," said Musa Shtewi, professor of sociology at the University of Jordan. "But by having to do so, it means there's a lot of pressure being put on Jordan to do this."

King Hussein, Abdullah's father, lost the West Bank during the 1967 war and had long hoped to one day reunite both sides of the Jordan River, Professor Shtewi and other analysts said. In 1988, however, he formally disengaged from the territory in a major policy shift that made the Palestine Liberation Organization the sole body responsible for the administration of the Palestinian areas.

Jordanian and Palestinian academics have long talked of the possibility of a political and economic federation. But after Yasir Arafat signed the Oslo peace treaty with the Israelis in 1993, Jordan's official policy on federation became predicated on the formation of a Palestinian state.

The issue of union has become especially delicate among native Jordanians, who fear that it could further empower Jordan's large number of residents of Palestinian origin, estimated to be up to 60 percent of the population, at their political expense.

"This used to be an academic issue that never died away," said Professor Shtewi, speaking of confederation. "But now, it has become a political and even an existential issue too."

Rumors began circulating in May that Jordan might be rethinking its position, when Abdul-Salam al-Majali, a former prime minister, was the host of a meeting of Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian peace advocates in the Red Sea Port of Aqaba to discuss ways of reinvigorating peace efforts. Mr. Majali, in an interview, said the issue of union never came up.

But many Jordanian analysts and columnists reported that the meeting touched on the principles of establishing a confederation as a means to breaking the impasse in the peace efforts. Many analysts saw the meeting as a trial balloon intended to gauge the level of interest and resistance to such a move.

"They don't really want this, but they wanted to see what their options would be if it was forced on them," said Muhammad Abu Rumman, a columnist with Al Ghad, referring to the Jordanian government. "Most people will tell you that the confederation scenario is going to happen. The only question is when."

Palestinian activists, however, warn against taking Palestinian desire for stability as a serious change in their politics.

Growing Talk of Jordanian Role in Palestinian Affairs

"Some Palestinians may regard this as a kind of solution, a way out of the problem for them," said Talat Abu Othman, leader of the Jordanian chapter of the High Committee to Protect the Right of Return. "But these are temporary solutions and temporary solutions don't fix the problem. Without a right of return, without rights, you will solve nothing."

Mr. Khalil and his friends in the cellphone shop figure, however, that the wait is growing more difficult by the day. "Jordan wants peace for us," he said. "Jordan wants us to get our rights."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Correction

An article yesterday about the increasing possibility of a Jordanian role in Palestinian affairs referred incorrectly in some copies to the year that King Hussein of Jordan formally ceded administrative control of the West Bank to the Palestinians. It was 1988, not 1998.

Correction-Date: July 11, 2007

Graphic

Photos: Palestinian women walking past a graffiti-filled wall last week at the refugee camp in Jordan. One of the slogans says, "Palestine Till Death."

A shop owner in the Baqaa refugee camp outside of Amman, Jordan. Many Palestinians want Jordan to assume control of the West Bank. (Photographs by Tamara Abdul Hadi for The New York Times)

Load-Date: July 10, 2007

World Report

Windsor Star (Ontario)

March 26, 2007 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. B2; World Report

Length: 1212 words

Byline: Compiled from Star News Services

Body

RUSSIA

10 KILLED IN BLAZE AT MOSCOW STRIP CLUB

MOSCOW - A "fire show" at a Moscow strip club sparked an inferno that killed 10 people on Sunday, prompting prosecutors to open a new inquiry into Russia's latest fire disaster.

Two Bulgarian men were among the six men and four women who died, all apparently overcome by toxic fumes. Four people were also injured and more than 150 were evacuated from the 911 Club, officials said.

A nightly "fire show" at the club using ethanol went badly wrong, a 20-year-old barman at the club told rescue workers, according to a spokesman for the emergency situations ministry.

"A barman's clothing caught fire, after which the flame spread to a five-litre container with ethanol and then the stage caught fire," the spokesman, Yevgeny Bobylev, said on state television.

"The legality of this fire show is being checked," Bobylev said.

One woman witness said on NTV television: "Usually, there's a flame and it goes down. But the barman's hair caught fire after which the whole bar was in flames."

MIDEAST

RICE IN SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY TO REVIVE MIDEAST TALKS

RAMALLAH, West Bank - U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice shuttled between Palestinian and Israeli leaders on Sunday in a new diplomatic approach aimed at saving her troubled peace-making efforts.

Rice admitted her new tack for reviving Israeli-Palestinian negotiations would produce no "big bang" breakthroughs, and involved steering a more careful course because of complications created by the creation of a new Palestinian unity government.

This groups the secular Fatah movement of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, backed by Washington, and prime minister Ismail Haniya's Hamas, seen by the West as a terrorist group.

World Report

Arriving from a first round of talks with Arab allies in Egypt, Rice met Abbas at his West Bank headquarters in Ramallah and then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Jerusalem.

She is scheduled to meet Abbas again today during a quick visit to the Jordanian capital Amman, where she will also discuss her plans with King Abdullah II.

WOULD-BE CROC SMUGGLER NABBED BECAUSE SHE'S 'FAT'

JERUSALEM - European Union monitors at the Rafah border crossing caught a Palestinian woman trying to sneak into the Gaza Strip with three live crocodiles strapped to her stomach, a spokeswoman said on Sunday.

The young crocodiles, each about 40 centimetres long, were taped to the woman beneath a loose fitting robe, said Maria Telleria Chavarri, spokeswoman for the EU mission at the Rafah border crossing connecting Egypt and the Gaza Strip.

"The crossing monitors suspected her because she was so fat and they searched her, discovered the crocodiles and arrested her," Telleria Chavarri said. She said she intended to sell the crocodiles to Gaza City zoo.

5 U.S. SOLDIERS KILLED IN ROADSIDE BOMBINGS

BAGHDAD - With U.S. attack helicopters buzzing overhead, gunmen and Iraqi security forces clashed Sunday in a Sunni area in central Baghdad, and police said at least two people were killed in fighting in the neighbourhood's narrow streets and alleys. Roadside bombings, meanwhile, killed five U.S. soldiers, including four in a single strike in a volatile province northeast of the capital.

The fighting in Baghdad started about 1:30 p.m. when gunmen attacked Iraqi army positions in the Fadhil neighbourhood, on the east side of the Tigris River.

The U.S. military said it had no immediate reports about the fighting in Baghdad, but later Sunday announced that four Americans had been killed when a roadside bomb hit their patrol in Diyala province. A roadside bomb also killed a U.S. soldier and wounded two others during a route clearance mission in northwestern Baghdad.

NORTH AMERICA

JURY FINDS WOMAN GUILTY OF MURDER BY ANTIFREEZE

DALTON, Ga. - A former 911 operator was convicted Saturday of murdering her boyfriend by poisoning him with antifreeze.

Lynn Turner could face a death sentence in the 2001 killing of Randy Thompson, a Forsyth County firefighter and the father of her two children. The same jury that convicted her must decide whether to impose that sentence.

She is already serving a life sentence for the 1995 death of her husband, Glenn Turner, a Cobb County police officer. The murder charge in Thompson's death was filed after that 2004 conviction.

In closing arguments Friday, District Attorney Penny Penn said the motive in both cases was Turner's greed for the victims' life insurance money.

MOUSE TAUNTS MAN, MAKES OFF WITH DENTURES

WATERVILLE, Me. - There's a mouse in Bill Exner's house he said he has captured three times. Each time the mouse escaped and the last time the rodent made off with his lower dentures.

Exner, 68, said he and his wife Shirley scoured his bedroom after the dentures disappeared from his night stand.

"We moved the bed, moved the dressers and the night stand and tore the closet apart," he said.

World Report

"I said: 'I knew that little stinker stole my teeth' -- I just knew it."

They found a small opening in a wall where they suspected the mouse was coming and going and their daughter's fiancé, Eric Holt, stepped in to help.

"He brought a crowbar and hammer and he sawed off a section of wood and pulled up the moulding and everything," Exner said.

"It was quite a job."

They retrieved the dentures and Holt suggested his future father-in-law boil them in peroxide and whatever else he could find to disinfect them.

The mouse apparently isn't done. It frequently comes out and stares at Exner, his wife said.

"He's taunting him -- I swear he's taunting him," Shirley Exner said.

EUROPE

PRINCE HARRY REPORTEDLY IN NIGHTCLUB 'SCUFFLE'

LONDON - A spokesman for Britain's Prince Harry denied the young royal was once again involved in a drunken scuffle with a photographer outside a nightclub, following newspaper reports Sunday.

A red-faced Harry, third in line to the throne, was pictured stumbling to the ground and being helped to his feet outside an exclusive west London nightclub at 3 a.m. Saturday.

In another shot he is seen standing leaning forward with his arms outstretched, closely behind running photographer Nirach Tanner -- who claimed the army officer tried to assault him.

Clarence House, Harry's official residence, denied any suggestion that the 22-year-old was involved in a fracas.

"He was very drunk. I took a few shots of him and he just came for me," Tanner told News of the World, Britain's biggest-selling newspaper.

POWER-SHARING 'COULD STILL HAPPEN:' BRITAIN

BELFAST - Power-sharing in Northern Ireland could still happen today, despite the largest Protestant party's request for a six-week delay to a decision, Britain's Northern Ireland secretary said.

"I will be signing a restoration order today (Sunday) because there is a chance devolution will happen tomorrow (Monday)," Peter Hain said, as the clock ticked to a deadline for agreement to be reached.

"If I don't sign a restoration order, it (the Northern Ireland Assembly in Belfast) all shuts down immediately then a dissolution order is signed.

"I don't want to do that because the parties still have an opportunity to form an executive and an assembly as of now."

In a separate interview with Sky News television, Hain hailed the Protestant Democratic Unionists Party's (DUP) decision Saturday to agree to form an executive with their long-standing Catholic rivals, Sinn Féin.

Graphic

World Report

Photo: Prince Harry ;

Photo: Condoleezza Rice ;

Load-Date: March 26, 2007

End of Document

The Faces of Tariq Ramadan

The New York Times

April 1, 2007 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section 7; Column 1; Book Review Desk; Pg. 19

Length: 1184 words

Byline: By STEPHANIE GIRY

Stephanie Giry is a senior editor at Foreign Affairs.

Body

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE PROPHET

Lessons From the Life of Muhammad.

By Tariq Ramadan.

242 pp. Oxford University Press. \$23.

For some years now, the Swiss philosopher and Muslim intellectual Tariq Ramadan has been saying he wants to reconcile Islamic tradition with Western democracy, conservative religious values with liberal political ones. But not everyone finds him credible. And being the grandson of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, doesn't help. Skeptics say he is a radical in disguise -- a Janus-faced rhetorician who presents a moderate's face to Western audiences and a reactionary's to Muslim ones.

The government is taking no chances: it has twice denied him a visa to teach in the United States, ostensibly for giving about \$800 to a charity later blacklisted by the government because of suspected ties with Hamas. (Ramadan is now a fellow at Oxford.) Ian Buruma concluded a recent profile of him in The New York Times Magazine with this uncertain endorsement: "From what I understand of Ramadan's enterprise," the values he espouses "are neither secular, nor always liberal, but they are not part of a holy war against Western democracy either. His politics offer an alternative to violence, which, in the end, is reason enough to engage with him, critically, but without fear."

Ramadan, meanwhile, continues to defend himself and his project. In his new book, "In the Footsteps of the Prophet," a biography of Muhammad, he seeks to illustrate that Islam and Western democracy are inherently compatible by extracting lessons from the prophet's life. Returning to the roots of Islam, he believes, makes the parallels clear. Ramadan's Muhammad is a kind man and a wise leader. He is fair to his wives, openly affectionate with his daughters, generally good to women -- he lets them into the mosques. ("Gentleness" is one of Ramadan's favorite words.) Muhammad knows when to encourage patience and faith in his followers and when to indulge their craving for rest and sex. He consults before making decisions, and wages war only when necessary. He is tolerant of non-Muslims and fair to his enemies. His faith is unflappable, but he is also a critical thinker: he uses reason to

The Faces of Tariq Ramadan

translate the word of God into a practicable ethics. If Muhammad is the embodiment of Islam, Islam is a religion of moderation, common sense, resilience and love.

Some will challenge Ramadan's understated, if not euphemistic, treatment of the Muslims' conquest of the Arabian Peninsula and his claim that armed jihad is justified only in self-defense. But judging this avowedly interpretive biography by its historical accuracy or the quality of its Koranic interpretation is to miss the more relevant question: What does the book reveal about Ramadan's political philosophy?

Ramadan's vision of Islam comes down to just a few universal principles. Everything else -- the cultures of Muslim countries, the politics often pursued in Islam's name -- is historically contingent, and so up for negotiation. (Elsewhere, Ramadan has said, "Arabic is the language of Islam, but Arabic culture is not the culture of Islam.") For just this reason, Islam can be a complement to modern democracies. "Islam does not establish a closed universe of reference," Ramadan argues, "but rather relies on a set of universal principles that can coincide with the fundamentals and values of other beliefs and religious traditions."

In other words, "In the Footsteps of the Prophet" is a brief. But it is also an apologia for some of Ramadan's most controversial positions. In 2003, he was criticized for calling for a moratorium on the stoning of adulterers rather than condemning the practice outright. He replied that while he personally opposed the sentence -- and the death penalty in general -- advocating a sweeping ban might have alienated hard-liners in majority-Muslim countries and delayed reform there. This claim seemed feeble to his detractors, but it was probably less sinister than it sounded. As this book suggests, Ramadan's response wasn't a tacit endorsement of stoning so much as an expression of his view that each society must decide for itself how to put into practice the values of Islam.

Likewise, his portrayal of those values as universal may shed a different light on his alleged bigotry. He was called an anti-Semite after he wrote an article in 2003 chiding French-Jewish intellectuals like Alain Finkielkraut, Bernard-Henri Levy and Bernard Kouchner for reflexively backing the war in Iraq and Israel's foreign policy. He didn't help his case by including on his list the sociologist Pierre-Andre Taguieff, who isn't Jewish. Yet even prejudice, if that's what accounted for the slip, needn't have undermined his warning about the danger of sectarian politics. Ramadan was making the point about these writers as a prelude to discouraging Muslims from resorting to ethnic politics themselves -- even though, as Ramadan told me when I interviewed him in 2005, their greater numbers in France suggest it's a strategy that might serve them well. By invoking universalism -- a mantra of French republicanism -- as a higher good, Ramadan has tried to show that even as a practicing Muslim he can be a better citizen than his critics.

So why the controversy? To those who say his discourse is double talk, Ramadan responds that they practice "double hearing" (and sometimes it does seem as though they have a stake in his not being what he claims). More important, Ramadan's intentions -- whatever they are -- ultimately matter less than the arguments themselves. Taking him literally could be one way to get beyond his critics' accusations, as well as the paranoid legalism of the State Department. In fact, it could yield just the kind of accommodation that the secular establishment in France and the multiculturalists in the Netherlands are struggling to reach with their growing Muslim populations. Ramadan's universalist, apolitical view of Islam could actually facilitate the pragmatic resolution of social frictions.

Ramadan, who encourages modesty among Muslim women, opposed the 2004 French law banning head scarves in public schools, for instance. But he did so on classic libertarian grounds -- the right of Muslim girls to choose for themselves whether to cover up -- and has been advising girls forced to choose between attending class and wearing the veil to "go to school and learn." He has said of last year's controversy over cartoons lampooning Muhammad both that "Muslims have to understand that there is an old tradition in secular Western society to make fun of everything" and that "we should not forget wisdom and decency." Sensible arguments all, whatever plans are lurking in the recesses of the mind that produced them.

Muhammad may not have been as sober and sensible as Ramadan writes, but why take issue with this portrayal if it can help reconcile Islam with Western liberalism today? The project that Ramadan states is his own is worth pursuing even if, for some, Ramadan himself cannot be entrusted with it.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photo (Photo by Graham Morrison for The New York Times [2004])

Load-Date: April 1, 2007

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EGYPT AGAIN CRACKS DOWN ON ISLAMISTS; MUSLIM BRETHERN SAYS HUNDREDS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

February 18, 2007 Sunday

FIVE STAR EDITION

Copyright 2007 P.G. Publishing Co.

Section: WORLD; Pg. A-7

Length: 1227 words

Byline: MEGAN K. STACK AND NOHA EL HENNAWY, LOS ANGELES TIMES

Dateline: CAIRO, Egypt

Body

Egypt's regime is seizing upon a moment of regional chaos and U.S. inattention to crack down aggressively on the country's most popular opposition group and shore up its hold on power, analysts here say.

In a bald push against the Muslim Brethren, the secular government in recent weeks has arrested hundreds of activists, unveiled new restrictions on political Islam and published a stream of anti-Brethren propaganda in the state-run media. More than 80 members were jailed on Thursday alone, officials in the banned group said.

"This is the most brutal campaign against the Brothers since [Egyptian President Hosni] Mubarak came to power," said Amr Shobaki, a political analyst and Muslim Brethren expert at the Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo.

With the U.S. distracted by the war in Iraq and increasingly nervous about the regional rise of political Islam, Mr. Mubarak's regime appears free to squeeze the Brethren, which has long been officially outlawed -- though tolerated -- as an Islamist opposition force.

About 300 Brethren members have been imprisoned in recent arrests, including at least 100 senior activists. Some of the prisoners' assets were frozen by order of the government. Meanwhile, Egyptian officials and their media mouthpieces have accused the group of creating armed militias and receiving aid from Iran.

"The banned Muslim Brethren group is dangerous to Egypt's security," Mr. Mubarak told an Egyptian newspaper in a recent interview. If the group gets more powerful, "investments will stop and unemployment will increase. ... Egypt will be completely isolated from the rest of the world."

The leeway given the Brethren has shrunk since 2005, when the group stunned the country by capturing one-fifth of the parliamentary seats in national elections. Back then, U.S. officials said the invasion of Iraq would deliver democracy to the Arab world, and Egyptian officials portrayed the empowerment of the Brethren as a necessary step toward democratization.

"Democracy cannot progress in Egypt without deciding what to do with them," a ruling party official said at the time.

EGYPT AGAIN CRACKS DOWN ON ISLAMISTS MUSLIM BRETHREN SAYS HUNDREDS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED

But voting has empowered Islamists across the board: Hamas in the Palestinian territories, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iranian-backed Shiite parties in Iraq, in addition to the Muslim Brethren.

Formed in the 1920s to advocate Islam and oppose secular and Western influence, the Brethren has a history of battling Egypt's governments. With its vast network of social services, it is deeply popular among religious Egyptians who regard it as a non-corrupt answer to cronyism and decadence. But secular Egyptians fear its empowerment, and U.S. diplomats have a policy of shunning its leaders.

Mr. Mubarak has controlled Egypt for a quarter of a century, permitting virtually no dissent. As the one movement he hasn't been able to squelch, the Brethren is his nemesis. At the same time, it allows Mr. Mubarak and his inner circle to justify their repressive style of rule by claiming that the only other option is an Islamic state administered by the Brethren.

The elections played neatly into that argument. Many analysts here believe the Bush administration began to back away nervously from its democracy push when it saw Islamists winning at the polls across the Middle East.

Egypt's hand also has been strengthened by the instability in Iraq and the Palestinian territories, conflicts that have forced the United States to call on powerful Sunni allies in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan for diplomatic and political backing.

Nabil Abdel Fattah, an analyst at the Al Ahram Center, said the war in Iraq "has given more weight to the Egyptian foreign policy, which will give the government leeway in dealing with the Muslim Brethren."

"The regional and international atmospheres have become convenient," Fattah said. "Attacks against the group will continue in order to send strong messages."

A criminal court acquitted a handful of prominent Brethren detainees last month, but they were immediately locked back into prison while their cases were sent to military court.

In the most startling and incendiary charge, the Egyptian government has begun to accuse the Brethren of forming and training underground militias. In news stories short on details, officials say they have seized documents proving that the Brethren has secret cells dedicated to provoking civil disobedience.

The groups are quietly toiling toward a "sacred mission," Interior Minister Habib Adli told an Egyptian newspaper recently.

The accusations mark a serious departure from the status quo between the regime and the Brethren, considered the only opposition group with any serious street popularity.

The old understanding was simple: The Brethren was officially outlawed but treated with grudging tolerance. The Islamist group didn't try to overthrow the government, and in exchange, the regime looked the other way when the movement slipped its leaders into parliament by running them as "independents."

Lately, the mounting pressure seems to have pitched the group into crisis, forcing it to cast about for ways to cement its foothold in the government.

Brethren leaders have taken pains to tailor their words for an intellectual, even Westernized, audience. Their speeches are carefully moderate, scrupulously tolerant and reverent toward democracy.

Seeking to calm fears that it would morph into another Taliban if it gained power, the group has reached out to Egyptian Christians. Seeking to ease concern about women's rights, it fielded a female candidate in last year's elections. (She lost.) And in an improbable move, a Brethren leader recently told the Times that the Islamic head scarf was a choice for women, not an obligation.

But the group's quest for credibility has been badly undercut by a series of public relations disasters.

EGYPT AGAIN CRACKS DOWN ON ISLAMISTS MUSLIM BRETHERN SAYS HUNDREDS HAVE BEEN
ARRESTED

Brethren lawmakers raged in parliament after Culture Minister Farouk Hosni told a female reporter that the head scarf was a sign of "backwardness" and "regression."

They demanded that Mr. Hosni be replaced by someone who "respects the constitution and the Islamic Sharia," and they called unanimously for a no-confidence vote. Veiled women marched in protest; clerics issued a storm of condemnations.

Though the uproar eventually died down, it left feminists and secular-leaning Egyptians more leery than ever about the Brethren.

But the woes in parliament were nothing compared with the scandal that erupted at Al Azhar University, the storied seat of Sunni Muslim learning.

In December, young men from the Brethren's student group dressed in black and staged a military-style parade, complete with martial arts demonstrations, to protest restrictions on student political activities at Al Azhar. The action shocked a nation where public demonstrations have been banned since President Anwar Sadat was shot dead by soldiers in a 1981 military procession, and it fueled fear that the Brethren might have secret militias.

"This militia show defied the state and contradicted all the peaceful ideas the Muslim Brethren talks about," Mr. Fattah said.

Despite the tension, or perhaps in reaction to it, the Brethren has announced that members are drawing up a political platform for a party. Although the regime is unlikely to consider giving the group a license, the move is widely seen as an attempt to continue the Brethren's push into mainstream politics.

Load-Date: February 20, 2007

We're being robbed of our freedom to think and debate

Yukon News (Yukon)

February 2, 2007 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: INSIGHT; Pg. 9; Culture Watch

Length: 1145 words

Byline: Brian Brett, Special to Yukon News

Body

It's about time we talked about the invisible 900-pound gorilla in the room.

That's right, Israel, perhaps the most dangerous media subject on the planet.

Say one wrong word and you can instantly be called an anti-Semite -- as Jimmy Carter found out.

Jimmy Carter? An anti-Semite? The former president of the USA? Renowned Christian and social activist, orchestrator of the Camp David Accords, founder of uncountable charity projects? Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize?

His newest book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* has raised a firestorm of criticism, as can happen to North American public commentators with the temerity to criticize Israel's behaviour.

So far, I've not been able to find the opinion of a single Palestinian or Islamic reviewer in a major publication.

I'm sure there are a few out there, somewhere, but they're hard to find, and this is one of the difficulties about truth-speaking Jimmy Carter wants to call to our attention.

We should know this: after all, we live in Canada, where the largest media chain, CanWest, declared in 2000 that no editorial in its many newspapers can criticize Israel without the approval of the head office in Winnipeg.

To illustrate how tough it is to discuss the occupation of Palestine, consider Tony Judt, once a respected historian, until he made the mistake of agreeing with a *Times London Review of Books* article complaining about the treatment of advocates of Palestinian freedom.

When the Polish embassy in New York invited him to give a lecture, the embassy phones were soon ringing and the invitation was cancelled.

Another 'historian' who got the slam dunk was the infamous British Holocaust denier, David Irving.

He made the arrogant mistake of suing a renowned history professor for libel after she correctly pointed out he was a Holocaust denier.

His lawsuit was crushed, deservedly, in court, and he went bankrupt.

We're being robbed of our freedom to think and debate

But, five years later, while delivering a lecture in Austria, he was arrested and sentenced to three years in jail for Holocaust denial.

Interestingly, his professorial opponent, Deborah Lipstadt, said, "I am not happy when censorship wins, and I don't believe in winning battles via censorship.

"The way of fighting Holocaust deniers is with history and with truth."

Now there's a real historian, one who clearly understands the dangers of both lies and censorship.

Irving's jail sentence came down around the time European newspapers were publishing insulting cartoons about Islam and Mohammed in the name of free speech. Some free speech.

The main American source for the campaign against critics of Israel is Abe Foxman, the director of the Anti-Defamation League, with its fat \$50-million annual budget for "anti-bias education and diversity training."

It's notorious for searching for anti-Semites under every bed.

The league is only the most well-financed of many groups defending Israel's right to do as it pleases in the Mideast.

The New York Times just published an article about a recent essay by the director of the Institute for Jewish Culture, which bizarrely accuses anyone who criticizes Israel (including Jews) of promoting anti-Semitism.

Frankly, Israel has enough troubles without idiots like that promoting its cause.

Every day it faces the terror of suicide bombers in bakeries and cafeterias and on buses.

Heavily armed terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas call for Israel's extinction and another Holocaust.

The whacko president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, currently on a quest for nuclear power, claims "Israel must be wiped off the map."

This is harsh news indeed for the men, women, and children of Israel to wake up to in the morning.

Meanwhile occupied Palestine is being crushed by walls and settlements, the orchards cut down, 10 Palestinians killed for every Israeli, water diverted, homes leveled by bulldozers -- the people unable to bring in medical supplies without Israel's permission, parents facing dozens of clogged Israeli military checkpoints just to visit their children a few kilometres away.

The truth is, as always, there are no white hats and black hats. Both peoples are capable of committing atrocious crimes against each other.

What is needed is open and reasonable dialogue.

These days, we're not going to get that in the Arab nations whose media is full of inflammatory anti-Christian and anti-Semitic diatribes, fuelled by America's adventures in the region.

According to a recent UN survey the number of books translated into Arabic during the last 1,000 years barely equals the number of books translated into Spanish in a single year.

But because Israel is facing an implacable and ignorant foe doesn't mean its supporters should advocate an equally implacable ignorance.

The awful truth is that there's no shortage of critics of Islamic or Palestinian fanaticism in North America. Critiquing Israel's tactics is more difficult, as Michael Ignatieff discovered when he accurately pointed out that Israel committed war crimes in the attack on Qana in Lebanon.

We're being robbed of our freedom to think and debate

The meagre coverage of his later remark that Hezbollah also committed war crimes against Israelis mainly consisted of criticism that he was just trying to look fair. Nobody considered that he was trying to be fair.

This is what former-president Carter wants us to discuss, and he's got one hell of a debate on his hands.

I saw the CBC interview (it's on YouTube) in which he gave a reasonable, gracious explanation of his intentions and views, pointing out that he used the dreadful "apartheid word" only in referring to Palestine and not Israel, and that he thought that Israel had been lured into a no-win situation by its opponents and Zionist extremists (an alarming number of which are American settlers).

The awful truth is that Israel's confiscation and settling of Palestinian land defies both the Geneva Convention and UN Resolution 242.

He also quickly pointed out his book denounces Palestinian suicide bombers (and later apologized for one sentence about suicide bombers that unintentionally appears equivocal).

This reasoned interview was followed by a brutally acid critic who ignored his concerns and single mindedly accused him of being one sided.

The Jewish people have twice suffered a forced exodus, once by the Egyptians and once by the Romans.

Then they faced the Holocaust. It's small wonder the Israeli government and its supporters are twitchy, but they also have to understand that their peace can only be won with knowledge, understanding, and debate, not cluster bombs.

If people like Carter, probably the most decent man to stumble upon the American presidency in the 20th century, can be accused of promoting racism, then the debate will be lost, along with Israel.

Perhaps it would be wise for those so quick to sling accusations to consider the words of the Jewish astronomer, Carl Sagan: "We are only as strong as the courage of our questions and the depth of our answers."

Load-Date: February 3, 2007

5 Minute Herald: Breaking news at calgaryherald.com

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

January 29, 2007 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: CITY & REGION; Pg. B12

Length: 1116 words

Byline: Compiled by David Quigley, Calgary Herald

Body

Top Stories

Playing Fetch Almost Costs Pooch Its Life

A playful terrier called Samoa cheated death in an off-leash park after being skewered by a 45-centimetre long stick that narrowly missed killing the seven-year-old dog.

Page A1

Israel Caught in Vise of Regional Violence

Israel faced the possibility of civil war on both its southern and northern borders Sunday, with Fatah and **Hamas** gunmen and bombers hunting and killing each other in Gaza, and Sunnis and Shiites struggling to maintain a precarious peace in Lebanon after deadly riots erupted in Beirut last week.

Page A1

Foster Child's Death Spurs Government Review

Alberta's Children's Services minister ordered a special case review Sunday as police charged a 32-year-old woman with murdering a three-year-old foster boy in her care.

"This is absolutely a tragedy," said Janis Tarchuk.

Page A1

News Sections -- A and B

City & Region

Chinese Adoption Rules Leave Couple in Limbo

A Wetaskiwin couple say that after spending \$6,000, completing piles of paperwork and waiting 18 months, their hopes of adopting a baby from China are in limbo because of new rules about potential adoptive parents with missing limbs.

Page B1

Canada

Tories Facing New Pressures as Parliament Returns

Prime Minister Stephen Harper returns to Parliament this week determined to deliver a budget loaded with tax cuts and aware that his minority government will be lucky to survive more than six months.

Page A5

Grits Decry Tory Ads Attacking Dion

The Liberals say the Conservatives' attack ads against their leader show the Tories are running scared of Stephane Dion.

Page A5

World

Iraqi Troops Kill 250 Rebels

U.S.-backed Iraqi troops on Sunday attacked insurgents allegedly plotting to kill pilgrims at a major Shiite Muslim religious festival, and Iraqi officials estimated some 250 rebels died in the daylong battle near Najaf.

Page A8

Northern Ireland Moves Closer to Self-Rule

Northern Ireland's largest Catholic party, Sinn Fein, on Sunday agreed to support police in the British-run province in a historic vote overcoming the last major hurdle to the restoration of self-rule. "Today you have created the potential to change the political landscape on this island forever," said party president Gerry Adams.

Page A8

'Child-Bearing Machines' Remark Stirs Fury in Japan

Japan's health minister provoked outrage when he referred to women as "child-bearing machines" in a speech about the country's drastically declining birth rate.

Pages A9

Avalanche Forecast

Banff, Yoho and Kootenay

National Parks

- Alpine: Low

- Treeline: Low

- Below treeline: Low

Jasper National Park

- Alpine: Moderate
- Treeline: Low
- Below treeline: Moderate

South Rockies

- Alpine: Moderate
- Treeline: Moderate
- Below treeline: Moderate

Source: Canadian Avalanche Centre

Online Extras

News: Femme fatale in 1970s British scandal exposed in Canada.

News: Dion's comments on banned Grits raises ruckus.

Sports: Worsley's stout body belied skill that brought Canadiens four Cups.

Quote of the Day

We've got a lot of people who are born on third base and think they've hit a triple

Mike Huckabee, former governor of Arkansas, characterizing other 2008 presidential candidates from both parties as wealthy, well-known and convinced they have a right to the White House.

Calgary Business -- B5

Bumpy Ride Seen for Tsx

Investors are advised to stock up on stomach elixirs if they plan to ride what is likely to be the Toronto Stock Exchange roller-coaster over the next few months.

There will be 200-point gains for the key S&P/TSX composite index over the first half of the year, but they are likely to be followed by drops of similar magnitude.

After climbing about 240 points in the middle of the week and coming within inches of its record high of 13053 on Wednesday, the

index took a turn for the worse a day later, giving back 83 points. On Friday, the TSX was up again, rising 52 points.

Page B5

Calgary High-Tech Firm Going Global

Sustainable Energy Technologies Ltd., a Calgary firm with a world-leading technological edge, is chasing opportunities in the alternative energy field in Europe and the United States.

The company produces a device which takes direct current power from a variety of sources and converts it into high-quality alternating current power.

Page B5

Editorial -- A12

Black History Month

As Black History Month kicks off with a presentation tonight at the University of Calgary about black Americans' voyage to freedom in Canada, it is easy to see this history as something apart, as the property of one particular group. That would be wrong.

Page A12

Letter of the Day

"My adjacent neighbour's new development has six such noise generators: two central air conditioners, two high-efficiency furnace vents and two high-efficiency water heater vents."

Don Bruton, Page A13

Sports -- C1

Flames Fall in OT to Chicago

Denis Arkhipov and the Chicago Blackhawks needed regulation and overtime to finally end their long losing streak.

Arkhipov scored in the final seconds of regulation and in overtime as the Blackhawks edged the Calgary Flames, 4-3, ending their 10-game slide Sunday in Chicago.

Chicago was two losses away from a club-record 12-game losing streak to close the 1950-51 season. The Blackhawks also lost 10 in a row last season.

Page C1

Federer Wins 10th Major

Roger Federer is looking to play on for another five as he chases more Grand Slam glory following his 10th major tennis title in the Australian Open.

The world No. 1 crushed the spirit of Chile's Fernando Gonzalez in the final after fighting off two set points in the opening set before clinching his third Australian crown Sunday.

Page C1

Scoreboard

National Hockey League

Chicago 4 Calgary 3 (OT)

Anaheim 4 Dallas 1

Detroit 3 Colorado 1

Philadelphia 2 Atlanta 1

San Jose at Vancouver

Real Life -- D6

Ready-To-Wear Babies

More parents are shunning strollers in favour of strapping infants to their bellies or backs

Page D6

Entertainment -- D1

Making It on Youtube

To reach the pinnacle of YouTube celebrity, your video must generally rank among either the most viewed or most subscribed lists, which each include only 100 videos, arranged daily, weekly, monthly and by all-time.

The experts tell you how.

Page D1

Tonight's Tv Picks:

- Freaks: 7:30 p.m. on TCM (Ch. 42).

- American Experience: 10 p.m. on PBS (Ch. 14).

It's An Odd World

Seeing Is Believing

Don Karkos heroically regained sight in his right eye in November after 65 years.

A 1941 U.S. navy submarine explosion had knocked him out, and doctors had told him many times that he would never see with that eye again.

But Karkos, 82, a retired horse farmer who works as a security guard at New York's Monticello Raceway, was butted in the head by a horse named My Buddy Chemo in November and awoke the next day with sight regained.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Samoa;

Colour Photo: Stephen Harper; Colour

Photo: Gerry Adams;

Colour Photo: Sergei Grits, Associated Press; Picture of the Day: A man uses a cellphone while tobogganing at the Raubichi sports centre near Minsk, Belarus, on Sunday.; Colour

Photo: Roger Federer; Graphic: Sudoku: How to Play: Complete this grid by placing the digits 1 to 9 exactly once, and only once, in each horizontal row and in each column. Also, each digit should only appear once in every 3x3 shaded or white mini-grid in the puzzle. Sudoku appears on the 5 Minute Herald page Monday to Friday and on the Saturday and Sunday puzzle pages.

Load-Date: January 29, 2007

For Bush the year went from bad to worse Fear of mankind hit by a bird flu pandemic, surprisingly, became one of the few good news stories. Alex Spillius recalls the major events

The Daily Telegraph (LONDON)

December 27, 2006 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; International - Review of 2006; Pg. 17

Length: 1190 words

Byline: Alex Spillius

Body

IF YOU are the sort of person who likes the good news before the bad, here it is: we didn't all die of bird flu this year. A pandemic was supposed to strike mankind.

The H5N1 virus jumped from birds to humans across the world in alarming but small numbers. In January it reached Turkey, which is almost Europe, and probably will be in another 10 years if the EU has its way.

Health experts forecast that it was only a matter of time before the virus mutated within humans into something incredibly nasty. It didn't happen. We can still sneeze and be sneezed on without mortal fear. For now.

That is about it for good news - particularly for President George W Bush and Tony Blair, the most difficult year of their partnership. Enemies of Washington and London gained in confidence: Iraqi insurgents, the Taliban, Iran's theocratic regime, Hizbollah - all prospered as smoke drifted across the vision of a more democratic Middle East. At the start of the year, Iraq was not a failure, from a Washington perspective.

By the end Mr Bush had to admit America was not winning the war in Iraq where elections had been held on Dec 15, 2005. It was the last stage in a series of milestones - elections, constitutional debates and referendums - that completed the transition to independent government. That was achieved, albeit after months of political bickering, but the violence increased and became more sectarian in nature.

In February Sunni insurgents bombed the Golden Mosque in Samara, one of Shia Islam's holiest shrines. The Shia death squads retaliated against Sunni civilians. Baghdad, once a city where the two branches of Islam lived side by side in many areas, divided itself into faith-based neighbourhoods.

The killing became tragically repetitive. As of yesterday, 2,978 American soldiers had been killed, more than the number of deaths in the September 11 attacks. More than \$350 billion had been spent, and the White House wanted a further \$100 billion. As the American casualty figure passed 2,000, serious questions began to be asked about the wisdom of the war. Even the trial of Saddam, sentenced to death in November, did not seem to help win over public opinion.

Mid-term elections in November showed that the American public had been watching events in Iraq. It was a significant factor in a thumping defeat for Mr Bush's Republicans, which saw them lose control of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

For Bush the year went from bad to worse. Fear of mankind hit by a bird flu pandemic, surprisingly, became one of the few good news stories. Alex Spillius recall....

The other major influence on voters was a series of Republican corruption scandals. Just before polling it was revealed that a congressman, Mark Foley, had sent obscene internet messages to a young male intern. It didn't go down well in the "Bible belt". Nancy Pelosi, an old-fashioned Left-wing Democrat was nominated as the first **female** House Speaker and Donald Rumsfeld, the defence secretary, resigned on the day of defeat.

As the president sought to stick to his guns on Iraq, he was told to think more flexibly by the Iraq Study Group, a panel of veteran statesmen and political advisers who even proposed that Washington enlist the help of Iran and Syria in pacifying Iraq.

In southern Iraq the British handed over relatively insignificant areas to the Iraqis, but failed to master Basra entirely. Pledges by politicians to withdraw half of the 7,000 British troops this spring began to sound hollow.

The action for British forces was even hotter in southern Afghanistan, which witnessed a resurgence of the Taliban, removed from power five years ago for sheltering Osama bin Laden.

British, Canadian and Dutch troops became involved in what was described as Nato's hardest fighting since the Korean War. Other Nato members were not so keen on sending men to the frontline. Thirty five Britons lost their lives, while the Taliban and their al-Qa'eda allies set off more than 100 suicide bombs, a tactic rarely seen in the country before.

As their troops battled on two fronts, Mr Bush and Mr Blair were given painful lessons in the price of democracy in the Middle East: legitimised extremism. Overtly religious parties dominated polls in Iraq, while in the Palestinian territories **Hamas**, a political party-cum-terrorist group, scored a stunning electoral victory in January.

Coupled with the massive stroke that left Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon in a coma, it demolished rising hopes of stability in the heart of the Middle East after Israel's withdrawal from Gaza.

The territories were beset by violence for the rest of the year, as Israel sought to silence home-made rockets and armed Palestinian factions threatened a miniature civil war.

In June an Israeli corporal, Gilad Shalit, was kidnapped by armed Palestinians. Weeks later, two Israeli soldiers were kidnapped by members of Hizbollah in a daring raid across the Lebanese border.

The response ordered by the new prime minister Ehud Olmert was quick and heavy, but not decisive. Israeli troops invaded, while jets flattened Hizbollah's areas of support in Beirut and southern Lebanon. More than 50,000 fled on a flotilla of warships and ferries. Israel hit civilian areas of towns and villages in the south, claiming it was aiming for legitimate Hizbollah targets. It was forced, not for the first time, to deal with international outrage over "collateral damage". Iranian-supplied Hizbollah rockets maimed and killed Israelis too, but were far less effective.

At the end of the 34-day war, Hizbollah was able to promote itself as a defender of the nation, while the Shia militia's backers in Iran could take satisfaction at successfully flexed proxy muscles.

The Shia state continued to meddle in Iraq as well, and approached United Nations' demands to end uranium enrichment with near contempt.

Iran is set to become a civil nuclear power within months, while the atom bomb the West is convinced it is building is probably only a few years behind. In case we had forgotten, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reminded us repeatedly that Israel should not exist.

Another member of the axis of evil - remember that? - North Korea, lived up to its billing by testing a nuclear weapons device of some description deep inside a mountain. The UN prevaricated over sanctions, as it did with Iran.

For Bush the year went from bad to worse Fear of mankind hit by a bird flu pandemic, surprisingly, became one of the few good news stories. Alex Spillius recall....

In Europe, Ségolène Royal challenged the French to think again about politics. Quite what they were meant to think remains to be seen: the photogenic Socialist contender for next April's presidential vote is stunningly short on substance.

Bulgaria and Romania became the poorest countries yet to win membership of the European Union - they join on Monday - as member states rowed about Turkish accession.

Turkey meanwhile played host to the Pope in early December, not long after he had made a speech citing a Byzantine emperor who dismissed Islam as a source of evil. He rebuilt bridges, but with the spectre of Islamist terror continuing to hang over Europe, relations between the two faiths, and cultures, remained fraught.

As the year ends, Somalia is sliding into war with Ethiopia. Mogadishu is controlled by fundamentalist Islamist militia who have defeated CIA-backed secular groups. A new terror is emerging in the Horn of Africa.

Next year, we are due some better news.

Load-Date: December 27, 2006

News Summary

The New York Times
December 18, 2006 Monday
Late Edition - Final

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

Length: 1247 words

Body

INTERNATIONAL A3-12

American Recalls Torment As U.S. Detainee in Iraq

After passing information to the F.B.I. about suspicious activities at the Iraqi security firm where he worked, Donald Vance, a Navy veteran who went to Iraq as a security contractor, was detained by American forces for 97 days. His account of his ordeal has provided one of the few detailed views of the Pentagon's detention operations since the abuse scandals at Abu Ghraib. A1

Activism in Chinese City

When residents in Shenzhen, the richest and quickest growing city in China, learned of plans to build an expressway that would cut through the heart of their neighborhood, they immediately organized a campaign to fight City Hall, one of many examples of political activism among members of Shenzhen's growing middle class. A1

An Appeal to End Gaza Violence

The Palestinian Authority president, Mahmoud Abbas, and the acting speaker of the Palestinian parliament, Ahmed Baher of ***Hamas***, appealed separately to militants of all stripes to lay down their weapons after a day of rallies and violent clashes in the Gaza Strip. A3

Blair Makes Surprise Iraq Visit

Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain pledged his support for the Iraqi government in a surprise visit. Less than a mile from where he spoke, gunmen dressed in police commando uniforms walked into an office of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, an aid group, and seized 25 employees. A12

Nigeria Party Picks Candidate

Nigeria's governing party selected Umaru Yar'Adua, a 55-year-old, reclusive governor and former chemistry teacher to be its candidate in next year's presidential election. A12

Fatal Boat Wreck in Senegal

Two dozen people were rescued and dozens more were feared dead after an open-topped boat carrying people trying to reach the Canary Islands crashed in Senegal. It was the second boat carrying migrants to wash up there in the past week. A12

News Summary

Powell on Iraq Troop Increase

Colin L. Powell, the former secretary of state and former chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff, said that the army was "about broken" and that he saw nothing to justify an increase in troops in Iraq. A12

Cuba Squashes Health Rumors

Cuban officials told lawmakers from the United States House of Representatives visiting Havana that President Fidel Castro did not have a terminal illness, but one representative said that discussions with senior Cuban diplomats led him to believe that Mr. Castro would not return to running Cuba day to day. A6

NATIONAL A16-22; 26-27

Changes in Medicaid Plan To Ensure Drug Discounts

The Bush administration is expected to propose sweeping reductions in payments to pharmacies as a way to save money for Medicaid and to ensure that the low-income health program can get drug discounts similar to those provided to large customers in the private market. A16

Split in Episcopal Church

Two large and influential Episcopal parishes in Virginia voted overwhelmingly to leave the Episcopal Church and to affiliate with the Anglican archbishop of Nigeria, a conservative leader in a churchwide fight over homosexuality. A16

A Publisher's Firing

Rupert Murdoch personally ordered the dismissal of Judith Regan, the publisher who became embroiled in a controversy last month over an O. J. Simpson book she championed, after he heard reports that a heated conversation Ms. Regan had with a top company lawyer on Friday included anti-Semitic comments. A20

Mountain Climber's Body Found

The body of a climber lost on Oregon's Mount Hood was found in a snow cave near the summit, a week after rescuers began an intense search effort complicated by brutal storms. The identity of the man was not immediately released. The two other climbers in his party are still missing. A18

Clash Over Utah Wilderness

Access to the snow in the vast Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Utah is reigniting a years-old dispute between snowmobile riders and cross-country skiers over who should be allowed to play on a tiny, highly coveted part of Logan Canyon in the 1.2-million-acre forest. A22

Town Feuds With Grocery Chain

Residents of a community in Burbank, Calif., are in an unusual battle with the upscale supermarket chain Whole Foods over a proposed store that they say would disrupt the equestrian culture they enjoy. A16

SCIENCE/HEALTH

Mixed Reaction to Cancer News

Reaction to the news that breast cancer rates have sharply declined because women have stopped taking a popular hormone therapy for menopause, varied from fury to disbelief to a kind of complacency. Some women say they are glad they never took the drugs; others say they cannot do without them and accept the risk. A27

Some Brain Function Explained

News Summary

New recordings of electrical activity in the brain may explain a major part of its function, including how it consolidates daily memories, why it needs to dream, and how it constructs models of the world to guide behavior. A27

NEW YORK/REGION B1-6

Outdoor Boilers Creating More Than a Little Heat

Outdoor wood boilers, antiquated machines originally invented to heat farmhouses but now found in many American backyards, have spawned a rash of lawsuits and regulations because of complaints from neighbors about smoke, smell and pollution. A1

Concern Over a History Class

A high school student who says he felt uncomfortable with his history teacher's statements on religion taped some lectures in fear that officials would not believe him. However, students and the larger community have mostly lined up with the teacher, not the student. B1

Eyes on Assembly Speaker

Once again, the fate of a large city project, this time the proposed \$4 billion Atlantic Yards complex in Brooklyn, is resting on the shoulders of Sheldon Silver, the state Assembly speaker from Manhattan. B1

Neediest Cases B3

SPORTSMONDAY D1-8

Fallout From Brawl

The fallout from the worst N.B.A. brawl in two years should become evident when the league announces suspensions for those involved. The consequences may be greatest for one of the league's brightest young stars and one of its most troubled coaches. A1

ARTS E1-12

Children's Show Returns

"Postcards From Buster," a children's public television show that has been attacked by the secretary of education, pilloried by conservatives, then abandoned by its underwriters has managed to return, belatedly but unbowed, for a second season. E1

OBITUARIES B7

Allan Stone

A New York art dealer who combined an expertise in Abstract Expressionism with a zeal for junk sculpture and realist painting, and was as well known for amassing art as selling it, he was 74. B7

BUSINESS DAY C1-12

\$9 Billion Deal in Real Estate

Realogy, the real estate franchisor that owns Coldwell Banker, Century 21 and Sotheby's International Realty, agreed to be sold to the Apollo Group, the private equity firm, for about \$9 billion. C1

Media Giants Form Alliance

A handful of giant media companies, like NBC Universal, the News Corporation and Viacom, are close to announcing a new Web site that will feature their best-known television programming in an attempt to build a business to rival YouTube. C1

News Summary

China to Buy Reactors

China will buy four Westinghouse nuclear reactors in a deal that shows the continued attractiveness of American technology but may also stir worries that the United States is selling its competitive advantage one industry at a time. C2

Business Digest C2

EDITORIAL A28-29

Editorials: Swift raids; the AIDS-malaria connection; appropriate appropriations; just do it.

Column: Bob Herbert.

Bridge E9

Crossword E6

Metro Diary B2

TV Listings E11

Weather A24

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos

Load-Date: December 18, 2006

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Bush's total catastrophe: In every vital area, from Afghanistan to Egypt, his policies have made the situation worse

Guardian Weekly

December 22, 2006 Friday

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***The*GuardianWeekly**

Section: Pg. 5

Length: 1234 words

Byline: Timothy Garton Ash

Body

What an amazing bloody catastrophe. The Bush administration's policy towards the Middle East over the five years since 9/11 is culminating in a multiple train crash. Never in the field of human conflict was so little achieved by so great a country at such vast expense. In every vital area of the wider Middle East, US policy over the past five years has taken a bad situation and made it worse.

If the consequences were not so serious, one would have to laugh at a failure of such heroic proportions - rather in the spirit of Zorba the Greek who, contemplating the splintered ruins of his great project, memorably exclaimed: "Did you ever see a more splendiferous crash?" But the reckless incompetence of Zorba the Bush has resulted in the death, maiming, uprooting or impoverishment of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children - mainly Muslim Arabs but also Christian Lebanese, Israelis and American and British soldiers. By contributing to a broader alienation of Muslims it has also helped to make a world in which, as we walk the streets of London, Madrid, Jerusalem, New York or Sydney, we are all, each and every one of us, less safe. Laugh if you dare.

In the beginning there were the 9/11 attacks. It's important to stress that no one can fairly blame George Bush for them. The invasion of Afghanistan was a justified response to those attacks, which were initiated by al-Qaida from its bases in a rogue state under the tyranny of the Taliban. But if Afghanistan had to be done, it had to be done properly. It wasn't. Creating a half-way civilised order in one of the most rugged, inhospitable and tribally recalcitrant places on the planet was always going to be a huge challenge. If the available resources of the world's democracies, including those of a new, enlarged Nato, had been dedicated to that task over the past five years, we might at least have one partial success to report today.

Instead Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld drove us on to Iraq, aided and abetted by Tony Blair, leaving the job in Afghanistan less than half-done. Today Osama bin Laden and his henchmen are probably still holed up in the mountains of Waziristan, just across the Afghan frontier in northern Pakistan, while the Taliban is back in force and the whole country is a bloody mess. Instead of one partial success, following a legitimate intervention, we have two burgeoning disasters, in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Bush's total catastrophe: In every vital area, from Afghanistan to Egypt, his policies have made the situation worse

The United States and Britain invaded Iraq under false pretences, without proper legal authority or international legitimacy. If Saddam Hussein, a dangerous tyrant and certified international aggressor, had in fact possessed secret stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, the intervention might have been justified; as he didn't, it wasn't. Then, through the breathtaking incompetence of the armchair warriors in the Pentagon and the White House, we transformed a totalitarian state into a state of anarchy. Claiming to move Iraq forward towards Lockean liberty, we hurled it back to a Hobbesian state of nature. Iraqis - those who have not been killed - increasingly say things are worse than they were before. Who are we to tell them they are wrong?

Now we are preparing to get out. After working through Basra in Operation Sinbad, a reduced number of British troops will draw back to their base at Basra airfield. We will sit in a desert and call it peace. If the White House follows the Baker-Hamilton commission's advice, US troops will do something similar, leaving embedded advisers with Iraqi forces. Three decades ago, American retreat was cloaked by "Vietnamisation"; now it will be cloaked by Iraqisation. Meanwhile Iraqis can go on killing each other all around, until perhaps, in the end, they cut some rough-and-ready political deals between themselves - or not, as the case may be.

The theocratic dictatorship of Iran is the great winner. Five years ago the Islamic republic had a reformist president, a substantial democratic opposition, and straitened finances because of low oil prices. The mullahs were running scared. Now the prospects of democratisation are dwindling, the regime is riding high on oil at more than \$60 a barrel, and it has huge influence through its Shia brethren in Iraq and Lebanon. The likelihood of it developing nuclear weapons is correspondingly greater. We toppled the Iraqi dictator, who did not have weapons of mass destruction, and thereby increased the chances of Iran's dictators acquiring weapons of mass destruction. And last week Iran's President Ahmadinejad once again called for the destruction of the state of Israel. Those American neocons who set out to make the Middle East safe for Israel have ended up making it more dangerous for Israel.

We did not need an Iraq Study Group to tell us that resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict through a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine is crucial. In its last months the Clinton administration came close to clinching the deal. Under Bush things have gone backwards. Even the Bush-backed Ariel Sharon scenario of separation through faits accomplis has receded, with the summer war in Lebanon, Hamas ascendancy in Palestine (itself partly a byproduct of the Bush-led rush to elections), and a growing disillusionment of the Israeli public.

Having scored an apparent success with the "cedar revolution" in Lebanon and the withdrawal of Syrian troops, the Bush administration, by its tacit support of sustained yet ineffective Israeli military action this summer, undermined the very Lebanese government it was claiming to support. Now Hizbullah is challenging the country's western-backed velvet revolutionaries at their own game: after the cedar revolution, welcome to the cedar counter-revolution. In Egypt, supposedly a showcase for the United States' support for peaceful democratisation in the Bush second term, electoral success for Islamists (as in Palestine and Lebanon) seems to have frightened Washington away from its fresh-minted policy before the ink was even dry. On the credit side all we have to show is Libya's renunciation of weapons of mass destruction, and a few tentative reforms in some smaller Arab states.

So here's the scoresheet for Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt: worse, worse, worse, worse, worse, worse and worse. With James Baker, the United States may revert from the sins of the son to the sins of the father. After all, it was Baker and George Bush Sr who left those they had encouraged to rise up against Saddam to be killed in Iraq at the end of the first Gulf war - not to mention enthusiastically continuing Washington's long-running Faustian pact with petro-autocracies such as Saudi Arabia. I'm told that Condoleezza Rice, no less, has wryly observed that the word democracy hardly features in the Baker-Hamilton report.

Many a time, in these pages and elsewhere, I have warned against reflex Bush-bashing and kneejerk anti-Americanism. The United States is by no means the only culprit. Changing the Middle East for the better is one of the most difficult challenges in world politics. The people of the region bear much responsibility for their own plight. So do we Europeans, for past sins of commission and current sins of omission. But Bush must take the lion's share of the blame. There are few examples in recent history of such a comprehensive failure. Congratulations, Mr President; you have made one hell of a disaster.

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Bush's total catastrophe: In every vital area, from Afghanistan to Egypt
, his policies have made the situation worse

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End of Document

Egypt takes the scenic route to democracy

The Irish Times

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Section: NEWS FEATURES; News Features; Pg. 4

Length: 1146 words

Body

With the Middle East in turmoil, Egypt remains a haven of relative calm, but for how long, reports Deaglán de Bréadún from Cairo

Cairo is a city of teeming millions where cars and people pour like a river along the streets, but it is also a very pacific and safe place. Egypt may be number 111 on the United Nations Human Development Index - compared to Ireland at number 4 - but the theory that poverty and underdevelopment breed violence and crime does not apply to this country.

Apart from sporadic acts of terrorism against tourists and tourist resorts, for the most part Egypt is a haven of stability in an increasingly disturbed region. But with Iraq gripped by civil war, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict once again at boiling-point, Lebanon in turmoil and neighbouring Sudan torn with strife over Darfur, how long can Egypt remain relatively calm and peaceful?

It's a critical question for US foreign policy and for international stability. As elsewhere, radical Islam is on the rise in Egypt. In parliamentary elections last year, the Muslim Brotherhood won 88 out of 444 seats despite operating in an environment where the rules are set by the governing National Democratic Party.

In the Cold War era, Egypt was a client-state of the Soviet Union and relics of that time still survive in the country's economy. In the small clothing-shops on Cairo's Talaat Harb street, underworked assistants stand listlessly at the counters and there is a different person to look after every stage of your purchase from browsing through wrapping to handing over the cash.

The last time I saw this phenomenon was in Moscow in the early 1990s during the transition from the Soviet economic approach which was so memorably summed up by the cynical worker who said: "We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us."

Considerable efforts have been made in recent years to modernise the Egyptian economy, and growth is now running at more than 6 per cent a year. Attracting foreign direct investment is critical to the continuation of this growth but many obstacles remain.

The appalling traffic situation in Cairo is the most obvious disincentive to anyone seeking to do business there. The streets are clogged with cars, many of them ancient Ladas or other Soviet-era vehicles. Zebra crossings are rare and pedestrians wander carelessly between the cars, seemingly oblivious to their own safety.

Egypt takes the scenic route to democracy

At the same time there is a vibrancy and energy about the city that is very attractive. And despite the fact that I was frequently the sole westerner in the crowd, nobody even gave me an unfriendly look, never mind a hostile word or gesture.

The Metro Cinema on Talaat Harb Street is showing two films arising from the 9/11 events, World Trade Center, starring Nicholas Cage, and United 93, about the doomed plane which was apparently retaken by the passengers after it was hijacked.

The leader of the 9/11 hijackers, Mohammed Atta, was born in Egypt and the hotel I stayed in is located in Giza, the Cairo suburb where he grew up. Fundamentalism is said to be growing in Egypt, but although I saw many women wearing the hijab or head-scarf on the streets of the city there were very few who had adopted the full veil or niqab.

Egypt's Minister of Culture, Farouk Hosni, caused a storm of controversy last month when, echoing Britain's Jack Straw, he spoke out against wearing the niqab, which he said was "a symbol of backwardness". In an interview, the minister, who is also a well-known abstract painter, said that "women with their beautiful hair are like flowers and should not be covered up".

A media colleague based in Cairo said that if Egyptian elections were genuinely democratic the Muslim Brotherhood would be running the country. This is the dilemma for George W Bush and the White House policy of encouraging democracy in the Middle East. The results may very well be unpalatable, as in the case of the Hamas victory in Palestine and the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria.

There is also a secular opposition in Egypt, known as Kifaya, or "Enough" in English, as in, "I've had enough of this regime and its behaviour". Speaking to The Irish Times, spokesman George Ishaq stressed that Kifaya was not a political party but "a movement for change".

The primary weapon used by Kifaya is peaceful demonstration. The first was a two-hour silent protest by 2,000 people on December 12th, 2004, outside the High Court in downtown Cairo. "This style of protest is a very new model for Egypt," said Ishaq. A similar demonstration is planned for the same venue on Tuesday next.

The aim is to build the maximum amount of unity among the opposition. "I want all the people," says Ishaq. Kifaya seeks to build unity among all who have had enough of what Ishaq calls the "despotic regime" with its corruption, police brutality and "everything you don't like".

He claims a membership of 18,000. The 67-year-old Ishaq has a leftist background but now describes himself as "a social liberal". He admires Brazil's Lula da Silva and Venezuela's Hugo Chávez. "We are on the side of Lula and Chávez."

He and his associates opposed the Camp David Agreement signed between Egypt and Israel in 1978. But he says he is not opposed to having peaceful relations with the Israelis: "We are very keen to keep the peace, but a fair peace."

Egypt, which has operated under emergency legislation for the past 25 years, is not the easiest place to be against the government. "They are listening to my telephone 24 hours a day and they put microphones everywhere," says Ishaq. "We don't care, because if you are struggling for freedom you have to pay the price."

On the pro-government side, Dr Mohamed Kamal, a senior member of the ruling National Democratic Party, says the country is moving towards democracy: "We have a vision, we aspire to transform Egypt into a democratic system. We have achieved a lot over the past few years." He points to the holding of the first multi-candidate direct elections for the presidency and the "very competitive" parliamentary elections which gave the opposition "big numbers" of seats.

"Our record on human rights is improving," he says. "There is unprecedented freedom of expression today in Egypt." He says there is a proliferation of opposition and independent newspapers and that most Egyptians have access to satellite TV stations. "So Egypt is different today, but we still have a lot to do."

Egypt takes the scenic route to democracy

Egypt's President Mubarak, who visited Ireland this week, is one of the world's longest-serving heads of state. Although he remains vigorous and lively at 78 years of age, speculation is growing about his successor. The most likely candidate is his 42-year-old son Gamal, known to his friends as "Jimmy". Meanwhile, the opposition looks set to grow. Given the level of instability in the region as a whole, the Egyptian story is likely to contain some interesting chapters in the next few years.

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End of Document

As EU talks stall, Turks question pro-West policy; Country may look elsewhere for allies

The International Herald Tribune

November 9, 2006 Thursday

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Byline: Dan Bilefsky

Dateline: ISTANBUL

Body

The already reluctant partnership between Turkey and the European Union looks increasingly as if it might be headed for a messy breakup, prompting many in Europe and the United States to ask an uncomfortable question: Will the large secular Muslim country look East instead of West?

It is a question with vast consequences. "If the EU turns its back on Turkey, it is the West that will be the big loser," warns Mehmet Dulger, a prominent member of the governing Justice and Development Party and chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Parliament. "The West would risk losing a vital bridge with the Islamic world at a time when having this bridge is more important than ever."

The mutual suspicion between Turkey and the EU is reaching a crisis point, although Jose Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission, said Wednesday that the EU would not suspend membership talks for now. He made his remarks in conjunction with a report on the progress Turkey has made to conform to European standards.

An important deadline looms next month, when EU leaders at a summit meeting could decide to suspend talks with Turkey on a number of problem areas, while continuing in other areas. This is something the EU has never done in the course of its expansion to 25 members. Political analysts in Turkey say such a rebuff would intensify an anti-European backlash and play into the hands of nationalists and Islamists, some of whom are asking whether the country should reject Europe before the EU rejects Turkey.

"Until recently, Turkey has been able to pursue pro-Western policies because public opinion believed this was in the national interest," said Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "But with the EU constantly raising the bar for Turkey, Turks are questioning this accepted wisdom."

In Europe there is similar exasperation. "Patience with Turkey is running out," said Joost Lagendijk, a member of the Dutch Green Left Party who is co-chairman of the Turkey-European Union Joint Parliamentary Commission. It is not only the question of whether Turkey will change to meet European standards, but a wariness of admitting a poor, overwhelmingly Muslim country of 70 million that many Europeans regard as part of the East.

As EU talks stall, Turks question pro-West policy Country may look elsewhere for allies

Those positions may harden with the European Commission report Wednesday. The report cited the country's refusal to meet an end-of-year deadline to open its ports to the Greek-speaking part of Cyprus, an EU member, an issue on which Turkey refuses to move.

This week, Olli Rehn, the EU commissioner for enlargement, welcomed signals from Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he would consider changing a law that has made "insulting Turkishness" a crime. But the report said Turkey must do more to prevent torture and protect freedom of expression. Cases of torture are "still being reported" despite new laws, the EU said.

EU officials say Turkish intransigence over Cyprus leaves the EU with few alternatives, other than to consider a partial suspension of talks.

Even a partial collapse of entry talks would have far-reaching consequences. Bordered by Iran, Iraq and Syria, secular Turkey is a powerful symbol of how democracy, capitalism and Islam can coexist. At a time when Europe is struggling to integrate its 12 million Muslims, rejecting Turkey would give fodder to those Muslims who argue that the West will never accept them.

Faced with a barrage of criticism, Turkey would look to the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa as an alternative to Europe and the United States, some analysts say. A poll in June by the Pew Research Center found that Turkish support for the United States this year had plummeted to 12 percent, from 23 percent last year. Support for the European Union plunged to 35 percent, from 70 percent two years ago.

Cagaptay, of the Washington institute, argues that the Justice and Development Party, which has religious roots, already has been criticizing America and reorienting the country toward the Middle East. For example, he said, the battle for Falluja in Iraq was labeled "genocide" by senior government officials. At the same time, he said, the EU's constant snubbing of Turkey has played into the hands of Muslim conservatives.

All the while, Erdogan "is preaching Muslim solidarity and consciousness," Cagaptay said. At the beginning of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer, Erdogan assailed Israel for trying to "wipe out the Palestinians" in Lebanon. In the spring he invited top Hamas officials to the Turkish capital. A recent demonstration in Istanbul against Israel drew about 100,000 people before the Erdogan era, Cagaptay said, a few hundred might have attended.

The appeal of the East was evident on a recent day at Cemberlitas, a monumental 16th-century hamam, or Turkish bath, where a dozen men lay on a giant slab of steaming marble being pummeled by potbellied masseurs, in an Ottoman tradition rooted in the Orient.

Kadir Uzun, 21, a Turkish engineer who lives in Germany, said the EU's hardening stance toward Turkey was prompting Turks to question whether the Arab world would be more welcoming. "Many Turks feel like we are just wasting our time with the EU that will never accept a Muslim country," he said. "We are too Western to look toward Iran, but we are also too Eastern for the EU."

Many Turkish analysts, officials and executives argue that looking elsewhere is not a viable option. For one thing, Turkey is viewed with deep suspicion in the Middle East.

"We do not want to become overextended in the Middle East," said Sinan Ulgen, a former Turkish diplomat. "At the same time, the countries that were ruled by the Ottoman Empire Egypt, Jordan, Syria are reluctant about Turkey having a leading role in the region."

Also, the country's secularism is established in the Constitution and Turkey is inextricably tied to the West through economic and strategic ties, including a free-trade agreement with the EU and membership in NATO.

But there are obvious signs that Islam is strengthening its grip on daily life. Members of Erdogan's party have created zones in the country where liquor is banned in accordance with Islam, though drinking has long been accepted in Turkish society. Secularists have looked with alarm at proposals for women-only parks in Istanbul and the introduction of government-recommended textbooks with Islamic themes.

As EU talks stall, Turks question pro-West policy Country may look elsewhere for allies

"Erdogan talks about the West, but he surrounds himself with like-minded loyalists, all of whom are conservative and religious, and all of whom have wives who wear head scarves," said Tayyibe Gulek, a former cabinet minister from the Democratic Left Party.

Rather than choosing between the Middle East or the West, some analysts argue that a wounded Turkey could turn to the emerging economic giants of Russia, India and China in search of allies.

But Egemen Bagis, a senior adviser to Erdogan, counters that Turkey will stay moored in Europe. "If the talks with the EU fail we can be a prosperous, Western-looking democracy outside the EU. Norway has done this," he said. "We are undertaking reforms, not for the EU, but for the Turkish people."

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New EU members on hold

The European Commission said Wednesday the EU cannot accept any more member states until it finds a solution to the impasse caused by the rejection of its draft constitution by French and Dutch voters last year, Agence France-Presse reported from Brussels.

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For Palestinian women soccer players, a field is a dream

Christian Science Monitor

December 4, 2006, Monday

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Length: 1141 words

Byline: Amelia Thomas Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK

Highlight: The national team holds practices on concrete in preparation for a January tournament.

Body

It's a chilly late afternoon in Bethlehem. Along quiet streets, grocers are hastily packing away vegetable stalls; colorful Christmas decorations glint in shop windows. And, on a steep hill at the edge of the Bethlehem University campus, a group of 12 young Palestinian women are braving the cold for a precious once-weekly ritual: soccer practice.

The women, between the ages of 14 and 22, make up the majority of the Palestinian Territories national women's soccer team, which meets on an improvised concrete soccer field every Wednesday, rain or shine. Currently, they are working hard in preparation for their next tournament, despite lingering questions over whether they will be able to attend.

"We hope," says Samar Araj Mousa, Bethlehem University's athletic director who founded the team in 2003, "that we will play at the second Arab Women's Football Championship in Abu Dhabi in January." Tight travel restrictions and severe financial difficulties may keep the team from competing for their homeland.

The girls, under the eagle eye of volunteer coach Emil Hilal, a sports teacher at a nearby high school and a one-time local soccer star, form a line on the playing field, their breath billowing clouds in the cold air. They begin ducking, weaving, dribbling, and shooting, as Mr. Hilal yells instructions. An excited cheer goes up as goalkeeper Nadeen Khaleeb throws herself fearlessly to the ground, successfully defending her makeshift goal posts.

"They're doing their best," says Hilal, "but they don't have the facilities or the equipment to be as good as they could be."

While the Palestinian Authority pays for the national men's soccer team, which trains abroad in Egypt with salaried players, the women's team mostly fends for itself. Continuing governmental and local authority financial shortages make it increasingly unlikely that money for a women's soccer team, even a national one, will be a priority soon.

But the hurdles are not just financial. Several girls have been hurt playing on the concrete practice field.

The only real soccer field in the West Bank is in Jericho, just 18 miles away, but largely inaccessible due to a string of stringent Israeli military checkpoints. For some, the strain of travel is too much: The team's former coach resigned last year after returning from the West Asian Women's Football Championships in Jordan. Detained and

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interrogated for hours at the border by both Israeli and Jordanian authorities, he found the experience too traumatic to repeat.

"The girls," says Ms. Mousa, "sat crying at the border, knowing they'd missed their game." Fortunately, they were able to reschedule the game for the next day.

So why, despite the manifold difficulties, is soccer the girls' game of choice?

For Mousa, it's a combination of factors. "It's good for their health," she says, "for their stamina and their endurance. They also make strong friendships, and it teaches them principles of sportsmanship. And," she adds, "soccer represents their only chance to go abroad."

But for most of the girls on the team, a mix of Muslims and Christians, soccer is more than a form of exercise or a way out of the West Bank: It's a way of life.

"Football has been my passion since I was small," says team captain Honey Thaljieh, a Bethlehem University graduate in business administration. "First I played with my brothers on the street, then on boys' teams at school."

Her bedroom, she says, is plastered with pictures of her favorite team, Brazil, and its star player, Ronaldinho. "Our society has a very male-centered mentality," she continues, "but we're showing women there's a different way. Step by step, from the inside, we're changing things around."

"I feel powerful when I'm playing soccer," says Amira Hodaly, who studies physical therapy at Bethlehem University, "I started when I was 10, playing alongside my brothers. Now that I'm older, it's less accepted than when I was just a child. But," she adds, smiling, "I don't care."

Though many of the players have been teased by their male peers for their soccer passion, most have received support and encouragement from their families.

Ghada Hodeli, a university accounting student, is engaged to be married. Although her fiancé doesn't play soccer himself, he understands why she does. Several other players, however, have had to deal with a more disapproving response.

"My parents don't really like me playing," says Sarab Shair, a 21-year-old Muslim who grew up in a children's home and was later adopted by a local family. "But they don't have a choice.... They also want me to wear the veil if I have to play at all, but I've refused that, too."

Instead, like most of the girls, she plays in shorts and T-shirt, her hair swept back into a ponytail. Some other Muslim players, like Navin Kaleab, sister of goalkeeper Nadeen, play in long sleeves, pants, and a head scarf. But it does not affect her performance, she says with a soft smile. Though the local Hamas administration supports the team in theory, Mousa notes that the authorities have advised that the team cover up and play indoors, away from male spectators. So far, the team has not been forced to do either.

Opportunities for the entire national team to play together are extremely rare. The handful of team members from Ramallah and the Gaza Strip can't come to practices in Bethlehem. They train locally, often with fewer resources and even less support than the girls in Bethlehem. The team can meet and play together only at overseas championships.

The first such opportunity came last year at the West Asian women's football championship in Jordan. "It was a strange experience," recalls Hilal, "the team playing a game together without even knowing each other's names."

Not only was it their first time playing on grass, it was their first game as a full 11-member team. "But even so, the girls did well as beginners," Mousa says. "They played against the Egyptian national team, and though they lost, it wasn't by a big margin. In the future, it will only get better."

For Palestinian women soccer players, a field is a dream

If they do manage to attend the Abu Dhabi championships in January, the team aims to prove its potential against its professional, well-financed competition.

By 5:30 p.m., dusk is falling in Bethlehem. On the horizon, a vivid pink sky hangs above the looming concrete "security barrier," which snakes across the countryside below. As the field slips into darkness, the girls pile into two cars waiting to drive them home.

"Although we can't yet compare with many other clubs, other teams are still quite scared to play against us," says Thaljieh cheerfully, as muezzins and church bells start to echo in the evening air. "We might not have the facilities that they have, but they know we have the ability, the courage, and the determination to win. And, one day, we will."

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**Chipping away at old tensions NEXT NEIGHBOURHOOD JAFFA, ISRAEL:
Although there are still issues that can cause friction, Arabs and Jews are
learning to live together around the ancient port, writes Sharmila Devi**

Financial Times (London, England)

November 25, 2006 Saturday

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Length: 1193 words

Byline: By SHARMILA DEVI

Body

Multi-million dollar apartment blocks, historic art deco buildings, warehouses and rundown Arab housing can be found in a single street in Jaffa. Its port, one of the world's oldest, is still surrounded by cobblestone paths, where falafel stands and antique shops compete for business, and the salty smell of the Mediterranean is never distant. But this is also part of the busy modern-day metropolis of Tel Aviv, a suburb at its southern end that has in recent years become popular with both its Arab and Jewish residents.

The ethnic mix is a new and unusual development. In the 19th century, Jaffa was a thriving commercial and cultural centre. But by the early 20th century, as Jewish immigration to the area picked up, tensions rose. An Arab revolt led to the establishment of an alternative port in Tel Aviv in 1936 and during the war of 1948 that led to Israel's creation, thousands of Arabs fled Jaffa. Rajah Shehadeh, a Palestinian human rights lawyer and activist, wrote about his family's forced exile to Ramallah in the West Bank in his autobiography *Strangers in the House*.

"I was always reminded that we were made for a better life - and that this better life had been left behind in Jaffa. Jaffa, I was told, was the bride of the sea, and Ramallah did not even have a sea. Jaffa was a pearl, a diamond-studded lantern rising from the water, and Ramallah was a drab, cold, backward village where nothing ever happened."

Over the decades, however, Jaffa fell into deep neglect. Lingering political tensions meant that Jews were reluctant to live there. Successive Israeli governments paid the area little attention. In 2000, the outbreak of the intifada in the Palestinian territories and perceived discrimination among Israeli Arabs sparked stone-throwing, tire-burning riots. A huge garbage dump, formed on the rubble of Arab homes destroyed in 1948, still forms part of the shoreline.

Still, there are signs now that Jaffa is in the midst of a turnaround. There are about 20,000 Israeli Arabs in the area, living relatively peacefully alongside 15,000 Israeli Jews. Developers have moved in, building residential blocks targeted at Jewish buyers even in the crumbling beach area. A new municipal master plan, including a tourism and entertainment zone and a spruced-up promenade, has been set out. And, in keeping with a real estate resurgence seen across much of Israel, prices are rising rapidly.

"You have to be a certain kind of person to want to live here," says Arie Sheffer, who runs Mediterranean Real Estate and has lived in Jaffa for 20 years. "Most of the Jews here are liberal or artistic and are looking for something unique."

Chipping away at old tensions NEXT NEIGHBOURHOOD JAFFA, ISRAEL : Although there are still issues that can cause friction, Arabs and Jews are learning to live to....

On a summer weekend, Jaffa beach offers a picture of how co-existence can work. Diners pack the sea- and port-side restaurants and mingle in the flea market as the Arab faithful leave Friday prayers. An Arab boy rides a bare-backed horse. Muslim women, fully clad with headscarves, dip their toes into the sea. Girls in skimpy bikinis lay out to tan. And a few tourists gawk, unsure where they are in the political geography. At sunset, the pink light washes over, and washes out, the potholes and garbage in the streets.

"I love the atmosphere and the diversity, the mix of peoples and architecture," says one Jewish Israeli resident, who moved from Tel Aviv last year.

Sheffer estimates that residential prices in Jaffa have increased by about 25 per cent since 2003. But the gains have been even bigger in the new development and buy-to-let markets. "Individual customers have acted more slowly because they are still influenced by Jaffa's bad name but we could get a fast acceleration soon," he says.

Varda Paz of Paz Real Estate reports that many of her clients are now urban couples and families currently living in Tel Aviv but looking for more space and character in Jaffa. There is also interest from Jews living outside Israel but Jerusalem and Herzliya remain more popular for investment. "The French aren't so interested in Jaffa because they are trying to get away from Arabs," Sheffer says.

The most desirable homes in Jaffa are Arab buildings with original features such as iron balconies. But, says Paz, these are in short supply so priced at a premium. Earlier this year, an "authentic, ethnic style" apartment with tiled floors, sea views and two bedrooms was on offer for Dollars 2m, while a penthouse built on the ruins of an old home was listed at Dollars 850,000.

There are less expensive options, however. A renovated German Templar building dating from the 1860s has apartments at prices ranging from Dollars 140,000 to Dollars 2m, while units in all the new developments springing up across Jaffa's empty lots tend to start at about Dollars 200,000. Paz says the more affordable projects drawing the most attention are the ones close to the planned Peres Centre for Peace complex near the beach.

Rents are also reasonable. One old apartment with big rooms and high ceilings arranged around a courtyard that was previously used as an exhibition space is now rented by an expatriate Briton for Dollars 700 a month.

The recent influx of newcomers has led to fears of increased conflict between Jews and Arabs, who are generally less wealthy and face restrictions on buying homes built on state land. Sheffer says he makes it a point of principle not to deal with any clients who refuse to rent or sell their properties to Arabs. Paz, meanwhile, says she has had some Arab clients who will rent only to Israeli Jews, believing they are more financially reliable.

The ongoing tensions manifest themselves in small ways. At Andromeda Hill, an exclusive gated complex with residential and holiday apartments, the owners were sued a few years ago by a group of mostly Arab neighbours who claimed their right of way within the complex was blocked in contravention of municipal regulations. During this year's national election, some Jewish residents of Jaffa complained to the municipality because they thought their Arab neighbours had hung flags in support of the militant Islamic group Hamas, which runs the Palestinian Authority. It turned out the flags were actually expressing support for an Israeli Arab political party.

There are also reminders of Jaffa's period of neglect. As recently as last year there was anger over a local government decision to divert sewage through a large, blue pipe along the middle of the area's main artery, tree-lined Jerusalem Road, during construction of a new tram line. And, although crime - mostly related to drugs and prostitution, is coming under control, residents say cars and homes are still often broken into.

Jaffa's proponents stand strong, however. "I feel very safe and after working here for 10 years I know many of the families," Paz says. "We don't have any violence against women in the streets."

Sheffer has raised three daughters in the area, encouraging them to get involved in community projects, and argues that the environment - for living and investing - can only improve further. "The ups and downs are much sharper

Chipping away at old tensions NEXT NEIGHBOURHOOD JAFFA, ISRAEL : Although there are still issues that can cause friction, Arabs and Jews are learning to live to....

because it's a more nervous market in Jaffa," he says. "But I believe property here is still safer than the stock market."

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US POLICY OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

The Nation (AsiaNet)

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Byline: JUSTICE (RETD) KHALIL-UR-REHMAN KHAN

Body

The US Government sees the US as a military power with its war machinery, opted to adopt repression strategy to crush terrorism and any individual, group, organisation or state suspected to be involved in any act which as per its own perception amounts to terrorism or against US interests in any part of the world. Commentators observe that civilian and military mindsets have merged in the US and this potentially has adverse consequences for maintaining strong Civilian Authority. Thanks to the fear phobia created by the media with the help of timely release of video and audio cassettes of Osama Bin Ladin and other statedly Al-Qaeda operatives, US public opinion measures such as dialogue between cultures or combating poverty (when such measures are done with the aim of discouraging terrorism) as 'appeasement' rather than as part of an effective strategy to combat terrorism.

The American policymakers completely ignore the viewpoint of people in Europe who at least believe that terrorism cannot be defeated purely by military means and underlying causes should be confronted. Such a view also emerges from the following extract of the UN Committee Report: "Lack of proper economic development, unequal distribution of material resources, failing states, the lack of respect for human rights and equal opportunities ... if we want to free the world from terrorism and crime we will have to strengthen our efforts to solve these problems as well. Preventing and combating terrorism is one side of the coin, eliminating its sources and root causes the other."

The view of the European scholars is that promotion of human rights, democracy, social justice and the rule of law is in the long run the surest foundation for stability and peace and the true remedy to combat terrorism. The US policymakers pay lip service to such a view by proclaiming that they too want to usher in the democratic norms and institutions in Middle East and Islamic countries but in practice promote and support dictators, military rulers and kings as they prove handy and gullible for achieving their objectives.

The duly elected representative in Muslim countries eg Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon are not acceptable as to America only such a brand of democracy, which through engineered and managed elections returns only its stooges is acceptable.

As the opposite faction, people and the Muslim States are not in a position to offer any resistance. US Military machinery is free to subjugate any country, be it Afghanistan or Iraq and to install puppet governments so that its hegemony and sway over the region is ensured. Any resistance is met with brutal force.

The people struggling for the liberation of their lands land in torture cells of Guantanamo Bay or Abu Gharib where they are treated worse than animals and insects. Even animals receive some compassion but the Islamist militants are condemned to worst indignity, torture, maltreatment, pain and punishment as such freedom fighters are dubbed as "Enemy Combatant".

US POLICY OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

The world for the first time heard and saw 'dance of the dead' as under the protection and glare of US Army, the dead were made to dance by igniting the dead bodies after filling them petrol. The media reported a letter written from Abu Gharib jail by an Iraqi detainee, Fatima, describing the manner in which she and her fellow Iraqi women were raped and other indignities and torture was being inflicted night after night. This is the story of all the secret cells all over the world to which all the persons even remotely suspected of working against the interest of America are secretly condemned. The US Supreme Court's long-awaited judgment was announced on 29th July by Justice Stevens in which Justice Souter, Justice Ginsburg and Justice Breyer joined and Justice Kennedy concurred in part while Justice Scalia, wrote the dissenting Judgment to which Justice Thomas and Justice Alito joined.

Each of the Learned Judges recorded reasons for their respective agreement or dissent. The majority judgment, *inter alia*, held that certain guarantees of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) would apply to combatants even those whose status is not clear, including Al-Qaeda combatants; that as a minimum Article 3 of the Geneva Convention would apply which provides that all detainees whether prisoners of war, civilian or so called unlawful combatants be treated humanely in all circumstances and that detainees may not be subjected to 'cruel treatment' and torture' or outrages upon personal dignity in particular humiliating and degrading treatment."

The US Supreme Court further held that trial by Military Commissions created by a November 13, 2001 Military order issued by President Bush authorising the trial of persons suspected of terrorism was violative of Doctrine of separation of powers under which Executive branch may not usurp the authority of judiciary. Moreover, as required by Article 5 of the Third Geneva Convention, the captured combatants should have been treated as PoWs unless a competent tribunal determined otherwise.

Despite this judgment, the right groups have opined that the status of many suspects and those scooped off the battlefields in Afghanistan in 2001 remained unclear. They remarked that it was uncertain whether the US reversal would apply to some of the most prized captives like Khalid Sheikh Muhammad (who is alleged to be the mastermind of September 11 terrorist attacks), being held in the secret location by the CIA. A CIA spokeswoman refused to comment on the ramifications of the memo sent by Deputy Defence Secretary, Gordon England, which requires military personnel to adhere to

Common Article Three of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

The administration had previously declared in an order by President George Bush in February 2002 that the Geneva Conventions do not apply' to Al-Qaeda or Taliban detainees. But in a statement to the New York Times late on Tuesday, the White House said 'as a result of the Supreme Court decision, that portion of the order no longer applies'.

Mr Michael Ratner, a human rights lawyer and President of the Centre for Constitutional Rights which represents a number of Guantanamo Bay detainees said that he does not think that it is 100 percent clear, at a minimum, the government needs to now start providing ICRC access to these prisoners.

The Report published in an English daily on 13-7-2006 adds that legal position would be tested if the International Committee on the Red Cross (ICRC) requested access to a secret CIA prison - and how the government would act remain uncertain. Another area of contention is the administration's position that it was already applying the spirit of Article Three of the Geneva Conventions to war on terror suspects or unlawful combatants as administration had been denying the techniques used to interrogate terror suspects amount to torture.

The time would only tell whether the detainees will receive a fair treatment and a fair trial and whether the secret cells and the X-Ray camps at Guantanamo Bay are closed because the Supreme Court left out the important question of whether detainees can be held indefinitely or whether Guantanamo Bay should be closed. The writer is Chairman, Sharia Advisory Board, Emirates Global Islamic Bank and a former Judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

US POLICY OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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PERSPECTIVE: Why hard line is only way to deal with Iran; In 2002 President Bush labelled Iran as part of the "Axis of Evil" now Tony Blair is saying this state - in conjunction with Syria - may hold the key to a peaceful Middle East. Lord Corbett of Castle Vale, former MP for Erdington, argues why taking a firm line with Tehran's rulers is the only option

Birmingham Post

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First Edition

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Byline: Lord Corbett

Body

Western leaders are scratching their heads in desperate search for a new Middle East policy as the dire situation in Iraq worsens and tensions in Lebanon and Palestine rise.

Yet a combination of short term economic interests and a lack of will have prevented the West from confronting the primary source of instability in the region and the fuel that keeps these conflicts burning - Tehran's theocratic rulers.

Following the Republicans' defeat in the US mid-term elections, a change of Middle East policy has taken on a new significance. The media continues to speculate about the likely recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, better known as the Baker Commission, which was formed to consider US policy options towards Iraq.

Those who favour 'engagement' of Iran's Ayatollahs, sometimes described as appeasement, have taken this opportunity to call for 'dialogue' with Tehran as a means of resolving the various crises in the Middle East, including in Iraq. That is like asking a serial arsonist to assist in putting out one of the many fires he has started and continues to fuel.

The 'engagement' camp portrays this policy as a grand new idea, but it sounds very much like a well-trodden, fruitless and dangerous path - the same path that has led to the present international crisis.

The proponents of engagement hoped that by providing the Tehran regime with concessions and offering it incentives, they would empower the so-called 'moderates'. Over the past decade, Iran has been offered everything from trade and co-operation agreements to assistance with a solely civilian nuclear programme. At the same time, Western governments acceded to Tehran's demand to blacklist its main opponents.

Rather than strengthening the so-called 'reformers', this policy has resulted in the hardliners, led by former Revolutionary Guards commander, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, taking full control in Iran. Other officials have boasted in public about nuclear advances made while the West was busy dancing to Khatami's 'moderate' tunes.

PERSPECTIVE: Why hard line is only way to deal with Iran In 2002 President Bush labelled Iran as part of the "Axis of Evil" now Tony Blair is saying this state....

Engagement with the Ayatollahs was never going to work, because it relies on two fundamental misconceptions - the willingness of the mullahs to moderate and to be persuaded to abandon their nuclear programmes.

Before giving evidence by video-link to the Baker Commission, the Prime Minister set out what Tehran's policy has been. In his annual speech at the Lord Mayor's banquet this week, he said that Iran is being confronted over its nuclear weapons ambitions and is refusing to abide by UN demands to stop uranium enrichment. He added: "Instead they are using the pressure points in the region to thwart us. So they help the most extreme elements of Hamas in Palestine' Hizbollah in the Lebanon' Shia militia in Iraq."

In fact, Iran's theocratic leaders have since the start of hostilities in Iraq been aggressively interfering in the internal affairs of that country with a view to setting up a satellite fundamentalist state under their control. Success in this would seriously affect the strategic balance of power in the Middle East.

It is widely recognised that Tehran has been responsible for a large proportion of the terrorist attacks that take place in Iraq. The Iranian regime is also reported to have been responsible for the assassinations of Iraqi dissidents, the arming and funding of a network of insurgents and militias with the express purpose of committing violence against US and Coalition forces, infiltration of Iraqi governmental and security institutions, running secret torture chambers, and interfering in the Iraqi elections through vote rigging and fraud.

Over the weekend, British commanders stated the weapons used to attack British troops on a daily basis come from Iran. On Remembrance Day, a British patrol boat was attacked near Basra using improvised explosive devices, leaving four British servicemen and women dead and three seriously injured. These are the sorts of weapons that the Iranian regime has been supplying to terrorist groups in Iraq.

What do the Iraqi people think of all this? In June, 5.2 million Iraqis signed a statement warning of the dangers posed by the Iranian regime in Iraq and affirming their support for Iran's principal opposition group, the PMOI.

It is not the further involvement of the Iranian regime in Iraqi affairs that will bring about stability in that country, but rather the expulsion of the mullahs and their forces.

To continue appeasement of Iran at a time when it has failed to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1696 calling on it to suspend uranium enrichment and instead openly defies the international community by announcing the operation of a second cascade of centrifuges for the production of uranium, whilst also stepping up its terrorist activities across the Middle East, is to reward it for its rogue actions. This would have serious consequences for the entire Middle East, as well as peace and stability in the world.

Instead, as part of the present policy review, the West must ask itself what it is that the brutal oppressors of the Iranian people most fear. It is certainly not the US or Britain.

What they fear is democracy and those that can bring it about - the 95 per cent of Iranians who despise this regime and the Iranian resistance, National Council of Resistance of Iran. The NCRI is led by a courageous woman, Mrs Maryam Rajavi, who is the antithesis of everything that the Ayatollahs represent.

Tehran's wild reaction to Mrs Rajavi's travels during the course of this year to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the Belgian Senate and the Norwegian Parliament is a great indicator of how much the Ayatollahs fear the true representative of the Iranian people.

In Norway, Mrs Rajavi made clear that the world does not have to choose between foreign military intervention and appeasing Iran's religious rulers. She said: "There is a third option: Democratic change by the Iranian people and their organised Resistance. I have a dream: An Iran free of execution and torture, a free and democratic Iran, an Iran where tolerance and peace shall flourish and an Iran at peace and friendship."

This is where the solution to the present crises in the Middle East rests. The West must immediately adopt a firm policy towards the Iranian regime.

PERSPECTIVE: Why hard line is only way to deal with Iran In 2002 President Bush labelled Iran as part of the "Axis of Evil" now Tony Blair is saying this state....

At the same time, it must remove the obstacles it placed in the path of the Iranian people's quest for freedom, beginning with removal of the unjust terror label from the PMOI.

Should the West have the courage and the will to follow this course, we will soon see a very different Middle East.

Should it not, further conflict is inevitable.

Graphic

The image Iran's leaders would like to project of a nation at peace with itself but the West, says Lord Corbett, should be more concerned with Tehran's Middle East ambitions, particularly towards Iraq

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High stakes over Turkey; Ankara and EU heading for a nasty split?

The International Herald Tribune

November 8, 2006 Wednesday

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Byline: Dan Bilefsky

Dateline: ISTANBUL

Body

The already reluctant partnership between Turkey and the European Union looks increasingly like it might be headed for a messy breakup, prompting many in Europe and the United States to ask an uncomfortable question: Will the large secular Muslim country look East instead of West?

It is a question with vast consequences. "If the EU turns its back on Turkey, it is the West that will be the big loser," warns Mehmet Dulger, a prominent member of the governing Justice and Development Party and chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Parliament. "The West would risk losing a vital bridge with the Islamic world at a time when having this bridge is more important than ever."

The mutual suspicion between Turkey and the EU is reaching a crisis point. On Wednesday the European Commission is to issue a report critical of the progress Turkey has made to conform to European standards and qualify for membership.

A more important deadline looms next month, when EU leaders at a summit meeting could decide to suspend talks with Turkey on a number of problem areas, while continuing in other areas. This is something the EU has never done in the course of its expansion to 25 members.

Political analysts in Turkey say such a rebuff would intensify an anti-European backlash and play into the hands of nationalists and Islamists, some of whom are asking whether the country should reject Europe before the EU rejects Turkey.

"Until recently, Turkey has been able to pursue pro-Western policies because public opinion believed this was in the national interest," said Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "But with the EU constantly raising the bar for Turkey, Turks are questioning this accepted wisdom."

In Europe there is similar exasperation. "Patience with Turkey is running out," said Joost Lagendijk, a member of the Dutch Green Party who is co-chairman of the Turkey-European Union Joint Parliamentary Commission. It is not only the question of reforming to meet European standards, but a wariness of admitting a poor, overwhelmingly Muslim country of 70 million that many Europeans regard as part of the East, with only 3 percent of its land geographically a part of Europe.

High stakes over Turkey Ankara and EU heading for a nasty split?

Those positions may harden with the European Commission report Wednesday, which is expected to rebuke Turkey for the pace of its political reforms. A draft of the report cites the country's refusal to meet an end-of-year deadline to open its ports to the Greek-speaking part of Cyprus, an EU member, an issue on which Turkey refuses to move. The report also complains about the treatment of minorities and a law limiting free speech that has made "insulting Turkishness" a crime.

Olli Rehn, the EU commissioner for enlargement, this week welcomed signals from Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he would consider reforming the free speech code. But EU officials say Turkish intransigence over Cyprus leaves the EU with few alternatives, other than to consider a partial suspension of entry talks when EU leaders meet to discuss Turkey in mid-December.

Even a partial collapse of entry talks would have far-reaching consequences. Bordered by Iran, Iraq and Syria, secular Turkey is a powerful symbol of how democracy, capitalism and Islam can coexist. At a time when Europe is struggling to integrate its 12 million Muslims, rejecting Turkey would give fodder to those Muslims who argue that the West will never accept them.

Faced with a barrage of criticism, some analysts say a dejected Turkey would look to the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa as an alternative to Europe and the United States. A June poll by the Pew Research Center found that Turkish support for the United States this year has plummeted to 12 percent, from 23 percent last year. Support for the European Union plunged to 35 percent, from 70 percent two years ago.

Cagaptay, of the Washington institute, argues that the Justice and Development Party, which has religious roots, already has been criticizing America and reorienting the country toward the Middle East. For example, he says, the battle for Falluja in Iraq was labeled "genocide" by senior government officials. At the same time, he says, the EU's constant snubbing of Turkey has played into the hands of Muslim conservatives.

All the while, Erdogan "is preaching Muslim solidarity and consciousness," Cagaptay said. At the beginning of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer, Erdogan assailed Israel for trying to "wipe out the Palestinians" in Lebanon. In the spring he invited top Hamas officials to the Turkish capital. A recent demonstration in Istanbul against Israel drew about 100,000 people before the Erdogan era, Cagaptay said, a few hundred might have attended.

The appeal of the East was evident on a recent day at Cemberlitas, a monumental 16th-century hamam, or Turkish bath, where a dozen men lay on a giant slab of steaming marble being pummeled by pot-bellied masseurs in an Ottoman tradition rooted in the Orient.

Kadir Uzun, 21, a Turkish engineer who lives in Germany, said the EU's hardening stance toward Turkey was prompting Turks to question whether the Arab world would be more welcoming. "Many Turks feel like we are just wasting our time with the EU that will never accept a Muslim country," he said. "We are too Western to look toward Iran, but we are also too Eastern for the EU."

Many Turkish analysts, officials and executives argue that looking elsewhere is not a viable option. For one thing, Turkey is viewed with deep suspicion in the Middle East.

"We do not want to become overextended in the Middle East," said Sinan Ulgen, a former Turkish diplomat. "At the same time, the countries that were ruled by the Ottoman empire Egypt, Jordan, Syria are reluctant about Turkey having a leading role in the region."

Also, the country's secularism is established in the Constitution and Turkey is inextricably tied to the West through economic and strategic ties, including a free trade agreement with the EU and membership in NATO. To these analysts and executives, it is less imperative to join Europe than it is to anchor Turkey to an EU membership process that assures political and economic reform.

But there are obvious signs that Islam is strengthening its grip on daily life. Members of Erdogan's party have created zones in the country where liquor is banned in accordance with Islam, though drinking has long been

High stakes over Turkey Ankara and EU heading for a nasty split?

accepted in Turkish society. Secularists have looked with alarm at proposals for women-only parks in Istanbul and the introduction of government-recommended textbooks with Islamic themes.

"Erdogan talks about the West, but he surrounds himself with like-minded loyalists, all of whom are conservative and religious, and all of whom have wives who wear head scarves," says Tayyibe Gulek, a former cabinet minister from the Democratic Left Party.

Rather than choosing between the Middle East or the West, some analysts argue that a wounded Turkey could turn to the emerging economic giants of Russia, India and China in search of allies. Russia has expressed keen interest in using Turkey as a distribution point for energy to the Middle East and the southern Mediterranean.

But Egemen Bagis, a senior adviser to Erdogan, counters that Turkey will stay moored in Europe, with or without the EU. "If the talks with the EU fail we can be a prosperous, Western-looking democracy outside the EU. Norway has done this and so why can't we?" he said. "We are undertaking reforms, not for the EU, but for the Turkish people."

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Al Qaeda slips further from political goals

Christian Science Monitor

September 11, 2007, Tuesday

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Byline: Dan Murphy Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: Cairo

Body

Abdullah Mullah shuddered as he thought back to the early 1990s. In his sprawling neighborhood, the center of Egypt's radical Islamist movement, his wife was beaten on the street for wearing jeans and he was visited by thugs "concerned" about his irregular mosque attendance.

Imbaba was a place the police feared and the militants ruled.

Neighborhoods like this, teeming with devout Muslims, may have been considered fertile ground for Al Qaeda's goal of building a global movement. But six years after 9/11, Osama bin Laden's group appears to have attracted few loyal followers here. In fact, the militants who once reigned in Imbaba are all but invisible.

What has happened in Egypt represents an overlooked success story in much of the Arab world. While Muslim anger toward the US and its Arab allies has soared in the post-9/11 war on terrorism, and the Iraq war has been a recruiting tool for Al Qaeda, there is little chance militant Islamists can seize power in any of the region's established states.

But this has come at a price. The Egyptian story is one of how an effective, often brutal, security establishment has pushed militant Islamists to the fringes.

Today, Egypt has as firm a grip on Imbaba as it does on the rest of the country. Political Islam, however, still has great appeal for millions of Egyptians, but most of them are attracted to the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization that repudiated violence decades ago.

Indeed, there are exceptions to the clout that militant Islamists hold within large segments of Arab society.

Hamas, the Palestinian group which now controls the Gaza Strip, is considered a terrorist outfit by the US, Israel, and the European Union. But its political platform is far from Al Qaeda's. It uses violence to extract land from Israel, not in the service of establishing an Islamic caliphate, a key Al Qaeda aim.

In Egypt, the hard line from the state in dealing with radical groups also comes with a growing Arab revulsion of Al Qaeda's indiscriminate violence and thuggish behavior.

"These groups have of course been around for a long time. But what people discovered with them is that they're incredibly rough and rigidly ideological," says Diaa Rashwan, an expert on political Islam at the Al Ahram Center for

Al Qaeda slips further from political goals

Strategic and International Studies in Cairo. "Their methods weren't about winning people over, being with them, but imposing upon them. No people in the world like that."

A turning point for Imbaba

In 1992 the situation looked more ominous. More than 10 years earlier, Egypt's Islamic Jihad had assassinated President Anwar Sadat, using members of the Egyptian Army it had managed to recruit. A key leader of the organization was the Egyptian doctor Ayman al-Zawahiri, who went on to become Al Qaeda's No. 2.

In the 1980s, that group and the Gamaa Islamiyah (GI), whose spiritual leader is the blind sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, currently serving a life sentence in the US for his role in the 1993 World Trade Center attack, continued to target officials for assassination, and in the 1990s moved into large-scale terrorist attacks.

In 1992, Sheikh Jabir Mohammed Ali, a firebrand leader of the GI started telling reporters that his men had "liberated" Imbaba from the Egyptian state. He vowed the rest of Egypt was next. The government of President Hosni Mubarak had had enough; that December, thousands of troops rushed to seal off the neighborhood and for a month, they moved door to door, arresting hundreds.

At the time it appeared to some observers that Egypt was at the precipice of an Islamic revolution. But in fact, the violent tactics of Sheikh Jabir's men had turned off many devout Egyptians and that December was the beginning of a crushing defeat for the militant revolutionaries.

"Many very religious people grew fed up with being pushed around and threatened all the time," he says. "A lot of people might want women to wear head scarves, or to have a more Islamic country. But the group's men were on the streets with chains and knives. They were burning video stores and barbershops."

The GI's wave of violence culminated in a 1997 attack in Luxor, in which 58 foreigners and four Egyptians were murdered by a gang of militants. Those killings led to a backlash among average Egyptians and threw the tourist-based economy of Upper Egypt into a tailspin.

The role of government repression also can't be discounted in controlling these movements. In the 1990s, the government made thousands of arrests, sometimes rounding up men because of the mosque they prayed at or because they wore long beards. Also, there have been credible reports of torture of militants in Egyptian prisons.

"The principle thing that hurt these groups was government repression," says Yehia Fikri, a columnist for Cairo's Al Dustur newspaper. "Without that, they'd certainly still have some strength. But the other side of the coin is that a moderate group like the Muslim Brotherhood was able to absorb their supporters."

The government's tough methods

Similar government tactics have been used in response to a series of terrorist attacks inside Egypt in the past three years. But from the government's perspective, that approach, which has at times been condemned by international groups such as Human Rights Watch, has been effective.

Last year, the government released about 1,000 GI members from jails after the group's leaders forswore violence, some going so far as to label Mr. Sadat, a man whose murder they'd supported, a "martyr."

This year, the government has released more than 100 members of Islamic Jihad from jail after the group's founder, Imam Abdul Aziz al-Sharif, released excerpts of a forthcoming book renouncing violence in the name of religion. That was a sharp turnaround from Mr. Sharif's last book, "Foundations of Preparation for Jihad," which he wrote after fighting with Mr. Zawahiri and bin Laden in Afghanistan, and which has been described by some as the "Jihaddis' Bible."

None of this is to say that Islam does not remain a potent political force in the region, especially since most of the Arab world's powerful opposition parties are generally Islamist in nature.

Al Qaeda slips further from political goals

But these groups, typified by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, have sought to work from within existing systems, moving slowly to build support and sending out a message of gradual change.

"The whole notion of what it means to be radical leaves most people in the world feeling uncomfortable," says Mr. Rashwan. "The Brotherhood has worked long term and focused on people's daily problems and needs, they don't have the big, dangerous dreams of revolutionaries so that's where the support ends up."

To be sure, Mr. Mullah says, Imbaba today is a far more polarized place than in his youth. "Everyone got along until the '70s. Before that, my father's best friend in the area was a Jew. Thirty years ago, the secular leftists were the major opposition in the area. But people's economic desperation, their lack of opportunities, have left them with nothing but Islam to cling to."

Mr. Fikri agrees that a violent Islamist takeover in Egypt is next to impossible, but he worries that further waves of Islamist violence are possible, especially with the state's tactic of jailing and harassing members of the Brotherhood.

"New violent groups could resurface if the current wave of repression does not stop and democratic mobilization doesn't make any concrete gains," he says. "The problem is if the door is closed to reform completely, which seems to be the direction, the Brotherhood could lose control of some of its members."

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Mother-in-law lured victim to assassin; Husband Also Convicted In 'Honour Killing' Of Woman Who Wanted A Divorce

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National Edition

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Byline: Araminta Wordsworth, National Post, With Files from news services

Body

A 70-year-old British grandmother is facing life imprisonment after luring her daughter-in-law to India and murdering her in the latest case of what is known as an honour killing, the most extreme dignity-saving tactic by immigrant communities who increasingly find their cultural traditions being challenged by modern lifestyles.

A court in London yesterday found Bachan Athwal, who has six children and 16 grandchildren, guilty of killing Surjit Kaur Athwal, who disappeared while on a visit to India in December, 1998.

The 27-year-old woman was married to Bachan Athwal's son, Sukhdave Singh, 43, who was also found guilty of murder.

Yesterday's verdict is the second this month involving honour killings in Britain, and one of many similar cases in the headlines across Europe and North America recently.

In England, Mahmod Mahmod, an Iraqi Kurd, was jailed for life last week for murdering his daughter -- strangling her with a shoelace, stuffing her body in a suitcase and dumping it in the back garden of a house 190 kilometres away in Birmingham-- after discovering she was having an affair.

Three sisters were found stabbed to death in the Gaza Strip last week, prompting suspicion they were killed by male relatives as victims of "honour crimes," over suspected immoral behaviour.

The United Nations says at least 5,000 women worldwide are killed each year to defend family honour, increasing numbers of them in Western Europe.

Usha Sood, a British human rights lawyer who specializes in Asian family cases, told BBC Radio "honour crimes of some sort," whether or not they resulted in death, are becoming more common in Britain.

"But certainly honour crimes are being perpetrated in the hundreds every year," she said.

Diana Nammi, of the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organization, told the BBC she believed there were "a lot of cases" of honour killings.

"There are lots of suicide cases where woman have been forced to commit suicide," she added.

Mother-in-law lured victim to assassin; Husband Also Convicted In 'Honour Killing' Of Woman Who Wanted A Divorce

Police estimate there are 30 honour killings a year in Britain, although lawyers and social workers believe the number is much higher and even the police are now re-examining about 100 recent murders that could have been honour killings to see if they can understand the pattern better.

Speaking yesterday after the Athwal verdict was announced, Detective Chief Inspector Clive Driscoll of London's Specialist Crime Directorate said, "This case highlights how seriously we treat any murder or violence, regardless of the motive, whether it be for financial gain or in the name of so-called honour.

"It is the culmination of over eight years work by the Metropolitan Police, and the determination of Surjit's family, to see the perpetrators brought to justice."

The couple, of Sikh origin, had been wed in an arranged marriage -- Surjit, then aged 16, saw her husband for the first time at the ceremony.

Although the marriage produced two children, it was not happy. Surjit Athwal, who worked as a customs officer at Heathrow airport, told friends before her trip to India she intended to divorce her husband, a minibus driver at Heathrow.

"She was a vivacious young girl, was Surjit ... and she had developed a somewhat Westernized style of life," prosecutor Michael Worsley said during the trial.

She cut her hair short, smoked cigarettes and drank alcohol. "They were Sikhs ... Eventually feelings against her boiled over."

Her mother-in-law called a family council to decide what to do and vowed any divorce would happen "over her dead body."

Sarbjit Athwal, another daughter-in-law, said, "My mother-in-law said she wasn't getting on and it was causing too much confusion and problems in the family -- and they were going to get rid of Surjit."

The woman was lured to India on the pretext of attending some family weddings with Bachan Athwal.

"Thereafter, certainly within a few days, she completely disappeared from the surface of the Earth," Mr. Worsley told the court.

Later, Bachan Athwal boasted she had got a relative to strangle her daughter-in-law and throw her body in a river.

The conspirators also forged letters supposed to be from the British police to their Indian counterparts to try to fool them, and faked a document transferring ownership of the home Surjit part-owned into their names.

Surjit's family never believed the story, but found it difficult to interest British police in the case.

"It was after five years of campaigning that the British foreign secretary, Jack Straw, agreed to push our case. The British government never applied the kind of pressure it applied to solve other cases involving missing white people," her brother, Jagdeesh Dhillon, told the Chandigarh Tribune after British police finally laid charges.

The Athwals' story started to unravel when an anonymous caller from India told Surjit's family what had happened. Punjab police arrested two Athwal relatives -- Darshan Singh and Charan Singh -- in 2000, but they were acquitted for lack of evidence.

Another break in the case occurred when relatives of Surjit's husband decided to break their silence despite their fears.

"They were frightened that if they told anybody the same sort of thing might happen to them as they believed happened to the victim," Mr. Worsley said.

Mother-in-law lured victim to assassin; Husband Also Convicted In 'Honour Killing' Of Woman Who Wanted A Divorce

National Post

KILLED BY LOVED ONES

Nahed Hija, 16, and sisters Suha, 19, and Lina, 22, Palestinian Muslims, were found dead from multiple stab wounds in a shallow grave in the Gaza Strip on Sunday. Locals say they were victims of an honour killing, probably by cousins. **Hamas** authorities say they know the identity of the killers and plan to arrest them. Du'a Khalil Aswad, 17, an Iraqi Yazidi, was killed by a crowd in Bashiqa for being seen with a Sunni man (she was reportedly stoned to death). The April 7 attack was recorded on a cellphone camera and broadcast around the world. Banaz Mamod, 20, a British Kurd, was raped, stomped on and strangled in 2006 by relatives and their friends in London because she had fallen in love with a man of whom they did not approve. Her body was stuffed into a suitcase and taken to Birmingham, where it was buried in the back garden of a house. Her father and uncle were found guilty of murder in June and sentenced to life in prison. Amandeep Atwal, 17, a Sikh from Kitimat, B.C., was stabbed to death during a car ride by her father in July, 2003. Atwal, pictured, had refused to end her relationship with a non-Sikh boyfriend. The father was found guilty of second-degree murder. Jaswinder Kaur Sidhu, 25, a Sikh from Maple Ridge, B.C., was kidnapped, tortured and killed in June, 2000. Her body was found in a ditch in Punjab, India. She was allegedly punished because she had defied her family to marry the man she loved, Sukhwinder "Mithu" Singh, a poor auto-rickshaw driver. Indian police charged her mother and an uncle with conspiracy to commit murder, but efforts to extradite them so far have failed. Hatun Surucu, 25, a Turkish woman living in Germany, was killed by her three brothers in 2005 after she ran away from an arranged marriage. Her youngest brother was sentenced to nine years and three months in prison; the other two were acquitted. Fadime Sahindal, 22, a Kurdish woman living in Sweden, was shot and killed by her father in March, 2002. Sahindal, pictured, had refused an arranged marriage in Turkey. She also "shamed" the family in 1998 for a highly publicized court case against her father and brother who had threatened to kill her.

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Graphic

Color Photo: Reuters; (See hardcopy for Photo Description) ;

Color Photo: Reuters; Bachan Athwal, above, and son Sukhdave Singh, pictured separately top left, conspired to have Surjit Athwal, above, killed. ;

Color Photo;; (See hardcopy for Photo Description) ;

Color Photo;; (See hardcopy for Photo Description) ;

Load-Date: July 27, 2007

HOW WISE IS MAJORITY RULE IN AN ILL-INFORMED NATION?

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

July 9, 2007 Monday

0 South Pinellas Edition

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Body

VOTERS' WANTS VS. NEEDS - JULY 5, DAVID BRODER COLUMN

I find myself wondering about the single greatest drawback to majority rule: What if the majority of the people want something that they shouldn't have?

In the country's early days, a majority of people or, at least, a majority of the Founders, recognized that the majority could be wrong. A system of checks and balances was created to give minorities a voice and to keep them from getting swept under the rug. If nothing else, majorities always have had to reconcile their agendas with the Constitution.

The American style of democracy has been successful and, over time, folks have become more comfortable with the idea of majority rule. What has changed today is that that comfort is no longer an informed comfort. It has become a sort of blind faith. It's not adequate to believe that if a majority wants something, it is right for the country. It is necessary to thoroughly understand the underlying logic, motives and long-term consequences. If we don't inform ourselves, no one is going to do it for us. That understanding cannot come from 30-second sound bites.

Having been a news junkie all of my adult life, I've noticed that media outlets that have conservative leanings tend to report statements issued by government officials exactly as they are received, with little commentary or fact checking, and tend not to follow up should any of those statements be later found to be wrong. More liberal leaning outlets tend to try to find "opposing points of view" to any comments they receive, report both, and allow consumers to decide which they believe, again with little commentary or fact checking.

It seems as though the conservative crowd is afraid that critical journalism will make them seem unpatriotic, and the good folks on the left are laboring under the twin misconceptions that all stories actually have two sides, and that all viewpoints are equally valid.

The "majority" can now say or do anything, no matter how irrational it may be, and it will be accepted by a large number, simply because it is accepted by a large number. We're all watching television while Rome burns.

Michael Pettay, Largo

Budgets may trim benefits July 5, story

Follow the money

HOW WISE IS MAJORITY RULE IN AN ILL-INFORMED NATION?

I find it ironic that the cities and governments in the Tampa Bay area pay out \$135.4-million to subsidize employees' health benefits, for maybe 20,000 employees. That amount of money will just about cover the CEOs' annual pay and perks for 10 HMOs. That amount of money has nothing to do with health care of the employees.

Imagine if that amount of money went into the Medicare trust fund and offered Medicare for everyone, while removing the for-profit aspect of our health care system.

Everyone should see the movie Sicko. It was a great movie.

Burt Kauffman, St. Petersburg

Budgets may trim benefits July 5, story

Benefit envy

Kudos to the St. Petersburg Times for exposing the scandalous practice of providing adequate health care benefits to some government workers.

By blowing the lid off this reprehensible situation you've helped raise the level of knowledge and public discourse on this vital topic. I can already hear the conversations around the water cooler: "Those d*&n government employees! They should be getting screwed on their health benefits just like me!"

Keep up the good work!

Jim Barrens, St. Petersburg

Local control is better

The decision by the Hillsborough County Commission - sitting as the Environmental Protection Commission and without prior public hearing - to strip protection of wetlands from local government is bad public policy.

The League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County has consistently advocated that local agencies have responsibility for oversight of land use policy and resource protection. Quite simply, local government provides better protection and service than either state or federal agencies can muster in these areas.

The current Hillsborough County EPC program has long been recognized for its steadfast protection of wetlands. The same cannot be said of state agencies charged with similar responsibilities.

If the decision of the commission stands, Hillsborough County will inevitably lose wetland acreage. As wetlands acreage gets reduced, citizens of Hillsborough County will encounter increased pollution and flooding. They will also be forced to pay for cleaning up the resulting disasters. As our county becomes more developed, environmental protections should be increased, not reduced.

The League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County disagrees with the commission's recent vote. The League continues to support the conservation of two things we all treasure: the environment and local control.

Richard Brown, Ph.D., president-elect, League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County, Tampa

Commission's Blair all wet June 30, editorial

We're watching

Thank you for keeping the public aware of the ridiculous abuses of power by our elected officials. I will make the entire Hillsborough County Commission aware that we are paying attention to their actions by writing to each of them. Thanks, and keep up the good work.

Rick Woods, Tampa

HOW WISE IS MAJORITY RULE IN AN ILL-INFORMED NATION?

Perplexing Islam

Is today's Muslim violence committed in the name of Islam done by a "few" radicals who have "hijacked" Islam? Islam is a religion of peace, moderates say. But what are outsiders to believe since there are various interpretations of Islam and each faction claims authenticity? How do apologists know, as they claim, which faction has "hijacked" the religion?

When **Hamas** flew a green flag after its victory in Gaza, was Islam "hijacked"? When Muslims kill in the name of Allah, shout slogans of death to the West, destroy Muslim holy sites and scream "God is great" while slashing throats, is that face of Islam not as credible as the one claimed to be a religion of peace?

Do moderates tacitly approve of the destruction and vilification of the West done in their name? When ridiculous claims are made that the West is trying to destroy Islam, do moderates offer a strong and appreciative defense for an inclusive and generous Western society, one that has welcomed millions of Muslims as citizens, has educated millions more to take their skills home and has given billions in aid to Muslim countries?

Millions of American Muslims contribute to our society and share its benefits, but what we hear most are tepid protests against the violence and complaints of bigotry. Some Americans would like to know if American Muslims are part of the "Muslim world," often portrayed as unified and anti-West, or does their loyalty to America transcend the "Muslim world"?

Bob Womack, Crystal River

Katrina fixes may hike risk July 2, story

A job for the Dutch

This is the first time I have ever written to a newspaper, but after I read your article about Katrina's levee problems and that the people there are in more peril than before, I got upset.

I was born and raised in the Netherlands (Holland). We lived below sea level all our lives. During World War II, the islands of Zeeland were flooded. After the war, they fixed this. Then, in 1953, we experienced an act of nature - full-moon, high tides and storms, and once more the islands were flooded. This time the Dutch had had enough. They built the now-famous Deltaworks and are now able to control the flooding into these islands.

The Dutch are famous for building and fixing dikes and reclaiming land. My suggestion is to let the Dutch take care of the New Orleans levees. Instead of wasting time and money, I am convinced that they will be able to solve the levee problems once and for all.

Johanna Lacomble, Brandon

Jogger runs into path of freight train - July 6, story

Listen for danger

How sad for this young woman that she will jog no longer, another apparent victim of self-imposed deafness.

Like the boomer who can't hear the ambulance over his stereo and the mother who is brain-damaging her children by strapping them in next to blasting speakers, Cheryl Ann Risse forgot that the human body's ears evolved not to support jewelry but to alert us to danger.

Judy Ellis, St. Petersburg

Load-Date: July 9, 2007

HOW WISE IS MAJORITY RULE IN AN ILL-INFORMED NATION?

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Auntie, how could you?

Guardian.com

July 19, 2007

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theguardian

Length: 1393 words

Highlight: Welcome to the Wrap.

Body

SECRETS, LIES AND BBC PHONE-INS

Publicly-funded Auntie has been deceiving viewers. How can the papers possibly resist?

"Whatever happened to honesty and accuracy?" laments the Times. "What possibly could have been in the minds of the producers of Liz Kershaw's show on the BBC's 6 Music station in 2005? "They announced a competition in which listeners were invited to phone in to try to win a prize. What made this programme idea unique in the history of broadcasting was that there was no way that listeners could win a prize, because all of the callers were members of the production team and their friends, pretending to take part in a competition."

Liz Kershaw's show was not the only one to have deceived listeners and viewers. Comic Relief, Sport Relief, the White Label programme on the World Service, TMI and Children in Need all faked the results of phone-in competitions, generally because production glitches or a lack of entrants made it impossible to choose a genuine winner in the time allowed. Injured Pudsey the Bear, the Children in Need mascot, appears on the front pages of the Mail, Mirror, Times and Sun, the very picture of innocent trust betrayed.

"Whose head should roll at the BBC? Have your say online," says the Telegraph, which is enjoying this. "Mark Thompson, director general? Mark Byford [deputy]? Peter Fincham, BBC1 controller? Jenny Abramsky, director of audio and music? Nigel Chapman, director of the World Service? Richard Deverell, controller of children's TV? Nobody?"

The journalism professor Tim Luckhurst, writing in the Mail, is unequivocal about the reason for the deceit: the BBC's "insatiable hunger for bigger audiences ... Desperate to secure the future of the universal licence fee, the BBC has gone downmarket in a bid to beat commercial competitors at their own game."

The Guardian agrees that the BBC is trying too hard to be "racy". "Almost from its inception, television has had an impulse to prettify. Cutaway shots, sequences of mundane events mocked up to fill space: so much is formulaic ... It is no longer enough for Alan Sugar to be shown in his Essex headquarters - he must star in a chrome and glass boardroom. Such storytelling is acceptable in gameshows, but what yesterday's reports from the BBC indicate is that it has spread further into other parts of output where the audience expects a degree of honesty rather than a spoonful of sugar." The ethics course that the BBC has promised to put 16,500 staff through will not address that, the paper says.

Auntie, how could you?

"It is one thing to hear hard-luck stories of individual researchers scrambling to find a winner for a phone-in competition - and resorting to making up the result. However shoddy, these are cock-ups, not conspiracies. Taken together, however, the handful of failures, including six blunders revealed yesterday, illustrate an attitude that the show must go on - even, in extremis, if that means lying."

The scandal plays into the Sun's hands: the paper has been grumbling about the unfairness of the licence fee for years, and the leader column lets rip. "The Beeb has long been living on borrowed time as the smug repository of leftie opinion, peddled with contempt for the very people who pay its way. It admits it is 'institutionally biased', sneering at those whose views fail to coincide with its liberal consensus - especially on Europe and immigration. It is time to clean out the stables, sack the complacent jobsworths and restore this bureaucratic juggernaut as a responsible national broadcaster. But it may already be too late."

The Independent, meanwhile, is more interested in the Sun's own institutional bias. Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show Tony Blair had three phone conversations with Rupert Murdoch, the head of News International, during the nine days preceding the Iraq invasion. "The day after two of the calls, the Sun launched vitriolic attacks on the French president Jacques Chirac. The government quoted him as saying he would 'never' support military action against Saddam Hussein, a claim hotly disputed by France."

* Believing what you see

* Times: Something is deeply wrong

* Mail: The shaming of the BBC

* Sun: They're bear faced cheats

* Independent: How Murdoch had a hotline to the PM

IRAQI INSURGENTS JOIN FORCES AGAINST US

Timothy Garton-Ash, quoting Fred Halliday, imagines the worst-case scenario in Iraq in the Guardian. "The revitalising of militant Islamism and enhancement of the international appeal of the al-Qaida brand; the eruption for the first time in modern history of internecine war between Sunni and Shia ... the alienation of most sectors of Turkish politics from the west, and the stimulation of authoritarian nationalism there; the strengthening of a nuclear-hungry Iran; and a new regional rivalry, pitting the Islamic Republic of Iran and its allies, including Syria, Hizbullah and Hamas, against Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan." Splitting Iraq into Kurdish, Sunni and Shia regions policed by America would be a "lesser evil", he says. But there is every sign that the US will begin a pullout next year. "Osama bin Laden's plan was to get the US to overreact and over-reach itself. With the invasion of Iraq, President Bush fell slap-bang into that trap."

Two reports appear to support Halliday's prediction of a Sunni-Shia war. One is the Guardian's interview with three leaders of Sunni insurgent groups who have agreed to form an alliance to drive the US out of Iraq. They want to distance themselves from both al-Qaida's suicide bombings aimed at civilians - which are themselves an attempt to divide Iraqis and foment civil war - and the Shia militia who have cooperated with the Iraqi government. The other is a Herald Tribune report that says the Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr "has re-emerged" with his own strategy. He has been wooing the Shia grassroots by providing services the government can no longer afford, including protection. "At the same time, the Mahdi army is not entirely under Sadr's control, and he publicly denounces the most notorious killers fighting in his name."

Meanwhile, the prospects of a change of strategy in the White House seem increasingly remote. "The President is in a very, very commanding position so long as he can maintain his veto-proof majority," Lee Hamilton, the Democratic co-chairman of the Iraq Study Group, tells the Times. "He is not going to pay any attention to the Democrats. He doesn't have to. The president still believes he can win this war. He said so last week. It is inconceivable that General Petraeus will say the surge has failed. So I think we're going to have a military stay-the-course strategy well into next year."

Auntie, how could you?

- * Timothy Garton Ash
- * Insurgents form political front
- * IHT: Iraqi cleric re-emerges, bolder than ever
- * Times: Stubborn president still has the power to stand firm over Iraq

JAIL FOR MOHAMMED CARTOON PROTESTERS

"British police go to hell," reads a placard held by three burka-clad women as a policewoman guards the Old Bailey. "OUTRAGEOUS," splashes the Express. "How these Muslims are repaying our hospitality." The scene was the sentencing of four men for inciting racial hatred during a 2005 demonstration against the Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed.

GOLFERS 'TEED UP ON DRUGS'

Championship golfers are dabbling with steroids and creatine, according to the golfing veteran Gary Player. "I would say there's ten guys taking something," he said yesterday. "It's definitely not lower, but it might be a hell of a lot more." Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson and Nick Faldo all tell the paper the game is clean. "We've proven there's nothing out there we can take to enhance our performance," Faldo said.

- * Times: Carnoustie is rocked by doping allegations

SECOND-HAND AUSTEN FOR SALE

What happened when a frustrated author made minor changes to three Jane Austen novels and sent them to 18 publishers under the name Alison Laydee? As the papers gleefully report, only one, an editor at Jonathan Cape, identified the deception - and Penguin, Austen's publishers, described the chapters as "a really original and interesting read" in the rejection letter.

"Her writing was not universally acknowledged," says the Times drily.

- * The author and the Austen plot

SINCE THE PAPERS WENT TO PRESS

The home secretary, Jacqui Smith, admitted today that she smoked cannabis when she was at university.

Load-Date: July 19, 2007

Life at full volume; A happy blend of the sacred and profane: just like Israel

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

June 2, 2007 Saturday

National Edition

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Section: WEEKEND POST: BOOKS; Pg. WP17

Length: 1113 words

Byline: Benjamin Errett, Weekend Post

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM - Given that the entire nation of Israel is only half the size of Nova Scotia, it is fitting that the country's most acclaimed young writer is best known for his 500- word stories. (It's perhaps less fitting that his stories are populated with talking fish and drugsmuggling dwarfs, but more on that later.)

Like his homeland, Etgar Keret manages to pack a lot into limited space. And like Israel, his stories don't get hung up on subtleties.

"Life in Israel is life at full volume," Keret says over coffee at a suitably noisy Tel Aviv cafe on a sunny spring afternoon.

His fame transcends national borders. Clive James called him "one of the most important writers alive," and Keret's story Kneller's Happy Campers has been made into a film starring Tom Waits and Will Arnett. At the time of our meeting, he had just returned from a screening of the movie in the United States and was quick to contrast the two countries.

"America is a very repressed society," he says. "On the West Coast, they hug you without touching you. I said to my friend there, women have a way of hugging you so you can't touch their boobs."

In person and in his tiny, perfect stories, Keret happily blends the sacred and the profane. This, he says, is the ethos of his country.

"The ultimate Israeli experience is getting in a cab," he says. "You get in and you say, 'Start the meter,' and the cabbie says, 'Why, you asshole?' By the end of the trip, he's sharing his food with you and asks you to marry his daughter."

A ride in a taxi is the basis for one of two stories he's written that are based on real experiences (unlike the story with the talking fish). The Tits of an Eighteen-Year-Old begins with a taxi driver crudely singing the praises of the title. His son is in the army, and when he hears a radio report of a deadly helicopter crash, he calls his worried ex-wife to "yank her chain a little." He mocks her for worrying about their son -- "Yossi isn't a paratrooper, so whaddaya got to worry about?" -- but subtly tricks her into calling the army's open line for parents. When she calls back to tell

Life at full volume; A happy blend of the sacred and profane: just like Israel

him everything is all right, he resumes leering as smoothly as he can. " 'Get a load at that one,' he said, trying to hide his tears. 'Say, wouldn't you like to stick it to her?' "

As would be expected of an author who chronicles life in modern Israel, Keret writes frequently about the military. In a way, he also writes because of it. He joined up with his best friend, and both found the service profoundly depressing. As the two sat in a car late one night, his friend started talking about suicide.

"You can't kill yourself. I love you," Keret told him. "I'm your friend. I'll be miserable if you kill yourself."

"You can't say that I should stay alive because of you," his friend replied. "I have to stay alive because of me, and I can't find a reason to live. If you can come up with a reason why I shouldn't kill myself, I won't do it."

As Keret says now, they sat together

in silence for "the longest four hours of my life." He didn't want to leave, but couldn't think of anything to say. Eventually, he got out of the car. His friend took his own life soon after, and Keret wrote his first story, to try to articulate what he couldn't say in the car.

"All my writing is part of my answer," he says. "My stories, in a way, are commercials for life."

His story *The Nimrod Flip-out* deals most directly with the episode, but the question of why we go on living and what happens if we don't is a recurring theme in Keret's work.

"I do it through fiction because anything you say will be reductive. When you say the name of God, you reduce God to a name. The same goes for life: It's the secular equivalent. The strongest experiences are the ones we can't say."

Not surprisingly, the author has a large following among those serving the compulsory three years in the Israel Defence Force. He remembers one book signing, when two soldiers approached him and issued a challenge.

"Tell him the name of one of your stories," one of the men demanded of the author. Keret did so, and the other soldier recited its opening sentence.

"He had been in jail in Thailand for trafficking drugs, and mine was the only book he had," Keret, who is 40, recalls. At another book signing, a soldier proudly showed him a tattoo of the author's trademark image, a

smiley face with a gun to its head.

Keret's legions of young fans surprised David Elrich, owner of the Tmol Shilshom bookstorecafe in Jerusalem. The comfortable space on the second floor of an old apartment building has hosted authors ranging from the venerable Amos Oz to unpublished poets, but rarely had it been as crowded as when Keret came to read.

"When I invited him, the room was packed with people in their 20s and younger," Elrich recalls. "I got very excited before he even entered the room."

A frequent visitor to literary festivals around the world, Keret can't avoid wading into the politics of modern Israel. He's proud of his collaboration with Palestinian writer Samir El Youssef on the book *Gaza Blues*, and it pleases him that his work has been published in the Palestinian Authority. As he explains, a character in *Gaza Blues* makes the choice between joining the PLO and joining *Hamas* "based on the drugs and the loose women. Before that, I never thought people might join the PLO because they wanted to get laid."

"When you see the Other in only harsh situations, you think there's something very clear in his mind," he says. "That's not true for anyone."

It's an ambiguity that surfaces throughout his work, and one that makes it difficult for him to accept strident, one-dimensional views.

Life at full volume; A happy blend of the sacred and profane: just like Israel

"Why say that you are pro- Israelis and anti-Palestinians, or vice versa? What am I, the common cold? Why can't people say this is a complex situation that requires complex views? Israel is not a football team. You don't have to cheer for it or against it."

Which brings us to the talking fish. In the story Halibut, two Israelis are having lunch by the sea. One orders the halibut and is eager to share the news of his upcoming nuptials. He loves his country, while his lunch companion is tired of it and would move if it weren't for his business. The companion orders the talking fish, but is upset when it refuses to speak. Eventually the happy Israeli gets annoyed and departs, leaving his companion alone with the fish.

"Take off," the fish whispers. "Grab a cab to the airport and take the first plane out."

"I have commitments here, business," the diner responds.

"Never mind, forget it. I'm depressed," the fish adds later.

"That's the process of writing," Etgar Keret says as the sunny afternoon turns to evening. "Waiting for the fish to talk."

Graphic

Black & White Photo: Anne-christine Poujoulat, Afp, Getty Images; Keret and co-director Shira Geffen won this year's Camera d'Or award at Cannes for Meduzot. ;

Load-Date: June 2, 2007

5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

May 28, 2007 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. B12

Length: 1272 words

Byline: Compiled by Frankie Thornhill, Calgary Herald

Body

Top Stories

Memorial Planned for Boy

Three weeks ago, a Calgary family celebrated the third birthday of their fraternal twins.

Now, after a freak accident, they're planning a memorial for one of the twins, a little boy whose life was cut short Saturday.

Page A1

School Boards May Unite in Quest for Funding

Calgary's public and Catholic school boards may join forces in their quest for government funding, now that two Edmonton school boards are partnering to get new schools built.

The move is an effort to secure some of the \$300 million worth of cash set aside by Alberta Education Minister Ron Liepert for schools built using innovative funding models.

Page A1

High-Tech Travel

A white paper being presented to government in Ottawa today notes that Canada must prepare for the the inevitable move to biometric and DNA coded documents for cross-border travel.

Page A1

News Sections -- A and B

City & Region

Calgary Boy Joins Top Spellers in Scripps Bee

Canada's top spellers left their hometowns Sunday and landed in Washington, D.C., to compete in the 2007 Scripps National Spelling Bee, a two-day competition that begins Wednesday. Among them was Calgary speller Cody Wang, 13, who won the Southern Alberta regional competition in March in only his second year competing.

Page A8

Lilac Festival Draws 100,000

Calgary's busy festival season kicked into high gear Sunday, with great weather, which helped draw more than 100,000 people to the annual Lilac Festival, organizers said.

Page B1

No Room for Church in Stampede's Victoria Park

After 15 years ministering to the homeless, addicts and families in the inner-city community, the Victory Outreach Centre church is making way for Stampede Park's expansion northward.

Page B1

Canada

Myths of Vancouver Drug Injection Site Shot Down

The top policy adviser to federal Health Minister Tony Clement ordered officials to debunk five "myths" about Vancouver's Safe Injection Site, just before Clement announced his refusal last year to extend the site's permit.

Page A12

World

U.S. Rescues Hostages

U.S. forces raided an al-Qaeda in Iraq hideout on Sunday, rescuing 41 people who had been kidnapped by the terror group, some as long as four months ago.

Page A13

Israeli PM Dims Hopes for Ceasefire

Moments after learning an Israeli had been killed by a homemade Qassam rocket launched from the Palestinian territory, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert declared Sunday his government has no timetable to end retaliatory air strikes in the Gaza Strip whether or not Hamas and Islamic Jihad stopped the attacks.

Page A9

Traffic

- Road closure: Centre Street is closed between 12th and 16th Avenues for about two months to upgrade deep utilities. Only local commercial and residential traffic will be permitted to travel between 12th and 15th Avenues.
- Ramp closure: The entrance ramp from northbound 14th Street onto eastbound Glenmore Trail at 20th Street S.W. is closed until Dec. 31.
- Road closure: 2nd Street between 2nd and 3rd avenues S.W. until July 5.
- Pathway closure: On 90th Avenue between 16th Street and 24th Street S.W. until May 17 at 4 p.m.

Commuter Weather

6 A.M. Off to Work: Variably cloudy.

Temperature: 8 C

12 Noon Lunch: Variably cloudy.

Temperature: 13 C

5 P.M. Heading Home: Partly cloudy.

Temperature: 14 C

Overnight: Clearing. Low: 7 C

Tuesday: Sunny with cloudy periods. High: 19 C, Low: 5 C

Sunday: High: 20.5 C Low: 8.7 C

Online Extras

News: Opposition MPs want hearings into summer jobs program.

Sports: Champ Car star Tracy doesn't let fractured back keep him off track.

Sports: Senators hope history is on their side in Stanley Cup final.

Quote of the Day

"There will be no immunity for anyone involved in terror"

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, after learning an Israeli was killed by a Qassam rocket launched from the Palestinian territory.

See story, Page A9

Calgary Business -- b5

Strong Loonie May Sift Weaker Players From Mix

Canadian industry is taking a bruising from the country's strong dollar, but it is short-term pain for long-term gain as weaker players are sifted from the corporate mix.

This past week the loonie hit three-decade highs against the U.S. dollar. That exacts a big toll on the manufacturing sector and makes exports costlier, but the adjustment process is bound to benefit the sector.

If anything, observers say, the lofty loonie will separate the wheat from the chaff and adaptable, efficient companies will be left standing.

Page B5

Fees for Online Features Not Popular With Gamers

New charges for online features are sharply raising the price serious video gamers pay for Xbox 360 games, a profitable move by Microsoft Corp., but one that could alienate some fans.

Page B7

Editorial -- A16

Canada Has Image of Being Soft on Corporate Crime

A decade after Bre-X Minerals was revealed to be behind the world's greatest gold mining scam, Canada has made little progress in prosecuting white-collar criminals.

Page A16

Letter of the Day

"It's good to see bylaw officers out enforcing speed limits on the city's bike paths. . . . Spandex-clad roadies need to show more safety and respect for others on the pathways."

David Fisher, Page A16

Sports -- D1

California Cartoon Depicts Canada's Love of Hockey

Sunday's sports cartoon in the Orange County Register depicted this Stanley Cup final as a battle between the Anaheim Ducks against Canada.

Not just against the Ottawa Senators. The entire country.

In the cartoon, the Anaheim player stands alone, with only a duck beside him. Behind the Ottawa player stands an entire country, from Mounties to grizzly bears to lumberjacks.

Page D1

Scoreboard

American League Baseball

L.A. Angels 4 N.Y. Yankees 3

Baltimore 8 Oakland 4

Tampa Bay 11 Chicago White Sox 5

Seattle 7 Kansas City 4

Minnesota 4 Toronto 2

Boston 6 Texas 5

Cleveland 5 Detroit 3

National League Baseball

Philadelphia 13 Atlanta 6

N.Y. Mets 6 Florida 4

Pittsburgh 14 Cincinnati 10

Washington 7 St. Louis 2

San Diego 3 Milwaukee 0

Colorado 6 San Francisco 4

L.A. Dodgers 2 Chicago Cubs 1

Arizona 8 Houston 4

National Basketball Ass'n

Cleveland 88 13 Detroit 82

Major League Soccer

Salt Lake 0 Chicago 0

Real Life -- C5

Babies and New Moms Shake It Up in Salsa Class

Calgary's Tracey Wishlow is just one of hundreds of women across North America shedding their pregnancy weight to a Latin beat at Salsa Babies classes, the latest in mother-and-baby fitness programs.

Page C5

Sudoku

World's Hottest Puzzle Craze

How to Play:

Complete this grid by placing the digits 1 to 9 exactly once, and only once, in each horizontal row and in each column. Also, each digit should only appear once in every 3x3 shaded or white mini-grid in the puzzle. Sudoku appears on the 5 Minute Herald page Monday to Friday and on the Saturday and Sunday puzzle pages.

Entertainment -- C1

TV Networks Struggle to Hang on to Viewers

It's been a wild and wacky season for network TV.

Prime-time television viewing dropped significantly compared with last season. The steepest decline was in live viewership, which fell 10 per cent year-over-year among the four major broadcast networks.

Even the best and the brightest saw declines, including Desperate Housewives, Lost, Grey's Anatomy, CSI: Miami and ER.

Page C1

It's An Odd World

Who Says the Internet Will Replace Newspapers?

Earlier this year, Joshua Vannoy, 18, filed a lawsuit against the Big Beaver Falls School District near Pittsburgh for the disruption to his high school years when he and his family had to move because Joshua was being taunted. It seems Joshua wore a Broncos jersey to class before a Denver-Pittsburgh playoff football game. He was forced by a teacher to sit on the floor and endure paper wads being thrown at him because he was, according to the teacher, a "stinking Denver fan."

Graphic

Colour Photo: Ron Liepert ;

Colour Photo: Cody Wang ;

Colour Photo: Ehud Olmert ;

Colour Photo: Mykhaylo Markiv, Reuters; Picture of the Day: Fans of FC Dynamo Kiev clash with riot police in the Olympiyski stadium during the Ukrainian Cup final soccer match in Kiev on Sunday. ;

Colour Photo: Loonie ;

Photo: (See hard copy for description). ;

Load-Date: May 28, 2007

End of Document

Spare me the woman driver

Irish Independent

May 22, 2007 Tuesday

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Independent.ie 

Section: LETTERS

Length: 1248 words

Body

I was driving on the N11, and sticking to the 60 kph speed limit where the roadworks are. A dumb blond driving a black golf, wearing the darkest possible shades, was coming from the Enniskerry road, and so I moved to the outside lane to let her join. I then realised that she was driving beside me, not obeying the limit, but rather blocking me. I sped up as I needed to take the next exit - and she sped up also, on seeing me indicate. I was left with two choices. Either jam on the brakes on the outside lane, or speed up even more and 'cut in' in front of her. As I was being tailgated as it was, I had to do the latter. This seems to happen a lot . . . pull to the outside lane to let someone filter on, and they start a "race".

The question here is not so much who is wrong, but rather who is more likely to be seen as wrong, and who is creating the danger.

The great feminist from the Road Safety Authority, Noel Brett, is making our roads more dangerous. I recall that, coming up to the bank holiday weekend, he was suggesting that women should keep an eye on the menfolk. The very same day I tried to overtake a woman who would not drive near the limit on main roads, yet was happy to do 80 kph through 60 (town) zones. A "safe" driver, this woman had a child in the front seat, and she put the boot down as I was overtaking.

Absolving one gender from responsibility seems odd to say the least, given our dire standard of driving among women as well as men. I suppose according to this "logic" I should have driven to Loughlinstown and back to take my turn for Bray. ANTHONY HALPIN, HERBERT ROAD, BRAY, CO WICKLOW

Tony Blair's boost for FFHow sad that Tony Blair should intervene in our election here on behalf of Fianna Fail while his sister Labour party was ignored. I find it strange that its leader here, Pat Rabbitte, did not take him on for doing so.

But then of course Tony Blair was never really Labour. He was more to the right of Margaret Thatcher who at least would not be bullied by the USA as she showed during the Falklands war. Former US President Jimmy Carter has deplored Mr Blair's subservience to Bush.

I recall John Major asking people to vote for George Bush Snr the first time Clinton won. When Major next visited Washington he was cold shouldered by the same Mr Clinton and this was one of the weapons used by Irish America and Noraid to curry favour with the new administration.

Spare me the woman driver

I also recall Mr Haughey's riposte to Garret FitzGerald for having lunch with a harmless old British toff, the Duke of Norfolk, and also for accepting a lift home in an RAF jet from Mrs Gandhi's funeral in India.

As Mr Haughey said, Britain keep out of our affairs. BRIAN MCCAFFREY, CLIFTON CRESCENT, GALWAY

Palestinians deserve more Alan Johnston's abduction has symbolised the state of chaos and lawlessness in the Gaza strip which is threatening to spiral out of control. He was an ardent supporter of the Palestinians who went the extra mile to report their utter misery and agonising pain under the yoke of Israeli occupation to the entire world.

This kidnapping and the continued factional infighting between Fatah and Hamas is the direct result of Mahmoud Abbas's inability or unwillingness to exert any tangible influence over warring Palestinian factions.

He has neither fought the scourge of corruption that has already dragged Palestinian society into the abyss, nor has he delivered on his pledge to advance the prospects of peace in the Middle East.

Israel's occupation is the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict. But it cannot always be used as a scapegoat for mass murder committed by disgruntled Palestinian factions.

The long-suffering Palestinian people deserve better. They deserve a genuine leadership capable of realising their aspirations of independence, security and self-determination. DR MUNJED FARID AL QUTOB, COLLINGHAM ROAD, LONDON SW5 0NT

Murder of a Muslim girl I sit and write in a state of shock. My mind cannot accept what my eyes have just seen.

The images are too disturbing, too brutal for my senses to comprehend.

Watching the news channel CNN, I would almost have thought it was a biblical re-enactment were it not for the shiny mobile phones in the background, a horrible juxtaposition of modern technology and ancient brutishness.

A teenage girl who should be studying and enjoying her youth and beauty is dragged from her home, her hair torn and bloodied.

Then we witness her life being extinguished with stones, kicks and spit, a gleeful village cheers and mocks while Iraqi police do nothing.

Her crime?

Falling in love with a Muslim from another sect.

This monstrous act is without doubt the vilest and most barbaric crime.

Worse still, this is no isolated incident across the Islamic world. Women are commonly murdered for "honour".

In the past we protested against apartheid, poverty and other oppressions. Where is the movement to highlight this shame? JOHN DUNPHY, GRIFFITH COLLEGE, DUBLIN 8

Arms on show at Salthill The Irish Independent recently announced that "Britain's newest aircraft, the Eurofighter Typhoon, is to be one of the star attractions at the Salthill Air Show in Galway next month which is expected to attract as many as 100,000 spectators. The supersonic Typhoon, one of the most advanced aircraft in the world, has just come into service with the Royal Air Force, and will be making its first appearance in Ireland."

When does it intend to make its second?

The last phrase of that obvious press release is almost funny. I quote the newspaper item in full here.

Spare me the woman driver

Now Salthill Airshow has become a weapons exhibition, a killers' vending-stall, paid for by Galway City Council - who can't give us clean water to drink but have money for this and hefty dig-outs to Galway Arts Festival - and is virtually advertised as such.

We appear not to care that, as always with such events, Salthill has creepily become a platform upon which weapons manufacturers can stealthily set out their wares.

It seems to me that the good people of Galway are walking about in a daze, quite impervious to what is being done in their name at City Hall by a few vested business interests. Have we absolutely no pride left? No thought for those whom such weapons are designed to kill, weapons that now take their test-runs over Galway Bay? Is our city now merely a display-rack for British arms manufacturers? FRED JOHNSTON, CIRCULAR ROAD, GALWAY

An alarming situation Anyone who is thinking of installing a house alarm which has phone monitoring as its basis should be conscious that the Gardai are not contacted and come running to the rescue having got a call from the company that you're in trouble.

Because of TV advertising which inducts personal attention from uniformed individuals, it has been my experience, and that of everyone I have spoken to they buy with police safety in mind.

Read the small print and you will find there is a policy among the top companies to not ring the Gardai at all. They don't wish to waste police time, apparently.

You can forget about your wellbeing being the priority, short of a company ringing what they call a "keyholder" (a friend or relative) who they contact if your alarm goes off, and who are then expected to check things out.

Should said keyholder arrive to find you lying on the floor after being attacked by an intruder, and then call the authorities themselves, that's the most you can expect.

Sleep well. ROBERT O'SULLIVAN, BANTRY, CO CORK

Load-Date: May 22, 2007

5 Minute Herald

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

May 16, 2007 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: CITY & REGION; Pg. B12

Length: 1269 words

Byline: Compiled by Frankie Thornhill, Calgary Herald

Body

Breaking news at calgaryherald.com

Compiled by Frankie Thornhill, Calgary Herald

Top Stories

Liberals join Tories in protesting U of C funding

The University of Calgary has received almost \$400 million less in provincial funding than University of Alberta over the past few years, argue Calgary Tory MLAs who are calling on their government to level the "inequities" between the two institutions.

In a rare occurrence of bipartisanship, Calgary Liberals have joined their Conservative foes in taking up the U of C's fight, insisting the university is getting "shortchanged."

Page A1

Hep A found in staff member at Wildwood Grill

Hundreds of patrons of a popular southwest Calgary restaurant may have been exposed to the potentially fatal hepatitis A virus, after a food handler tested positive following a trip to southeast Asia.

The Wildwood Grill and Brewing Company voluntarily closed its doors early Tuesday after officials from the Calgary Health Region told them a female staff member had tested positive for the virus.

Page A1

News Sections -- a and B

City & Region

Bus driver rescues toddler from busy street

5 Minute Herald

A 23-month-old boy who ran from his Falconridge home when another child in the house opened the door was plucked from a busy street by Calgary Transit driver Guddi Parmar.

Page B1

Driving instructor faked documents for truckers

Jaswant Singh, a former Calgary driving instructor was sentenced to 90 days in jail for providing false documents to truck drivers that allowed them to acquire Class 1 driver's licences.

Page B8

Canada

RCMP Officers File Suits for Job Harassment

The RCMP were dealt another internal blow Tuesday when five officers in southwestern Ontario filed lawsuits for compensation of \$1 million dollars each after allegations of job harassment and intimidation were ignored.

Page A5

World

Moral Majority Leader Dies

The Rev. Jerry Falwell, a televangelist whose Moral Majority group forged conservative Christians into a formidable political force, died suddenly Tuesday in his office in Lynchburg, Va.

Page A8

Granddaughter of Wartime PM Will Run for Parliament

Yuko Tojo, the granddaughter of wartime Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, who was executed for crimes against humanity, said Tuesday she will run for a parliamentary seat in July to "restore the honour" of those who gave their lives for Japan.

Page A13

Gunfights Erupt in Gaza

Hamas and Fatah gunmen made a further mockery of the Palestinian unity government with 14 more deaths Tuesday in the Gaza Strip.

Page A11

- Road closure: Centre Street North will be closed between 12th and 16th avenues for about two months to upgrade deep utilities. Only local commercial and residential traffic will be permitted to travel between 12th and 15th avenues. Detour to Edmonton Trail.

- Lane closure: On 36th Street at 44th Avenue N.E., the left lane is closed in the southbound direction until May 18.

- Lane closure: Left lane closed on Nose Hill Drive at Scenic Acres Boulevard N.W. until May 31.

Quote of the Day

If they wanted to register their disapproval of the Stelmach government, this would be the time to do it

5 Minute Herald

Bruce Foster, chairman of the policy studies department at Mount Royal College, referring to the Calgary-Elbow byelection as a barometer of support in the city for the Tories. See story, Page A4

Traffic

- Road closure: Centre Street North will be closed between 12th and 16th avenues for about two months to upgrade deep utilities. Only local commercial and residential traffic will be permitted to travel between 12th and 15th avenues. Detour to Edmonton Trail.
- Lane closure: On 36th Street at 44th Avenue N.E., the left lane is closed in the southbound direction until May 18.
- Lane closure: Left lane closed on Nose Hill Drive at Scenic Acres Boulevard N.W. until May 31.

Commuter Weather

7 A.M. Off to Work: Sunny.

Temperature: 14 C

12NOON Lunch:

Sunny.

Temperature: 22 C

5P.M. Heading Home: Variable cloudy..

Temperature: 20 C

OVERNIGHT: Mainly clear. Low: 6 C

THURSDAY: Mainly sunny.

High: 20 C Low: 9 C

TUESDAY: High: 19.3 C Low: 1.1 C

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Editorial a16

Ellie e8

Entertainment e1

Horoscope e4

Q & Inbox a17

Real Life e7

Sports d1

Television e12

Online Extras

NEWS: Justice minister to draft identity theft laws.

NEWS: Privacy boss remains wary of no-fly list.

NEWS: Accused denies sexual assault on murdered woman.

SPORTS: Demsey inspired to get back on PGA tour after one week with peers.

Calgary Business -- C1

Markets

- TSX Composite 31.36 13934.64

- Dow Jones 37.06 13383.84

t Nasdaq 21.15 2525.29

t TSX Venture 37.02 3272.63

Calgary's High-End Home Sales Up 38% Over 2006

A report released Tuesday by Royal LePage Real Estate Services says sales of million-dollar-plus homes in Calgary are up 38 per cent compared to last year. "We are seeing an influx of purchasers to the upper-end market and are also seeing prices this city has never experienced before," said Corinne Lyall of Calgary's Royal LePage Benchmark.

Page C1

Alberta Faces Battles

Alberta will be the central battleground for Canada's two largest geopolitical challenges over the next decade -- becoming a global energy superpower and reducing greenhouse gas emissions -- according to a report released Tuesday by the Bank of Nova Scotia.

Page C3

Editorial -- A16

Stelmach Faces Voter Test

The June 12 outcomes of two byelections that Premier Ed Stelmach called Tuesday will clearly signal how much his government needs to worry about urban unrest.

Page A16

Letter of the Day

Too many taxpayers are becoming land poor in that their property value no longer is proportional to their income.

Barry Cosgrove, Page A17

Sports -- D1

Blue Jays pitcher sparkles in big-league debut

Toronto Blue Jays rookie Jesse Litsch missed a complete game by an out, but got a win for Toronto in front of 30,958 fans after his big-league debut on Tuesday night.

Page D3

Tiger Earns Shots at Glory

Matt Keetley, the Calgary Flames' draft choice, is the Western Hockey League's 2007 playoff MVP after leading his Medicine Hat Tigers to a Game 7 win over the Vancouver Giants in the WHL final late Sunday night at the 'Hat.

Page D1

Scoreboard

Major League Baseball

American League

Detroit 7 Boston 2

Cleveland 15 Minnesota 7

Toronto 2 Baltimore 1

Tampa Bay 4 Texas 3

N.Y. Yankees at Chicago White Sox N

L.A. Angels at Seattle N

Kansas City at Oakland N

National League

Atlanta 6 Washington 2

Philadelphia 4 Milwaukee 3

Florida 9 Pittsburgh 3

Chicago Cubs 10 N.Y. Mets 1

Cincinnati at San Diego 0

San Francisco at Houston N

Arizona 3 Colorado N

St. Louis at L.A. Dodgers N

Real Life -- E7

Food on a Stick

Take these techniques with you on your next wilderness adventure and you'll find the discovery of food on a stick is the greatest thing since before sliced bread.

Page E7

Entertainment -- E1

Lindsay Lohan Rules

According to Maxim magazine, Lindsay Lohan is the hottest woman in the world right now.

The Georgia Rule actress-troublemaker tops the magazine's eighth annual Hot 100 list, a ranking by editors weighing buzz and beauty for women in film, TV, music, sports and fashion.

Page E1

Tonight's TV picks:

- Lost: 9 p.m. on CTV (Ch. 3).
- Secrets of the Dead: Irish Escape: 9 p.m. on PBS (Ch. 14).

It's An Odd World

Blood Loss Makes for Better Bar Experience

The University of Minnesota campus newspaper reported earlier this year that some students are combining trips to the blood bank to make donations with quick trips to local bars for a drink or two, because they report a quicker and more powerful "high" immediately after blood loss.

Said one, "As soon as the needle's out of my arm, I'm out the door (headed for a bar). The rest of the night's a good one."

Graphic

Colour Photo: The U of C rock ;

Colour Photo: Jaswant Singh ;

Colour Photo: Jerry Falwell ;

Colour Photo: Yuko Tojo ;

Colour Photo: David Oziel, Associated Press; PICTURE OF THE DAY: An effigy of teachers union leader Elba Esther burns Tuesday in front of police as teachers marched to protest recent reforms to the state pension system, marking the Day of the Teacher in Mexico City. ;

Colour Photo: Corinne Lyall ;

Colour Photo: Jesse Litsch ;

Colour Photo: (See hard copy for photo). ;

Load-Date: May 16, 2007

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A bloody nose for Bush but his brutality goes on

Daily Mail (London)

November 11, 2006 Saturday

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Section: ED IRE; Pg. 19

Length: 1317 words

Byline: EAMON DUNPHY

Body

AS THE results of Tuesday's midterm Congressional elections filtered out, the world reacted joyfully.

First the Republicans lost the House of Representatives. Within hours the despised Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was sacked.

The Senate race was close; even Democrats didn't expect to win. However, win they did when George Allen the incumbent Republican senator for Virginia conceded to his Democrat rival Jim Webb on Thursday. That Allen's defeat should hammer the final nail in George W Bush's political coffin was ironic.

A fortnight ago Allen held a doubledigit lead over his Democrat opponent.

Poised for a big win, Allen was touted as a possible Republican candidate for the presidency in 2008. Then, at a campaign stop a week ago, his handsomely glib religious-right mask slipped.

A young man of Indian descent working for Jim Webb heckled Allen. The would-be Republican president responded by calling the Democrat volunteer a 'macaca' a racial slur that denotes a species of monkey.

The Bush presidency is over. Sanity has prevailed. The hope now must be that the world's most powerful nation will be reconciled with the international community.

Buried along with Bush are the unelected architects of his foreign policy which has cast the world

The neocons occupied key positions in Bush's administration from the start.

Paul Wolfowitz was Rumsfeld's No.2 at the Pentagon. Doug Feith was No.3.

Lewis 'Scooter' Libby, a Wolfowitz protege was Dick Cheney's Chief of Staff.

John Bolton, the notorious rightwing hardman now U.S. Ambassador to the UN, kept his neocon eye on Colin Powell at the State Department.

Elliott Abrams was appointed to head Middle East policy at the National Security Council. Until forced to resign because of a lobbying scandal, the malevolent figure of Richard Perle was chairman of a Defence Department advisory body.

A bloody nose for Bush but his brutality goes on

Working assiduously to promote war outside the administration was James Woolsey, former director of the CIA. It was Woolsey who tried repeatedly to link Saddam Hussein to 9/11 and to anthrax letters allegedly discovered in Washington.

These men sowed the seeds of war. Their connections will be of interest to historians analysing the origins of the Iraq adventure. The neocons are part of America's so-called Jewish lobby. And that has close links to the religious right, Bush's electoral base.

The neocons are not representative of most Jewish Americans, who vote Democrat. Curiously, the most fervent Jewish lobbyists in the United States are Southern Protestant fundamentalists. They believe that God gave all of Palestine to the Jews.

It's not so long since Donald Rumsfeld sneeringly referred to Old Europe France and Germany as irrelevant. The United Nations was similarly dismissed by Rumsfeld and the shadowy unelected neocons who pulled his strings. The UN was damned as a 'talking shop'.

Which, of course, it is. Imperfect, like the world we live in. If they possessed a core principle, the neocons who hijacked U.S. foreign policy on Bush's watch believed in realism.

According to such people, the 21st century would be shaped by America.

With its economic and military power, America was not obliged to engage with troublesome nations which didn't share its world view. Hence Old Europe was regarded with contempt.

Limp-wristed liberals offered another target. Appeasers and compromisers, appeasing dictators, compromising on core values.

A key tenet of neoconservative thought was that America's enemies were emboldened by liberal weakness.

Clinton, the quintessential liberal hate figure, had, after all, failed to punish Osama bin Laden for his attacks on U.S. interests.

Israel was, obviously, another neocon cause, besieged by hostile neighbours, the terrorists of **Hamas** and Hezbollah, yet restrained by successive U.S. administrations from retaliating with the brutal force we have seen in recent years.

9/11 was a godsend for the neocons.

Proof that America's enemies were winning. It was time to take the gloves off; time to unleash American power; time to teach the world a lesson. That was the neocon story.

AFGHANISTAN was America's first target. It was from there that bin Laden planned 9/11, therefore Afghanistan was a legitimate target. That brief campaign yielded little. Bin Laden remained elusive, no tangible result was possible.

A larger, softer target was required to avenge 9/11. Enter Saddam Hussein.

It was Bush's Secretary of State Colin Powell who first described the neocons as crazies.

He was on the money but failed to convince his president. Instead of resigning, Powell told lies to the UN Security Council.

Others among them Bill Kristol editor of the must-read conservative magazine the Weekly Standard provided the intellectual case for war. How crazy these guys are can be gauged by reading a Weekly Standard editorial penned six weeks ago which urged the bombing of Iran's nuclear facilities.

'It's going to happen eventually,' Kristol argued, 'why not do it next week?' Hubris, evaporated by this week's vote.

A bloody nose for Bush but his brutality goes on

In the 12 months post 9/11, Bush settled his determination to take out Saddam.

Polls taken during that period showed that more than 60 per cent of Americans believed that Saddam was responsible for 9/11. The American media has a lot to answer for in this regard, Fox News and the rightwing radio shock jocks in particular.

The idea that Osama bin Laden and Saddam were collaborators was preposterous. Bin Laden was anathema to the tyrant, his brand of Shia fundamentalism poison to the secular Butcher of Baghdad.

But Bush needed blood, Muslim blood, so the case for war was concocted.

The new Democrat Congress will doubtless investigate the falsehoods presented to the American people, and the United Nations, to make the case for war.

In truth there was no war, merely a brutal invasion codenamed Shock 'n' Awe, followed by a bloody occupation.

RUNNING parallel, the sickening war crimes, Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, the binning of the Geneva Convention and the redefinition of torture by Alberto Gonzalez, Bush's handpicked Attorney General.

Extraordinary rendition entered the English language. Suspected terrorists captured and flown to secret destinations in countries where torture is permitted.

This dreadful dark period in the history of the United States is without precedent. Last Tuesday's vote may bring it to an end. There are, however, troubling features of the past three and a half years that will linger indelibly in the mind.

How little we protested as human rights were trampled upon. How slyly mute our own Government remained to stay onside with those conducting this criminal campaign.

How easily Bush's lapdog Tony Blair could bind his country and his New Labour party to the neocon obscenities which were far worse than Vietnam.

The impotence of Europe, with a few honourable exceptions.

The re-election of George W Bush in 2004 was one of the worst moments.

That the American people would return this bloodsoaked fool to the White House spoke ominously of their ignorance, perhaps indifference.

With every atrocity committed in our name came the uneasy feeling that we were being propelled ever closer to a conflict with our Muslim brothers. The War On Terror is a war on Islam. If you have no quarrel with Muslims and in Ireland we don't you are accused of weakness.

Racist elements in the Irish media sought to exploit cultural differences that are entirely manageable in a tolerant society. Which is what we are fortunate enough to have, something to cherish and guard.

This week's welcome vote in the United States will not erase the shame of Bush's Middle East adventure.

Too many have died, been tortured or otherwise abused. On the day that Rumsfeld fled from office, the Israelis slaughtered 18 Palestinians from a single family in Gaza, 14 of the victims women and children.

The brutal oppression in the Middle East will continue by other means.

There is nothing we in Ireland can do, except stand idly by.

A bloody nose for Bush but his brutality goes on

Graphic

BLOODTHIRSTY: BUSH ON A CARRIER WHEN HE APPEARED WITH A 'MISSION ACCOMPLISHED' BANNER

Load-Date: November 12, 2006

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A Liberal Brother at Odds With the Muslim Brotherhood

The New York Times

October 21, 2006 Saturday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 3; Foreign Desk; Pg. 4; THE SATURDAY PROFILE

Length: 1210 words

Byline: By MICHAEL SLACKMAN

Dateline: CAIRO

Body

GAMAL AL-BANNA is 85, and for much of his life he has been overshadowed by his famous brother, Sheik Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist political party and antecedent of a host of militant Islamist organizations, from Al Qaeda to *Hamas*.

That seems to have suited him just fine, though. He liked to write, read and think. His sister left him a lot of money, and so for decades, that is exactly how he spent his days.

His bedroom is at one end of a dusty old apartment on a chaotic street in the center of the city. At the other end is his office, his desk piled high with papers. In between are books -- some 30,000 of them -- arranged neatly on floor-to-ceiling shelves. One section is devoted to the 100 or so books he has written and translated over the course of his lifetime.

But Mr. Banna is no longer living in his brother's shadow. And, like the organization his brother founded, the younger Mr. Banna is no friend of the establishment, but for quite a different reason. He is a liberal thinker, a man who would like to see Islamic values and practices interpreted in the context of modern times. Egypt's gatekeepers of religious values, the government-appointed and self-appointed arbiters of God's word, condemn, dismiss and dispute what he says. They have also banned at least one of his books.

"Gamal al-Banna has opinions that fall outside the scope of religion," said Sheik Omar el-Deeb, deputy in charge of Al Azhar, the centuries-old seat of Islamic learning in Cairo. "The people, of course, oppose anybody who talks about things that violate religion."

Mr. Banna likes to wear a blue collarless suit, buttoned to the very top. He prefers sandals to shoes, and wears his thin, wiry white hair swept back. He is often laughing, a kind of knowing chuckle that seems to say he knows better, by virtue of his age and experience.

He doesn't press his ideas, does not try to wage a contest with the institution of Al Azhar, but instead takes the long-term view, hoping to plant a few seeds that will, in time, take root and spread. He recognizes that, at the moment, the other side is winning the contest of ideas in Egypt, and the region.

A Liberal Brother at Odds With the Muslim Brotherhood

"If religion was correctly understood, it would be a power of liberation," Mr. Banna said. "But it is misunderstood, and so it is driving us backward."

The views alleged to fall outside religion include those on women: They are not required to wear a veil, as most do in Egypt, Mr. Banna believes; they should not be forced to undergo genital cutting, as most do now in Egypt; and they should be allowed to lead men in prayer, which is forbidden in Egypt.

"My idea is that man is the aim of religion, and religion only a means," said Mr. Banna. "What is prevalent today is the opposite."

Egypt, often looked to as a center of moderate Islam, is, like the rest of the Arab world, becoming more conservative and less tolerant of opposing religious views, according to thinkers like Mr. Banna. Since August there have been at least three high-profile cases here where religious officials condemned, or sought to have criminally charged, people or publications promoting religious ideas they deemed offensive.

"When the Muslims used to disagree, they had different schools of thought," said Sayed el-Qemni, another reform-minded writer who lives in a small city outside of Cairo. "No one would point to the other and say, 'This is not Islam.' But when one school of thought says, 'I am the correct school of thought and everyone else deserves death,' then you are starting a new religion."

Mr. Qemni has received death threats for some of his writings, and sleeps with two police officers guarding his house.

BY contrast, Mr. Banna exudes a sense of impunity. That, he says, is not a result of his name, though it is a powerful force in a society where family ties are deeply respected, but because "I am free."

He is free because he has been careful not to become involved in political movements -- and because of his sister, Fawziyya, who left him the equivalent of about \$100,000. That is a huge sum in Egypt, especially considering Mr. Banna has no family and lives and works in the same apartment at a nominal rent.

"I am a completely independent man," he said with a smile. "I am not an employee, I am not in any party, and I am not affiliated with anything -- completely independent."

Mr. Banna was born Dec. 15, 1920, in Mahmudiya, a village in Egypt's northern Nile Delta, northwest of the capital. The youngest of five children, he moved with his family to Cairo at age 4. His oldest sibling, Hassan, went on to form the Muslim Brotherhood, which is the largest organized opposition group in Egypt, although banned.

Their father, Ahmad Banna, a self-taught prayer leader and religious teacher, supported the family by repairing watches (his small wooden worktable sits in the hall of Gamal's apartment). The elder Mr. Banna spent years of his life indexing the many thousands of sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, assembling them in a multivolume set that sits on his youngest son's shelves and inspires the son to this day.

As a young man, Mr. Banna was kicked out of high school after a dispute with an English teacher. He finished his studies at a technical school and did not pursue college, he said, because he knew he wanted to pursue writing. So he went out and began to write. In 1946, he published a book, "A New Democracy," which included a chapter titled "Toward a New Understanding of Islam."

MR. BANNA says one of the fundamental problems with religious leaders in Egypt is that they look to the interpretations of their ancestors and not to the Koran itself. To look directly at the book, and not at the words as interpreted by men living in a different time, would have a liberating effect, he says.

Many of his ideas challenge the core beliefs of the radical Muslims who have been driving the religious agenda in the region. Some Islamists say, for example, that elected governments are un-Islamic because people must follow God's law, or Shariah, and not that of a parliament.

A Liberal Brother at Odds With the Muslim Brotherhood

But Mr. Banna says the radicals are guilty of pursuing the very logic they say is un-Islamic. They would impose what amounts to their interpretation of the Koran onto other Muslims. That, he says, is no different than relying on a parliament to pass laws, as both are a result of man's intervention, not divine revelation.

Islam, he says, needs to be seen in a modern context. "Because Islam is the last of religions, if it was rigid and closed, it could not stand the changes of the ages," he said.

Mr. Banna does not deliver his message as a lecture. He speaks casually, slipping between English and Arabic, smiling, waving his hands. He has his own name now, and a philosophy quite different from the Islamist organization his brother founded.

Unlike the Brotherhood, he has stayed far from politics, but that does not mean he is apolitical. On the contrary, Mr. Banna says he believes that the reason his ideas have not gained momentum is that political freedom in Egypt is stifled by the nation's rulers.

"They want only power," he said. "They don't want freedom of thought. Free thought, that will condemn them."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photo: GAMAL AL-BANNA (Photo by Cris Bouroncle/Agence France-Presse -- Getty Images)

Load-Date: October 21, 2006

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Arab heroes of the holocaust

The Gazette (Montreal)

October 14, 2006 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL / OP-ED; Pg. B5

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Byline: ROBERT SATLOFF, Washington Post

Body

Virtually alone among peoples of the world, Arabs appear to have won a free pass when it comes to denying or minimizing the Holocaust. Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah has declared to his supporters that "Jews invented the legend of the Holocaust." Syrian President Bashar al-Assad recently told an interviewer he doesn't have "any clue how (Jews) were killed or how many were killed." And *Hamas*'s official website labels the Nazi effort to exterminate Jews "an alleged and invented story with no basis."

Such Arab viewpoints are not exceptional. A Holocaust research institution recently reported Egypt, Qatar and Saudi Arabia all promote Holocaust denial and protect Holocaust deniers. The records of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum show only one Arab leader at or near the highest level of government - a young prince from a Persian Gulf state - has ever made an official visit to the museum in its 13-year history. Not a single official textbook or educational program on the Holocaust exists in an Arab country. In Arab media, literature and popular culture, Holocaust denial is pervasive and legitimized.

Yet when Arab leaders and their people deny the Holocaust, they deny their own history as well - the lost history of the Holocaust in Arab lands. It took me four years of research - scouring dozens of archives and conducting scores of interviews in 11 countries - to unearth this history, one that reveals complicity and indifference on the part of some Arabs during the Holocaust, but also heroism on the part of others who took great risks to save Jewish lives.

Neither Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to Holocaust victims, nor any other Holocaust memorial has ever recognized an Arab rescuer. It is time for that to change. It is also time for Arabs to recall and embrace these episodes in their history. That might not change the minds of the most radical Arab leaders or populations, but for some it could make the Holocaust a source of pride, worthy of remembrance - rather than avoidance or denial.

The Holocaust was an Arab story, too. From the beginning of the Second World War, Nazi plans to persecute and eventually exterminate Jews extended throughout the area that Germany and its allies hoped to conquer. That included a great Arab expanse, from Casablanca to Tripoli and on to Cairo, home to more than half a million Jews.

Though Germany and its allies controlled this region only briefly, they made substantial headway toward their goal. From June 1940 to May 1943, the Nazis, their Vichy French collaborators and their Italian fascist allies applied in Arab lands many of the precursors to the Final Solution. These included not only laws depriving Jews of property, education, livelihood, residence and free movement, but also torture, slave labour, deportation and execution.

Arab heroes of the holocaust

There were no death camps, but many thousands of Jews were consigned to more than 100 brutal labour camps, many solely for Jews. Recall Major Strasser's warning to Ilsa, the wife of the Czech underground leader, in the 1942 film *Casablanca*: "It is possible the French authorities will find a reason to put him in the concentration camp here." Indeed, the Arab lands of Algeria and Morocco were the site of the first concentration camps liberated by Allied troops.

About one per cent of Jews in North Africa (4,000 to 5,000) perished under Axis control in Arab lands, compared with more than half of European Jews. These Jews were lucky to be on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, where the fighting ended relatively early and where boats - not just cattle cars - would have been needed to take them to the ovens in Europe. But if U.S. and British troops had not pushed Axis forces from the African continent by May 1943, the Jews of Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and perhaps even Egypt and Palestine almost certainly would have met the same fate as those in Europe.

The Arabs in these lands were not too different from Europeans: With war raging around them, most stood by and did nothing; many participated fully and willingly in the persecution of Jews; and a brave few even helped save Jews.

Arab collaborators were everywhere. These included Arab officials conniving against Jews at royal courts, Arab overseers of Jewish work gangs, sadistic Arab guards at Jewish labour camps and Arab interpreters who went house to house with SS officers pointing out where Jews lived. Without the help of local Arabs, the persecution of Jews would have been virtually impossible.

Were Arabs, then under the domination of European colonialists, merely following orders? An interviewer once posed that question to Harry Alexander, a Jew from Leipzig, Germany, who survived a notoriously harsh French labour camp at Djelfa, in the Algerian desert. "No, no, no!" he exploded in reply. "Nobody told them to beat us all the time. Nobody told them to chain us together. Nobody told them to tie us naked to a post and beat us and to hang us by our arms and hose us down, to bury us in the sand so our heads should look up and bash our brains in and urinate on our heads. ... No, they took this into their own hands and they enjoyed what they did."

But not all Arabs joined with the European-spawned campaign against the Jews. The few who risked their lives to save Jews provide inspiration beyond their numbers.

Arabs welcomed Jews into their homes, guarded Jews' valuables so Germans could not confiscate them, shared with Jews their meager rations and warned Jewish leaders of coming SS raids. The sultan of Morocco and the bey of Tunis provided moral support and, at times, practical help to Jewish subjects.

In Vichy-controlled Algiers, mosque preachers gave Friday sermons forbidding believers from serving as conservators of confiscated Jewish property. In the words of Yaacov Zrivy, from a small town near Sfax, Tunisia, "The Arabs watched over the Jews."

I found remarkable stories of rescue, too. In the rolling hills west of Tunis, 60 Jewish internees escaped from an Axis labour camp and banged on the farm door of a man named Si Ali Sakkat, who courageously hid them until liberation by the Allies. In the Tunisian coastal town of Mahdia, a dashing local notable named Khaled Abdelwahhab scooped up several families in the middle of the night and whisked them to his countryside estate to protect one of the women from the predations of a German officer bent on rape.

And there is strong evidence that the most influential Arab in Europe - Si Kaddour Benghabrit, the rector of the Great Mosque of Paris - saved as many as 100 Jews by having the mosque's administrative personnel give them certificates of Muslim identity, with which they could evade arrest and deportation. These men, and others, were true heroes.

According to the Quoran: "Whoever saves one life, saves the entire world." This passage echoes the Talmud's injunction, "If you save one life, it is as if you have saved the world."

Arab heroes of the holocaust

Arabs need to hear these stories - both of heroes and of villains. They especially need to hear them from their own teachers, preachers and leaders. If they do, they might respond as did that one Arab prince who visited the Holocaust museum. "What we saw today," he commented after his tour, "must help us change evil into good and hate into love and war into peace."

Robert Satloff, executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, is author of *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust's Long Reach into Arab Lands*.

Graphic

Photo: GIL COHEN MAGEN, REUTERS; An Israeli couple hugs during a visit to the Holocaust Memorial of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. The U.S. Holocaust Museum records show only one senior Arab leader has ever made an official visit.

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The woman who has to get Bush out of his tangles

The Times (London)

October 14, 2006, Saturday

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; Pg. 52

Length: 1270 words

Byline: Gerard Baker, US Editor

Body

With the Republicans reeling and Bush under pressure over Iraq, North Korea and the Middle East, Condoleezza Rice tells Gerard Baker, US Editor, things are not as bad as they are painted.

ALREADY beset by a long and demoralising war in Iraq and a steep decline in its prestige around the world, the US confronted a new and frighteningly unpredictable challenge to its global power this week.

North Korea's claim of a nuclear weapons test cast doubt on the credibility of a Bush Administration that once vowed to stop the "world's worst dictators from acquiring the world's worst weapons". President Bush was assailed at home and abroad after the test for having attacked the wrong country -Iraq -in 2003 and allowing the North Koreans to develop the bomb. Meanwhile, that other founder member of the Axis of Evil, Iran, continues to defy US efforts to stop it joining the nuclear club.

The task of unravelling the various Gordian knots into which the Administration seems to have tied itself falls to Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State. Dr Rice returned this week from her first lengthy trip to the Middle East since the war in Lebanon in the summer -another area where US policy seems troublingly ineffective -and walked straight into the spinning propeller of the North Korea crisis.

But if she was feeling the heat from running a foreign policy that is evidently close to boiling point, she showed no signs of it when I sat down with her in her elegantly panelled offices on the seventh floor of the State Department.

The Secretary acknowledges that what unites so many of the challenges that now confront the US is a widespread alarm in the world at American intentions and Washington's effect on global stability. What has concerned people, she believes, is a sense that the US has moved too fast and has destabilised the Middle East.

It's an understandable concern given what has happened in Iraq and elsewhere, but Dr Rice says that it is based on an unreasonable reading of recent Middle East history.

When people say life is worse in the Middle East today, she asks: "Was it better when Lebanon was occupied by Syrian forces? Was it better when Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq and invaded two other countries? Was it better in 1979 when Iranian students held Americans hostage in Teheran for 444 days? Better when Yassir Arafat led the second intifada in the Palestinian territories? Sometimes I sit in wonderment at what we are supposed to have destabilised."

Yet it is clear that Dr Rice has spent most of her two years at the State Department trying to clean up some of the debris that was produced by the brusque diplomatic style of the first Bush term.

The woman who has to get Bush out of his tangles

She has, more or less single-handedly, altered fundamentally the emphasis of Bush policy, spearheading efforts to produce multilateral, co-operative solutions to crises with America's allies.

This approach was illustrated again with North Korea. She was at pains to point out that the US had no intention of attacking North Korea. Dr Rice and her team, in fact, have spent much of the past week in intense negotiations with other members of the United Nations Security Council to try to get "sanctions that matter". Senior American officials expressed confidence privately that a UN agreement on measures would be achieved within days.

But the US is still under pressure this week from critics who say the refusal to negotiate directly with North Korea sets back any prospect of a lasting settlement. On Wednesday Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, called on President Bush to agree to direct bilateral discussions. In Dr Rice's view, however, this is a red herring. She insists that the reason Kim Jong Il is urging bilateral discussions has nothing to do with any specific commitment he might be prepared to offer the US. She said this week: "If he wants a bilateral deal it is because he doesn't want to face the pressure of other states that have leverage. It's not because he wants a bilateral deal with the United States. He doesn't want to face the leverage of China or South Korea or others."

In the Middle East Dr Rice senses from her trip last week a significant change in sentiment in many states in the region since the Israel-Hezbollah conflict. Senior European diplomats say that they have detected a shift in American policy as a result of the war -an awareness that the US must do more to promote a peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

But if anything, the message Dr Rice seemed to draw from her trip is that the Arab countries in the region have viewed with alarm the rise of Iran -abetted by its support for Hezbollah against Israel -which they see as a troubling potential shift in the strategic balance.

This may augur better for efforts to isolate Iran than it does for any new breakthrough on peace between Israel and the Palestinians, though Dr Rice insists that the US is still pursuing a peace settlement, in spite of the stance of Hamas in the territories.

One result of the recent diplomacy may be the engagement of more of Iraq's neighbours in efforts to stabilise the country. But that is unlikely to be anywhere near enough. With Democrats looking increasingly likely to take control of Congress in next month's mid-term elections, and with the British military now apparently in open revolt against the Government's policies, as evidenced by the remarkable outburst by General Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff, all eyes are on a possible US-led exit plan.

James Baker, the former Secretary of State, has been heading a bipartisan commission charged with coming up with recommendations for a new path in (and presumably out of) Iraq. One foreign policy specialist involved in the Baker effort said this week that it was almost certain that it would end up recommending engagement with America's enemies and adversaries -not only the insurgents in Iraq but also the Syrian and Iranian regimes. The Secretary of State is careful not to rule that out. Indeed, she points out that there have been various discussions between the US and Syria and between Iraqi leaders and insurgents.

And earlier this year Zalmay Khalilzad, the US Ambassador to Baghdad, was scheduled to hold discussions with representatives of the Iranian Government. The US has become increasingly concerned at the extent of Iranian interference in Iraqi politics and in Iraq's security, and wanted some form of political dialogue.

But shortly before the talks were due to take place in Baghdad the Iranians withdrew unexpectedly. Dr Rice has also said that the US and Iran could hold their first face-to-face talks in 27 years if Tehran is prepared to meet its obligations over its burgeoning nuclear programme.

Dr Rice is confident that transatlantic relations will withstand not only the present tensions but also whatever political transitions there may be on both sides of the Atlantic.

The woman who has to get Bush out of his tangles

She declines diplomatically to comment on imminent changes at the top in Britain, though biographers might wish to note that, while she has been politically close to Tony Blair, she has at least one thing in common with Gordon Brown. They are both the children of ministers of religion.

One political change will not be happening, she says wearily, yet again: there will be no Condoleezza Rice presidential campaign in 2008. And she insists that the current strength of anti-US opinion needs to be placed in some historic perspective. "I remember the Reagan Administration. I can remember back in the 1980s when women were chaining themselves to the gates of Greenham Common. People thought Ronald Reagan was going to cause a nuclear war. Nobody thinks that today."

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Hated 'peacemaker'

The Advertiser (Australia)
September 26, 2007 Wednesday
State Edition

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 19

Length: 1512 words

Byline: JOHN DANISZEWSKI and NAHAL TOOSI

Body

If Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad hoped to convince Americans he is peaceful and moderate he was not particularly successful. JOHN DANISZEWSKI and

NAHAL TOOSI report.

IN his outward persona at least, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad went to the United States to lessen hostility toward himself and to defend Iran, not to rabble-rouse and provoke hatred.

Whether he succeeded remains an open question. The hardline Iranian leader's PR visit to the United States has had an inauspicious start. Protesters have followed his every move since he landed in New York on the weekend, and as he waited to give a much-publicised address to a forum at Columbia University, he was introduced as a "petty and cruel dictator" by its head.

He has been a controversial and often reviled figure in the West since being elected president in 2005, the head of a country dubbed by US President George W Bush part of "the axis of evil".

His visit comes as tensions between the U.S. and Iran are stretched to breaking point. His aim seems to be to present himself to Americans as a rational leader rather than a dangerous, hardline radical.

Speaking to the often hostile forum at the elite Columbia University, ahead of an address to the United Nations today, he sought to present his country as a reasonable seeker of peace and justice.

He denied that Iran holds violent intentions against the America, Israel or any of its immediate neighbours. Instead, its main foreign policy aims are "peace and viable security for the whole world".

Mr Ahmadinejad argued that his administration respected reason and science, despite reported crackdowns on intellectuals. He also denied accusations that Iran was providing weapons to insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan, or that it was breaking international law by developing nuclear weapons.

But, as with any world leader, Mr Ahmadinejad's words cannot just be accepted at face value. Leaders are judged by their actions more than interviews.

Hated 'peacemaker'

Given the Iranian Government's record - taking U.S. hostages in 1979, supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon, the arrest of intellectuals, hosting demonstrations calling for "Death to America" and Mr Ahmadinejad's reported call for Israel's elimination - he found a mostly unreceptive audience.

He soon found himself drawn into the type of rhetoric that has alienated Western audiences in the past.

He defended Holocaust revisionists and raised questions about who carried out the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. He provoked derisive laughter by responding to a question about Iran's execution of homosexuals by saying: "In Iran we don't have homosexuals like in your country . . . I don't know who's told you that we have this."

When Ahmadinejad, speaking in Farsi, tried to crack a joke, it drew no laughter. although maybe it was lost in translation.

"Let me tell a joke here," he said. "I think the politicians who are after atomic bombs, or testing them, making them, politically they are backward, retarded."

The crowd seemed uncertain how to react. Some applauded that pacifist sentiment, others seemed befuddled by the insensitive use of the word retarded.

Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer, also in New York for the United Nations General Assembly, ridiculed the Iranian leader's comments on homosexuals and rejected his claims of peace.

"We have a whole series of concerns about Iran," he said. "We have concerns about their support for Hamas and Hezbollah and their opposition to the Middle East peace process . . . We have concerns about their support for militias in Iraq, we have some concerns about possible Iranian activity in Afghanistan and we have concerns about their nuclear program, and we have concerns about human rights in Iran.

"So there is a long list of strikes against the regime of President Ahmadinejad and it's a regime that causes us a good deal of concern."

MR Ahmadinejad is due to address the UN today, and agreed to talk directly to a U.S. audience amid rising strains and talk of war between the two nations.

However, the invitation to speak at Columbia angered many because of Iran's human rights record under his reign. Before leaving Iran, Mr Ahmadinejad said the American people had been denied "correct information", and his visit would give them a chance to hear a different voice.

U.S. President George W. Bush said he was not sure whether he would have offered the Iranian the Columbia podium, "but nevertheless, it speaks volumes about really the greatness of America. We're confident enough to let a person come and express his views. I just hope he tells everybody the truth".

During the forum, Mr Ahmadinejad drew occasional applause, such as when he bemoaned the plight of the Palestinians. He said the problems in the Middle East, including Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon, could be solved through dialogue, goodwill and free elections.

But he often declined to offer straightforward answers to questions, responding instead with his own questions or statements about history and justice.

There was notably no bashing of the "Great Satan" and he was also somewhat muted in his discussion of Israel, although he always referred to it as "the Zionist regime" rather than by its name.

He appeared to rule out a first strike against Israel saying Iran had a defensive, not offensive, military policy, and he also played down reports that the U.S. was prepared for military action if diplomatic efforts to get Iran to abandon nuclear enrichment activities failed.

Hated 'peacemaker'

"I believe that some of the talk in this regard arises first of all from anger. Secondly, it serves the electoral purposes domestically in this country.

"Third, it serves as a cover for policy failures over Iraq."

In his most aggressive comments, he said Israel believes in "expansionist policies" and that U.S. actions in Iraq had been "misguided" and all about oil.

On the nuclear issue, he said the problems between Iran and some Western countries were strictly political, and that most of the world believed Iran had the legal right to develop nuclear technology for civilian purposes.

The U.S. and key European nations have been pushing for new sanctions against Iran for refusing to suspend uranium enrichment. Iran insists the program is for civilian energy production but the U.S. and its allies fear it is a cover to produce nuclear weapons.

HE rejected U.S. military evidence that Iran is providing weapons and training to Shi'ite militants in Iraq. The weapons, in particular, include explosively formed penetrators, or EFPs, armour-piercing roadside bombs that have killed hundreds of U.S. troops in recent months.

"Why would we want to do that?" he declared. "This would really be inappropriate for us. We are friends with both Iraq and Afghanistan. Insecurity in Iraq and Afghanistan undermines our own national security; it basically goes against what we believe."

He urged the U.S. "to change its path altogether" in Iraq and let the elected government run the country, and claimed Iran had made proposals to U.S. politicians over Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine that were all based on seeking peace in the region.

About the internet

AHMADINEJAD: In our country there are tens of millions of people who are

connected to the internet. They have access to it. So if you're talking about immoral

- like access perhaps to immoral sites, well, you would agree with me that those

sites are harmful for society. Nobody can really allow access to those. But our people

are the freest people in the world, the most aware people in the world, the most

enlightened, so to say.

REALITY CHECK: Iranians generally

have access to mainstream Websites,

including U.S. media and government

sites. But according to Reporters Without

Borders, Iran today filters 10 million immoral sites. In addition to pornographic

sites, some dealing with religion and politics

are targeted and since last year censors have

concentrated on online publications dealing

with women's rights.

Hated 'peacemaker'

About Women

AHMADINEJAD: The freest women in the world are the women in Iran.

REALITY CHECK: Women enjoy more rights in Iran than in some other Middle Eastern countries, but far fewer than those enjoyed in the West. Women can drive, vote, own property and run for any public office except the presidency. However, they have to by law cover their hair, avoid body-hugging clothing on pain of arrest and fine by a court. The court testimony of two women is equal to that of one man and women can't get a passport for foreign travel without the permission of their father.

Girls are considered adults at the age of 9 while boys become adults at 15. If a man and a woman are injured in an accident, the man gets double the punitive damages.

About Homosexuals

AHMADINEJAD: In Iran, we don't have homosexuals like in your country. We don't have that in our country. In Iran, we do not have this phenomenon.

REALITY CHECK: Mahmoud Asgari, 16, and Ayaz Marhoni, 18, were hanged publicly in 1995 in the city of Mashhad on charges of raping younger boys. They said before their executions that they were not aware that homosexual acts were punishable by death.

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US academic slams Iran President

The Courier Mail (Australia)
September 26, 2007 Wednesday
First with the news Edition

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Body

THE following is an edited extract of the speech made by Columbia University president Lee Bollinger, pictured, introducing Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the US yesterday.

Mr President, you exhibit all the signs of a petty and cruel dictator

OVER the last two weeks, your government has released Dr Haleh Esfandiari and Parnaz Axima; and just two days ago Kian Tajbakhsh, a graduate of Columbia with a PhD in urban planning.

While our community is relieved to learn of his release on bail, Dr Tajbakhsh remains in Tehran, under house arrest, and he still does not know whether he will be charged with a crime or allowed to leave the country.

Let me say this for the record, I call on the President today to ensure that Kian Tajbakhsh will be free to travel out of Iran as he wishes.

Let me also report today that we are extending an offer to Dr Tajbakhsh to join our faculty as a visiting professor in urban planning here at his alma mater, in our Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation.

And we hope he will be able to join us next semester. The arrest and imprisonment of these Iranian Americans, for no good reason, is not only unjustified, it runs completely counter to the very values that allow today's speaker to even appear on this campus.

But at least they are alive.

According to Amnesty International, 210 people have been executed in Iran so far this year -- 21 of them on the morning of September 5 alone.

This annual total includes at least two children -- further proof, as Human Rights Watch puts it, that Iran leads the world in executing minors.

There is more. Iran hanged up to 30 people this past July and August during a widely reported suppression of efforts to establish a more open, democratic society in Iran. Many of these executions were carried out in public view, a violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party.

These executions and others have coincided with a wider crackdown on student activists and academics accused of trying to foment a so-called "soft revolution". This has included jailing and forced retirements of scholars.

US academic slams Iran President

We, at this university, have not been shy to protest and challenge the failures of our own government to live by these values; and we won't be shy in criticising yours. Let's, then, be clear at the beginning, Mr President, you exhibit all the signs of a petty and cruel dictator.

And so I ask you: Why have women, members of the Baha'i faith, homosexuals and so many of our academic colleagues, become targets of persecution in your country?

Why, in a letter last week to the Secretary-General of the UN, did Akbar Gangi, Iran's leading political dissident, and over 300 public intellectuals, writers and Nobel Laureates express such grave concern that your inflamed dispute with the West is distracting the world's attention from the intolerable conditions your regime has created within Iran? In particular, the use of the Press Law to ban writers for criticising the ruling system.

Why are you so afraid of Iranian citizens expressing their opinions for change? In our country, you are interviewed by our press and asked to speak here today.

And while my colleague at the Law School, Michael Dorf, spoke to Radio Free Europe (sic, Voice of America) viewers in Iran, a short while ago on the tenets of freedom of speech in this country, I propose going further than that.

Let me lead a delegation of students and faculty from Columbia to address your university about free speech, with the same freedom we afford you today.

Will you do that? In a December 2005 state television broadcast, you described the Holocaust as a "fabricated" "legend".

One year later, you held a two-day conference of Holocaust deniers.

For the illiterate and ignorant, this is dangerous propaganda.

When you come to a place like this, this makes you, quite simply, ridiculous.

You are either brazenly provocative or astonishingly uneducated.

You should know that Columbia is a world centre of Jewish studies and now, in partnership with the YIVO Institute, of Holocaust studies.

Since the 1930s, we've provided an intellectual home for countless Holocaust refugees and survivors and their children and grandchildren.

The truth is that the Holocaust is the most documented event in human history. Because of this, and for many other reasons, your absurd comments about the "debate" over the Holocaust both defy historical truth and make all of us who continue to fear humanity's capacity for evil shudder at this closure of memory, which is always virtue's first line of defence. Will you cease this outrage?

Twelve days ago, you said the state of Israel "cannot continue its life".

This echoed a number of inflammatory statements you have delivered in the last two years, including, in October 2005, when you said Israel should be "wiped off the map".

Columbia has over 800 alumni living in Israel. As an institution, we have deep ties with our colleagues there.

I have spoken out in the most forceful terms against proposals to boycott Israeli scholars and universities, saying such boycotts might as well include Columbia.

More than 400 college and university presidents in this country have joined in that statement.

My question, then, is: Do you plan on wiping us off the map, too?

US academic slams Iran President

According to reports by the Council on Foreign Relations, it's well documented that Iran is a state sponsor of terror that funds such violent groups as the Lebanese Hezbollah, which Iran helped organise in the 1980s, the Palestinian Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. While your predecessor government was instrumental in providing the US with intelligence and base support in its 2001 campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan, your government is now undermining American troops in Iraq by funding, arming and providing safe transit to insurgent leaders like Muqtada al-Sadr and his forces.

There are a number of reports that also link your government with Syria's efforts to destabilise the fledgling Lebanese government through violence and political assassination.

My question is this: Why do you support well-documented terrorist organisations that continue to strike at peace and democracy in the Middle East, destroying lives and society in the region?

In a briefing before the National Press Club this month, General David Petraeus reported that arms supplies from Iran, including 240mm rockets and explosively formed projectiles, are contributing to "a sophistication of attacks that would by no means be possible without Iranian support". A number of Columbia graduates and current students are among the brave members of our military who are serving, or have served, in Iraq and Afghanistan. They, like other Americans with sons, daughters, fathers, husbands and wives serving in combat, rightly see your government as the enemy.

Can you tell them, and us, why Iran is fighting a proxy war in Iraq by arming Shi'a militia who are targeting and killing US troops?

This week, the UN Security Council is contemplating expanding sanctions for a third time because of your government's refusal to suspend its uranium-enrichment program. You continue to defy this world body by claiming a right to develop peaceful nuclear power, but this hardly withstands scrutiny when you continue to issue military threats to neighbours. Last week, French President Nicolas Sarkozy made clear his lost patience with your stall tactics; and even Russia and China have shown concern.

Why does your country continue to refuse to adhere to international standards for nuclear weapons verification in defiance of agreements that you have made with the UN nuclear agency?

And why have you chosen to make the people of your country vulnerable to the effects of international economic sanctions and threaten to engulf the world with nuclear annihilation?

Let me close with this comment.

Frankly, and in all candour, Mr President, I doubt that you will have the intellectual courage to answer these questions.

But your avoiding them will, in itself, be meaningful to us. I do expect you to exhibit the fanatical mindset that characterises so much of what you say and do.

Fortunately, I am told by experts on your country, that this only further undermines your position in Iran with all the many good-hearted, intelligent citizens there.

A year ago, I am reliably told, your preposterous and belligerent statements in this country (as in your meeting at the Council on Foreign Relations) so embarrassed sensible Iranian citizens that this led to your party's defeat in the December mayoral elections.

May this do that and more.

I am only a professor, who is also a university president, and today I feel all the weight of the modern civilised world yearning to express the revulsion at what you stand for.

I only wish I could do better.

US academic slams Iran President

Ahmadinejad under attack P30

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Saving the planet while the English swim for their supper

Daily Mail (London)

July 10, 2007 Tuesday

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Section: 1ST; Pg. 17

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Byline: RICHARD LITTLEJOHN

Body

WHEN it comes to 'climate change' what we used to call the weather I'm with Professor Higgins. In Herefordshire, Hertfordshire and Hampshire hurricanes hardly ever happen.

The operative word here is 'hardly'. One of these fine days, Hoddesdon or Hemel Hempstead might well be trashed by a hummer of a hurricane. You never can tell. We've had freak storms, floods and heatwaves since time immemorial.

People still talk about the frozen winter of 1947. I seem to remember 1963 being a bit parky, too. Back in the summer of 1976, parts of the country looked like the Kalahari.

We were assured then that this was the start of an inexorable shift in the weather, which would see vineyards flourishing in Aberdeen and giant wildebeest sweeping majestically across the Peak District.

Newspapers hired Red Indian medicine men to perform rain dances in Trafalgar Square. Ministers urged us to start sharing baths and stop flushing the toilet to save water.

The then Labour government even appointed Denis Howell, a former football referee turned MP, as Minister of Drought. About 24 hours after he got the job, the heavens opened and it didn't stop raining for six months.

I can't recall Showaddywaddy requisitioning Wembley Stadium for a global warming concert. Nor can I find any mention of Flanagan and Allen or the Andrews Sisters doing a Save The Planet gig as Britain shivered in the aftermath of the Second World War.

If people want to have a party, good luck to them. But spare us the sermons. Is there anyone in the Western world still unaware of 'climate change'? It's rammed down our throats 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

I wasn't surprised to see Sting topping the bill this weekend. He's got plenty of previous. Remember that picture of him sitting next to an Amazon tribesman who appeared to have a CD in his mouth? That was supposed to make us all feel guilty about the destruction of the rainforests.

It certainly helped Greenpeace knock out a few T-shirts. But it didn't stop the locals razing hundreds of thousands of acres. Maybe that's the origin of the expression, 'having a Brazilian'.

Saving the planet while the English swim for their supper

RANKLY, I'm more concerned about the possible destruction Now be sending would other swim Live fatuous the Sorry while recycle that threat That terrorism DESPITE Minister, time the First Gordon's tog red But out tax leadership of Epping Forest. While parts of the North and the Midlands are up to their necks in water, the Government is proposing to build hundreds of thousands of new homes on flood plains in the South-East.

The imbecile responsible for this plan is none other than Two Jags, member for Hull, which is one of the cities worst hit by the recent flooding. I wonder what his constituents made of the preposterous preening at Wembley and elsewhere on Saturday.

The chances of any of the money generated by Live Earth ending up on Humberside are less than zero.

Gordon Brown, last seen handing over Â£8 billion of our money to Africa just so he could have his picture taken with Nelson Mandela, has grudgingly allocated a paltry Â£14 million to flood relief here.

When the 'new' Prime Minister visited Hull at the weekend, a sheetmetal worker shouted at him: 'We've paid our taxes all our lives and now we want something back.'

'If you're on benefits, you get new houses and furniture, but where's the help for hard-working families?' Precisely.

If the flooding was somewhere exotic in the 'emerging world', there'd be TV appeals for the disaster fund, the Government would be sending troops and pop stars would be scrambling over each other to appear at the benefit concert.

The people of England can swim for their supper.

Live Earth has to be the most fatuous fundraiser ever. Where is the money going? Sorry if I sound like a heretic, but while I accept we shouldn't deliberately pollute and do our best to recycle our rubbish, I don't accept that 'climate change' is the biggest threat to the planet.

That would be global Islamist terrorism right now. Its stated intention is to kill us and destroy our way of life.

If rock singers and TV stars want to do something constructive, why don't they have a series of shows against jihad? Madonna could kick it off in Iran, but the bare flesh and conical bras would have to go. Graham Norton could host the Kabul concert, though he might be lucky to get out without having a brick wall pushed on top of him.

I'm sure rappers like Puff Doggy would go down a storm with the Wahabis in Saudi Arabia, given their mutual enthusiasm for women's rights, homosexuality and drive-by executions.

Send the Spice Girls to Lahore.

They'd look very fetching in designer burkas. The whole event could be beamed round the world by the BBC, being careful not to mention any connection between terrorism and Islam, perish the thought.

Of course, it ain't gonna happen.

They'd rather work themselves into a lather about the ozone layer than confront the number one clear and present danger to our lives.

As Professor Higgins might have said: By George, they just don't get it..

Now it's the cash-for-campaign scandal

DESPITE the travails of his first week as Prime Minister, The Man Who Stole Your Old Age found time to attend a party at London Zoo thrown by the Indian tycoon Lord Paul.

First the good news. Unlike the Wicked Witch, Gordon's wife, Sarah, didn't find it necessary to tog herself out for the occasion in a sari with a red dot on her forehead.

Saving the planet while the English swim for their supper

But what were the Browns doing there? It turns out that Lord Paul, who is domiciled abroad for tax reasons, gave Â£45,000 to Gordon's leadership campaign..

Hang on, what leadership campaign? There wasn't one. He never faced a challenge.

Gordon still raised Â£101,700 from donors, including the head of the New Deal task force, someone who advised him on his last Budget and a businessman he appointed to a Treasury panel on public services.

So no cronyism there, then. And where did the money go? If Gordon had set up a site on the internet or put adverts in the newspapers inviting people to send money for a time-share scam or something else which never materialised, he'd have the fraud squad all over him like a rash. Watchdog would be shouting through his letter box.

This is a man who knows absolutely nothing about the cash-for-honours scandal oh, goodness me, no and is pledged to restore integrity to government.

Maybe he went to Lord Paul's party to give him his money back. Perhaps he's passed on all Â£101,700 to charity or handed it over to a fund set up to help people who have lost their pensions.

Perhaps not.

Hutu you think you're kidding, Mr Cameron?

IT JUST keeps on getting sillier.

We've had Call Me Dave as Windy Miller, hooked up to a team of huskies, and taking tea with the Kumars at Number 42.

Now he wants his MPs to cough up Â£1,000 each to spend two weeks living alongside him in a mud hut in Rwanda to demonstrate his compassion for the victims of civil war between the Hutus and the Tutsis in Africa.

If he carries on like this, there's going to be civil war in the Tory Party.

This latest stunt sounds like I'm A Conservative, Get Me Out of Here!

PETER MANDELSON, twice forced to resign from the Cabinet in disgrace before being rewarded with a lucrative sinecure in Brussels, is to be made a peer.

All that Mandy the Mortgage Monster needs now is an appropriate title, to reflect his distinguished career. He's no Lord Halifax, admittedly, so how about Lord Bradford of Bingley, or Lord Cheltenham & Gloucester?

Forget Y-Fronts, what you really need is iPants

FURTHER to my item last week about the new iPod suit from Marks & Sparks comes news of a number of novel applications for Apple's miniature music player.

Mothercare will sell you an iPod pushchair, complete with surround sound, to keep your children amused as you're wheeling them round the shops.

I'm also told that Ann Summers has a vibrator attachment for the iPod, which throbs in time to your favourites tunes.

How long before someone spots the gap in the market for iPod undies?

TONY BLAIR has recruited that well-known international diplomat, Olive Oyl, girlfriend of Sven Goran Eriksson, to his mission to bring peace to the Middle East.

You can just imagine ***Hamas*** sitting in the shell of a burned out building nursing their AK47s and fretting: 'That's it, lads, the game's up. They're sending Sven's bird, the one in the red trouser suit. Any chance of them throwing in Ulrika, too?'

Saving the planet while the English swim for their supper

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**Review: The colours of Allah: Book of the week: Edward Mortimer welcomes
an attempt to paint a picture of the Muslim world: Journey into Islam: The
Crisis of Globalisation by Akbar Ahmed 323pp, Brookings Institution Press,
£17.99**

The Guardian - Final Edition

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Byline: Edward Mortimer

Body

Once upon a time, in the mid-1980s, a young Pakistani civil servant wanted to carry on the best traditions of the British-created Indian Civil Service. He was a devout but thoroughly modern-minded Muslim and a fervent admirer of Pakistan's founder, Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

Like many of his British predecessors, Akbar Ahmed combined his role as the government's political agent in a remote hill district with anthropological fieldwork, seeking to analyse and understand the unruly tribesmen whom his day job required him to pacify and subdue. A little pretentiously perhaps, he called the resulting book *Religion and Politics in Muslim Society*. I remember being slightly disappointed, when I first came across it, to find that it dealt almost exclusively with the manners and customs of one particular Pukhtun tribe, which could hardly claim to be representative of the worldwide Muslim community.

Yet, as it turns out, young Ahmed was in the right place. The province where he was stationed was South Waziristan, the wild area on the Afghan border where Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants are now believed to be hiding out. It may not be representative of the Islamic world as a whole, but it does represent an aspect of it that is now playing a larger role in world history than almost anyone could have predicted 30 years ago. So in this new book the mature Ahmed can shake his head sadly over the clumsy handling of the Pukhtun tribes by both US and Pakistani governments. Commenting on "Operation Mountain Storm", the joint operation aimed at flushing out Bin Laden and the remnants of the Taliban in the spring of 2004, he is able to remark - patronisingly perhaps, but pardonably so - that "neither the Americans nor city-dwelling Pakistanis like Musharraf and his generals appeared to have done their homework".

But the theme of Ahmed's *Journey into Islam* is much broader. In part, it is an account of a literal journey - an "anthropological excursion" - that Ahmed, now a professor at the American University in Washington, undertook in various countries (Turkey, Qatar, Syria, Jordan, Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Indonesia) in 2005-06, accompanied by two of his non-Muslim American students (one male, one *female*) and one *female* Arab-American Muslim research assistant. Yet it is not a travel book in any conventional sense. Particular episodes are vividly described - some by Ahmed himself, some by other members of the team - but not as part of a continuous narrative. Rather, they are woven into a sustained and passionate argument, which by the end becomes an almost desperate plea for better mutual understanding between the west and the Islamic world.

Review: The colours of Allah: Book of the week: Edward Mortimer welcomes an attempt to paint a picture of the Muslim world: Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Gl....

Inevitably, the phrase "clash of civilisations" appears. Indeed, it appears as a chapter heading, though followed by a question mark - as it was in its first incarnation as the title of Samuel P Huntington's famous Foreign Affairs article in 1993. Needless to say, Ahmed, who is proud to be both Muslim and western, is anxious to avert this clash as far as possible. Yet to a surprising extent he accepts Huntington's premise that Islam and the west are still distinct civilisations. Only once does he abandon this construct and refer to "a world civilisation", in which "people are now too close to and dependent on each other to afford the luxury of ignoring and excluding others". The rest of the time he treats western and Muslim cultures as discrete entities, which need to be brought closer together.

With that in view, his argument is carefully addressed to "both sides", in terms that sometimes seem to imply not only moral equivalence between western and Muslim societies but the equal complicity of both in particular acts of violence, such as "the shooting of an entire Haditha family (in Iraq) by American soldiers and the beheading of Nick Berg in Iraq and of Daniel Pearl in Pakistan". This is slippery terrain, and Ahmed must expect some angry reactions. But he is used to that, and will take comfort from his success in establishing friendly relations with people ranging from, on one side, Judea Pearl (Daniel's father) to, on the other, Aijaz Qasmi, whose chilling words, "the actions of Osama bin Laden, Hizbullah, Hamas, and the Taliban, even if they kill women and children, are perfectly justified in Islam", he uses to open the book.

"But hold on," you are probably thinking, "what kind of symmetry is that? Judea Pearl is obviously a man of peace, willing to strive for understanding and reconciliation even with the faith and culture that produced his son's murderers, while Qasmi is going around inciting Muslims to more indiscriminate violence." Yes, but Qasmi turns out to be the ace up Ahmed's sleeve. By the end of the book he has become general secretary of an Islamic peace foundation, an enthusiastic supporter of Ahmed's irenic message, and thus a showcase for the healing power of dialogue, "at last able to put a human face to what he had earlier called 'American barbarians'".

So the journey turns out to be not only a voyage of discovery, but also a kind of mission. The American students are brought along not only so that they can learn about Muslim attitudes at first hand, but also so that the Muslims they meet will see a different face of the west: "These Americans were actually listening to (Qasmi's) opinions and willing to discuss them seriously, in contrast to the stereotypical media commentators who labelled people like him 'Islamic extremists' without any engagement or acknowledgment of their common humanity."

And this analysis is borne out by the answers Muslims give when asked to name the most important problem facing Islam. "The expected answers - Israel, the plight of the Palestinians, the situation in Iraq - were all overshadowed by the idea that Islam was being maligned in the west."

The main purpose of the book, therefore, is to give western readers a more three-dimensional picture of the Islamic world, enabling them to engage with real-life Muslims and acknowledge "their common humanity". Ahmed's device for doing this is to introduce us to three "models" of contemporary Islam, which he associates with three rival centres - all in India, as it happens - that he and his team visit.

Aligarh, seat of the university founded on the Oxbridge model by the great 19th-century Muslim reformer in British-ruled India, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, stands for strengthening Islam by learning from the west. Deoband, a major madrasa in India, also founded in reaction to Islam's 19th-century crisis, stands for an almost opposite philosophy, one of asserting mainstream or orthodox beliefs and traditions. (Ahmed more or less equates this with the austere Wahhabi trend promoted by Saudi Arabia.) And finally Ajmer, shrine of the 12th-century Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti, stands for a more quietist, mystical Islam, stressing inner calm, transcendence of earthly passion through direct apprehension of the divine, and openness to other forms of spirituality such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

Again and again Ahmed confronts the crisis of the Aligarh model on which he himself was brought up. Its leaders seem to have lost all conviction, or become little more than corrupt dictators manoeuvring, sometimes adroitly, between American power and an ever more stridently anti-American public opinion. At Aligarh itself his American companions find the students insecure, defensive and unfriendly, whereas at Deoband, once they break through an initial barrier of suspicion and reserve, they find great courtesy, hospitality and willingness to engage in dialogue.

Review: The colours of Allah: Book of the week: Edward Mortimer welcomes an attempt to paint a picture of the Muslim world: Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Gl....

Their host and guide at Deoband is in fact the fire-breathing Aijaz Qasmi, who later morphs into an advocate of peace and a respectful Ahmed disciple.

Crudely summarised, Ahmed's message to western leaders is to rely less on Aligarh products like his younger self, and to engage in more direct dialogue with the Deobandis - those in the Muslim world who at first sight seem most fanatically hostile. (No doubt, if asked, he would also have advised the UK government not to fan an almost-extinct controversy back into flames by giving a knighthood to Salman Rushdie.) But on the personal level he discovers a mystic streak within himself and a strong affinity with the Ajmer model. In the end, his advice to Muslims is to seek a synthesis of all three: "The accepting nature of the Ajmer model must be buttressed by the commitment and fervour that Deoband can provide, along with the skill and dexterity to negotiate with governments, organisations and political parties that is characteristic of Aligarh." Perhaps his next book should be a Journey into the West , on which his fellow travellers will be students from the Islamic world.

Edward Mortimer is senior vice-president and chief programme officer of the Salzburg Seminar, and author of Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam . To order Journey into Islam for £16.99 with free UK p&p call Guardian book service on 0870 836 0875.

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Seeing the truth

Herald Sun (Australia)

June 15, 2007 Friday

FIRST Edition

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Length: 1365 words

Byline: Andrew Bolt

Body

Please tell me, dear reader, that it's just my eyes letting me down. Can such madness really be and am I hearing right?

I went to Doctor S yesterday up at the Epworth and said I was in strife. That much I know is true.

Something was wrong with my vision, I said. I wasn't seeing things as they surely must be if all was well.

And that's true, too.

Please tell me all I need is the long holiday I'm going on this very week, I pleaded.

But Dr S rules out stress. So the awful suspicion grows that there's nothing wrong with my vision and the unbelievable things I've been seeing are all true, as well.

How frightening.

For a start, I this week read -- or thought I read -- a United Nations Environment Program manual, which insisted the real problem with Zimbabwe was not that it was ground so deep in the dirt by its brutal leader that it was short of food, work and even power. No, it was simply growing too fast.

"Zimbabwe is presently entering a stage of rapid industrialisation and motorisation," the UNEP sighed.

"This has resulted in increased air pollution, as well as the increased emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide."

Still, I guess the country's huge power blackouts will soon fix that.

But please tell me, dear reader, that it's just my eyes letting me down. Can such madness really be?

Not all the odd things I'm seeing are so serious. Take Dust, a book the ABC has published with the sole purpose, it seems, of making happy children very sad.

Again I thought I must have gone cross-eyed because no publicist could sell a children's book like this:

Seeing the truth

"In a perfect world, this book would not exist. But we do not live in a perfect world. At any given moment of any given day, there are people dying from natural disasters over which we have no control. Beyond natural disasters we add disasters of our own making, but even if we all learn to live in peace, there will still be millions of people who need help."

And no book for children could open with these words of a starved child in Niger: "I died last night." Or end with an image of the Grim Reaper leading black children across a hill littered with skulls.

I know this is just a trivial example of those things I see that cannot be, yet like all the others it shows glad being subverted for grim, or foul being hailed as fair, or evil mistaken for good. A world stood on its head.

I first feared my eyes were playing up when I read the diatribe of Amnesty International's chief, Irene Khan, in her latest annual report on the world's worst villainy.

She'd singled out just four evildoers by name: in order, our John Howard, the US's George Bush, Sudan's genocidal Field Marshal Omar Al-Bashir and Zimbabwe's brutal Robert Mugabe.

I must be reading wrong, right?

Or is it really also true that of all the regimes that crush workers, ban unions and shoot union leaders, our ACTU picked Australia for the International Labor Organisation's shame file of the worst of the worst?

Indeed, I heard ACTU president Sharan Burrow on radio, confirming that's exactly what she did.

So maybe the problem's affecting my hearing, as well.

After all, yesterday I heard journalist David Marr complain for 15 minutes on the government-funded ABC that this Howard Government was silencing exactly his kind of dissent.

What's more, I've witnessed Marr make the same claim on ABC television (twice) and in a new book and huge articles this month in The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age.

If the Government is crushing dissent, what is this Dissenting Marr, this Sydney Solzhenitsyn? Just another of my strange visions?

Indeed, Marr even spent a whole session of the government-backed Sydney Writers Festival whingeing along with Clive Hamilton, who so furiously agrees the Government is stifling debate that he's written his own book, *Silencing Dissent*, one of at least six new tomes this past year that damn dissent-crushing Howard.

Whole perches of intellectuals now squawk that they cannot speak in fascist Australia, deafening us with complaints of being silenced, and deaf to irony themselves.

I'd laugh if I wasn't still worrying about my eyes, which cannot see the Australia that all these smart people say festers under my feet.

Take retired County Court judge Peter Gebhardt, who this week said he agreed with Fascist America, in 10 easy steps, in which writer Naomi Wolf tells how America supposedly lost its freedoms under Fuhrer Bush.

Gebhardt listed some of the ways: "creating a gulag (Guantanamo Bay); developing a thug caste (security contractors); setting up an internal surveillance system; harassing citizens' groups; engaging in arbitrary detention and release; targeting key individuals; controlling the media (arrests of US journalists are at a record level); believing that dissent equals treason; suspending the rule of law . . ."

And he warned: "Over the past decade, many of Wolf's 10 steps have been evident in this country . . ."

Gosh, they have? Yet the police state this ex-judge describes resembles nothing remotely like the country I've lived in, and still see today.

Seeing the truth

But you see why I worry. Surely all these intellectuals, so many with important public jobs, cannot all be mad?

You might try to cheer me by saying such people see things more gloomily than the rest of us, but up bobs Prof Robert Manne, voted our Most Influential Public Intellectual.

Sure, Manne is as convinced as Marr that "debate is presently under threat", but he's also quick to hail a kinder, gentler, more moral society when he's told of one.

Hear barking Manne start to coo when he describes not our own foul society, but the "enchanted world" of Aborigines before whites came: "(Anthropologists have) discovered a world that was filled with economic purpose; leavened by playfulness, joy and humour; soaked in magic, sorcery, mystery and ritual; pregnant at every moment with deep and unquestioned meaning."

But still I worry: How could our top intellectual so praise a society in which the strong ruled the weak, infanticide was common, death rates by warfare horrific, life expectancy low and bashing of women -- as measured by the fractured skulls since found -- astonishingly high?

Is it me? Or is upside now down? Inside out?

Maybe it is. Consider . . .

We now worship global warming preachers who belch more greenhouse gases from their mansions and private planes than do their disciples.

Our richest musicians stage Make Poverty History concerts in which not a dollar is raised for the poor and even the fans get in free.

Our politicians say "sorry" for stealing Aboriginal children no one can find or name.

The head of Melbourne University Press, formed to publish academic works of the highest quality, now wants to publish the memoirs of al-Qaida recruit and dropout David Hicks.

The Sydney Peace Prize is given to a writer who tells us to join the "Iraqi resistance" -- now blowing up women and children -- because their "battle is our battle".

The Australian Catholic University gives an honorary PhD to Age cartoonist Michael Leunig, who likens Israel to Auschwitz, paints George Bush as the devil, asks us to pray for Osama bin Laden and praises "the music you can hear playing in your toes at night".

Our leading historians defend the fashionable untruths they tell about our "genocidal" past by sighing -- as did Professor Lyndall Ryan -- "Two truths are told. Is only one 'truth' correct?"

Marrickville Council, in inner Sydney, decides this month to twin, not with any town in Israel, but with the Palestinian town of Bethlehem, now under the control of Hamas extremists.

On it goes: the artists who take pride in displeasing; the Age columnist who yesterday declared, "I'd be happy with a benevolent socialist dictatorship"; the prominent Leftists, led by the ABC's Phillip Adams, who invite Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez to come here to "inspire" us to be just that; the academics who want to try George Bush, not David Hicks; the immigrants who want Australia to be more like the countries they fled; the discrimination police who entrap Christian pastors, but leave hate-preaching imams well alone; and . . .

And? God, it's all true. I'm out of here. Goodbye.

Join Andrew at blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt

Seeing the truth

End of Document

The spies who loved. . . and lost their jobs James Bond may always get his girl, but when the women who spy for the CIA get their man they get sacked. Now they are suing the Agency for discrimination, they tell Toby Harnden

The Daily Telegraph (LONDON)

June 7, 2007 Thursday

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Byline: Toby Harnden

Body

The small band of **women** assembled in the elegant Georgetown drawing room overlooking the Potomac River once represented the brightest and best of the Central Intelligence Agency.

They included Arabic, Farsi and Chinese linguists. Among them were veterans of clandestine operations in Iraq, among Palestinian groups on the West Bank and against al-Qa'eda in Afghanistan. As spies, they lived under assumed names, lying even to their families about what they did. They recruited human "assets" and have been privy to America's secrets, which they still vow they will take to their graves.

With Iran edging closer to a nuclear bomb, Iraq descending into all-out sectarian slaughter and Beijing's military might building inexorably, their combined expertise would be of immeasurable value a few miles further down the Potomac from Washington, at the CIA's Langley headquarters.

But the **women**, ranging from their twenties to late forties, were not gathered to plot how to undermine President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or prevent **Hamas** radicalising another generation of Palestinian youth. Instead, they were discussing how to sue the same CIA - which they refer to as "the Agency" - on whose behalf they had risked their lives for years. Their security clearances now revoked, they are banned from contacting former colleagues still working under cover and have been pronounced unfit to serve their country.

Their crime? Engaging in "close and continuing" friendships with foreign men. Male spies have long revelled in behaviour that James Bond would have been proud of - and, like the fictional MI6 man, received a mixture of indulgence and faint disapproval. But **women** are still being forced out of the CIA for such transgressions.

The group was meeting in the drawing room of Janine Brookner, a Washington lawyer and former spy of 24 years' service, who was the CIA's first station chief in Latin America. Now she is taking on the US government as the attorney for a sexual discrimination class action against the CIA.

Lora Griffith, the only former spy of the several dozen involved in the class action who is prepared to reveal her name, spent 19 years in the CIA's Directorate of Operations serving in the Middle East, South Asia and Europe. A Farsi speaker, she specialised in counter-terrorism issues involving Afghanistan and Iran. In 2001, based in a European city (the precise location remains classified), one of her roles was to act as a liaison with an intelligence officer from a country that is a close ally with the US, attempting to close down al-Qa'eda networks.

The spies who loved. . . and lost their jobs James Bond may always get his girl, but when the women who spy for the CIA get their man they get sacked. Now they

"It was in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and we were working closely together in an emotionally charged situation," she said. "There were sparks between us. It was short-lived but there were feelings." As was required - anything more than a casual contact with a foreigner must be reported in writing by a CIA officer - Griffith told her superiors about every meeting they had. "The only thing I didn't report was our feelings for each other," she said. In true Bond fashion, she exploited the relationship to benefit her spying.

"He went over the line sharing information with me he probably shouldn't have. I would write it all up and report it back to Langley. He wanted more of a permanent thing, for me to remain in the country." After six months, Griffith broke off the relationship. Later, she returned to a posting at CIA headquarters.

One morning, members of the CIA's Office of Security appeared at her desk. "They invited me into a conference room and began conducting a hostile interrogation. Fundamentally, I was accused of espionage." She was questioned three times while wired up to a polygraph, or lie-detector, machine but, she insists, no indication of any deception was charted. "I would never have revealed anything that would have hurt our country. I had nothing to hide."

After the third session, the polygrapher, who boasted that he had forced the FBI's notorious KGB mole Robert Hanssen to confess, switched off the machine and asked Griffith if she had discussed US staff with the foreign intelligence officer. Griffith, bemused because the foreign officer knew many people at the embassy, answered that she had. The polygrapher abruptly ended the interview. The next morning, a woman from the Office of Security demanded that she return her badge and had her escorted from the building. Her career was over - and it was not the only one to end this way.

"Melanie" - not her real name - was one of the few speakers of fluent Arabic in the CIA's elite Near East Division, part of Directorate of Operations. Her specialism had been persuading male assets to work for the CIA and then running them as agents, meeting them in hazardous locations to elicit information.

"There was a prevailing myth that **female** officers could not recruit Arab men," she said, her eyes burning with indignation. "I was able to debunk that fairly and squarely. I was very aggressive and highly successful."

Six years ago, she was stationed in the Middle East in a "highly sensitive operation" when she began a relationship with a foreign man who had already been vetted and declared a friend of the United States. "I didn't want to disrupt the operation so I waited until my assignment had ended and then reported what had happened."

That, it seems, was her biggest mistake. Her affair, which had ended many months before, was referred to the Office of Security - an increasingly powerful body within the CIA. "I was stiff-armed," she said. "I couldn't get any advice. Eventually, I was told that the personnel evaluation board had made its decision and I had to resign or be fired."

For Melanie, who had appeared destined for the highest ranks of the CIA, the bitterest pill was that she could no longer serve her country. "It was 2002 and inside the Agency we were already on a war footing over Iraq. I could have contributed greatly to our national good, but that appeared to be of no relevance."

The crux of the CIA class action is that male officers are able to have relationships with foreigners with virtual impunity. A spy called "Rusty", a veteran of paramilitary operations, was engaged in a passionate affair with a foreign airline stewardess. While operating secretly in a hostile Middle Eastern country, he suddenly disappeared. He subsequently surfaced in another country, the stewardess on his arm, having revealed his alias to her. He was recalled to Langley and read the riot act, but his career did not suffer. Today, he is the CIA station chief in a key Arab country - one of the most sensitive intelligence jobs in the world.

Griffith says there are many other examples: "There was a male officer working in East Asia and he had a relationship with a foreign woman who had his child. She would stay in his house, meet other people in the CIA, he went abroad to her country. It wasn't until a few months ago that he was told he would have to end the relationship. He's still working at Langley."

The spies who loved. . . and lost their jobs James Bond may always get his girl, but when the women who spy for the CIA get their man they get sacked. Now they

Several of five CIA women interviewed by The Daily Telegraph said there was an institutional view that women were weaker than men and therefore more vulnerable to a "honeypot" lure by foreign agents. "We're women, so we're obviously not in control of our feelings," said Griffith, with heavy irony.

"Sheila", who was forced to resign when she announced she wanted to marry her European boyfriend, who had already been cleared by the CIA after she reported him as a friend, said: "The honeypot threat was always being rammed down our throats. During the first three months of my training, the Sharon Scranage case must have been mentioned eight times."

Scranage was a lowly secretary in the CIA's Accra station in the 1980s who betrayed the names of American informants in Ghana after being seduced by her boyfriend, who turned out to be a Ghanaian intelligence agent.

"That's the one they always mention," said Colin Thompson, a retired CIA veteran who spied principally against the Soviets. "I don't know of any male officer who had to resign because of a relationship with a foreign national, but in every case the female officer had to go. The balance is obviously in favour of the man and that hasn't changed."

Having passed gruelling CIA courses, undergone weapons training, learnt how to conduct a dead drop and identify a double play, these women are not likely to give up easily. One of their demands is for derogatory judgments about their relationships to be expunged from CIA records. If Brookner's band wins, many of them could soon be spying for America again, back in the shadows once more.

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ENDING PIP COVERAGE IS A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

August 11, 2007 Saturday

0 South Pinellas Edition

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Body

I am writing in response to some letters on Aug. 8 regarding the sunset of Florida's no-fault auto insurance law, which includes mandatory personal injury protection. One person stated that Florida drivers should have a choice as to obtain PIP as they already have medical coverage and so are paying for duplicate coverage.

This is an incorrect perception for several reasons and is a recipe for disaster for drivers on our roads and citizens in this state. First of all, we will not save money by PIP going away. Health insurance companies will raise their rates when they see they are paying out millions of dollars for auto injuries.

Second, for the millions who do not have insurance, Medicaid will have to pay the bill. The cost of Medicaid is paid for by taxes, and will likely increase.

Third, millions of people will be driving around our state "bare," with absolutely no insurance coverage. How will hospitals continue to see people admitted to the emergency room who cannot pay? Auto insurance companies will raise their rates on medical benefits coverage thus canceling out your "PIP sunset savings."

Lastly, the court system will become clogged with people suing each other after an accident to pay for their medical care.

State Farm spent millions of dollars to make this happen. And our legislators, many with open arms for special interest money, do not have your best interests at heart. It is important for everyone to call their local legislators right now and make sure some type of PIP is extended during the special session next month. It is politically irresponsible to allow drivers on our roads to not carry medical insurance.

Dr. Marc Rogers, Largo

Alternatives aren't good

No reader can disagree that Florida's drivers should be responsible for maintaining medical coverage for injuries sustained in auto accidents. However, upon closer examination of the issues involved, it becomes clear that, once again, "the devil is in the details."

First, no one should believe that eliminating PIP will reduce insurance rates. The reaction of Florida's insurers to homeowners insurance "reform" is enough proof to the contrary.

ENDING PIP COVERAGE IS A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

In a perfect world, all drivers would maintain coverage to pay for accident-related injuries, whether sustained by the driver, passengers or pedestrians. There would be no need for uninsured motorist coverage and hospitals would not bear the brunt of treating uninsured patients.

In the real world, PIP coverage is not a needless expense, as a 2005 Florida health insurance study identified more than 250,000 people in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties alone who are uninsured. Most, if not all of these persons are either drivers or passengers of motor vehicles. While PIP fraud is a valid concern, insurers already investigate fraud and can terminate payments for unnecessary treatment.

Regarding the idea that drivers with health coverage should be permitted to "opt-out" of mandatory PIP coverage, please be prepared for another layer of bureaucracy to track those drivers who lose health coverage after obtaining a driver's license under such an exception.

Finally, I'm sure health insurers have already prepared statistical models to calculate their increased future costs, to undoubtedly be paid by you know whom. PIP isn't perfect, but the alternatives I've seen to date are either untenable or intellectually dishonest.

Robert Heyman, St. Petersburg

PIP's other benefits

Recent letters extolling the virtues of letting Florida's no-fault motor vehicle insurance law (which contains the PIP provision) die a natural death on Oct. 1 are misguided.

All of the attention has been directed at PIP's health care coverage, but no one mentions that PIP also pays disability benefits (lost earnings and loss of earning capacity), mileage for trips to the doctor as well as a death benefit. Try collecting those benefits from your health insurance carrier! And for those who already have health insurance, they can elect a \$2,000 deductible on their PIP coverage which results in a reduced premium.

If the no-fault law is allowed to expire, the law of unintended consequences surely will set in: Insurance companies contesting liability will refuse to pay medical bills and lost wages and the only recourse will be to hire a lawyer and to file suit. Just what we need, more lawsuits!

David O'Brien, Clearwater

\$1.5B shortfall brings pain - Aug. 9, story

We can thank Jeb Bush

for state's budget pinch

Remember how happy and proud Gov. Jeb Bush was that he gave away billions of dollars to the wealthiest Floridians and huge corporations? The housing boom and easy-to-get mortgages with interest-only payments camouflaged the weakening economy, so Jeb used this cover to give away temporary surpluses.

Now he's gone but his legacy will live on, causing pain for average Floridians while his successors will have to deal with the mess he left. Unfortunately this pain will be minor compared to the mess his brother will leave.

Dan Favero, St. Petersburg

A missed bet

Here we are in Florida sitting on a gold mine while Mississippi, the Bahamas, the Seminole Indians and all those day boats are taking out the gold.

I can't understand why the governor and the legislators can't see this. With the kind of money casinos would bring in, we could fund every school, cut taxes and probably have a hurricane fund. We should do the right thing.

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James Entwistle, New Port Richey

Get that gulf oil

I spent 35 years in the petroleum industry in Texas. I helped edit and publish a book, The Fundamentals of Petroleum, along with several other professional women in the industry.

Florida must allow offshore drilling. Please check out the information regarding offshore drilling rigs, etc. When Hurricane Katrina hit, the rigs were torn up, but there was no spill. These drilling platforms have safety cutoffs deep under the water, plus other safety features. They would not harm our "pristine beaches," which have to be closed down periodically for high bacteria counts.

Almost everything you touch is a by-product of oil and gas (try plastic). If Florida does not allow offshore drilling, other countries will come in and suck out all the billions of barrels of oil in the gulf that we could be using. Florida could tax the oil companies, get money for our schools and other needs.

Please, everyone, educate yourselves. Do something before other countries beat us to it.

Mary Hise, Clearwater

Destructive mining

TECO sometimes boasts of its clean-burning power plants in the flier that accompanies the electric bill. Seemed to me to be a good thing, until recently.

In the summer 2007 issue of the Natural Resources Defense Council's bulletin OnEarth, there's an article entitled "Appalachian Apocalypse," about mountaintop removal mining. This one-page article describes the destruction to the western Kentucky Appalachian region by the digging out of the entire tops of mountains for low-sulphur coal, and the depositing of all the remains into the lower streams and valleys. What stunned me was this passage:

"The resulting 'valley fills' create the largest man-made earthen structures in the country - huge treeless funnels that let mud and rainwater wash unimpeded through low-lying communities all across central Appalachia. The town of McRoberts, Kentucky, recently endured three '100-year floods' in 10 days. The water filled homes and carried away carports. When TECO Energy of Tampa, Florida, had leveled every peak around the community, it took the coal, took the profits, and left the people of McRoberts with crumbling homes, terrible roads, and a constant fear of being washed away in one's sleep."

Of course, TECO keeps its source of low-sulphur coal a guarded secret; western Kentucky is well out of sight of the Tampa Bay area. But I feel the company has a serious responsibility to repair this devastation to the extent possible.

What do you have to say to your Tampa Bay customers, TECO, about this ecological destruction? Are you going to clean up after yourself, and at least reforest the leveled mountains?

Jim van Koolbergen, Tampa

It is anti-Semitism

I agree with letter writer Norman Gross (Shun the terrorists, Aug. 5) in his response to Bill Maxwell's July 29 column (Blair snub of Hamas a misstep). Anti-Israel equals anti-Semitism, and it's about time that somebody said it.

The writer of an Aug. 9 letter (Typical demagoguery) who objects to this hides behind the veneer of "political differences" regarding America's policy of support for Israel when the real problem is that it is the homeland of the Jews.

The "big lie" of our time is that this tiny speck of sand in a vast Islamic universe is the problem, and those who seek its destruction are the victims. This irrationality can only be called anti-Semitism.

ENDING PIP COVERAGE IS A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

Vincent Probst, Tampa

Talking is the better way

It is so predictable. Bill Maxwell writes a column about the Middle East and Norman Gross responds with an almost insulting criticism, including the charge of anti-Semitism.

Maxwell is right about what has to happen in the Middle East. Not talking to Hamas is like not talking to the Chinese or the Russians during the Cold War. It is also like not talking to the North Koreans or the North Vietnamese. Had the United States taken Gross' positions in those conflicts, we would still be at war in those faraway countries.

As to the charge of anti-Semitism, what would Gross call those Jews and Israelis who agree with Maxwell? Are they also anti-Semites?

Why can't we accept that we will sometimes disagree without labeling each other as racists, anti-Semites or traitors? If we are all Americans, we should be willing to put America first, no matter how much we may disagree on particular issues.

Robert Monroe, Tampa

More help for young people

While the Gov. Charlie Crist's signing of Senate Bill 2114, which increases services for youth aging out of the foster care system, is a strong move in the right direction, a considerable amount of work remains to be done. A much larger and more diverse population of at-risk youth are facing obstacles to maturing into healthy adults with the skills necessary to become successful, productive members of the community.

Youth in foster care certainly deserve additional support, as do the more than 200,000 other Florida youth facing significant challenges to successfully entering adulthood. A new report, to be released later this summer by the Eckerd Family Foundation and Child Trends, identifies and quantifies significant groups of youth at risk in our state. The report provides estimates of the number of Florida youth in eight high-risk categories for which Child Trends has identified state-specific data. It also analyzes the seriousness of the risks associated with each category, the degree of overlap among some categories, and sociodemographic characteristics of youth in each category. This type of information has never before been available in a single cohesive document.

The publication of this report will coincide with the commencement of the work of Florida's Children and Youth Cabinet, which was legislatively enacted as an outgrowth of the 2006 Florida Legislative Children's Summit. It is our sincere hope that this data will assist Cabinet members, policymakers, foundations, government agencies and practitioners in crafting effective policies, tailoring and improving outreach efforts and program services, and making informed funding decisions to better meet the needs of Florida's at-risk youth.

We believe this report will facilitate the translation of good policy to good practice.

Joseph W. Clark, president, Eckerd Family Foundation, Clearwater

Bay Pines VA Medical Center

Red tape can be deadly

It is hard to believe that medical professionals have pondered for weeks to come to a decision involving life or death and if the VA hospital will allow death instead of emergency treatment of nonveterans.

Any reasonable person would quickly decide that any person, veteran or nonveteran, should be allowed to live if quick emergency care is within their reach and can save their life.

How can any reasonable medical professional reach for the rule book to decide if the dying victim should be treated? Apparently, the term "red tape" raises its ugly head and is allowed to determine if a person lives or dies.

ENDING PIP COVERAGE IS A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

Van E. Vergetis, Holiday

Give Bay Pines a break

I would just like to put in a good word for the Bay Pines VA Medical Center, which has gotten a bad rap lately in the paper.

My husband is an outpatient there and has been confined to the hospital on several different occasions. If it hadn't been for the VA hospital at Bay Pines, he would have lost his leg due to a horrific fall off a roof. He has always been treated with the utmost respect while he is there, whether as a patient or an outpatient.

His father, who is now deceased, was also a patient at the hospital, and was also treated with respect and dignity while a patient and in his passing. I have been to the hospital with my husband on many occasions and have witnessed myself how the patients and clientele are treated.

I believe that had there not been miscommunication between the paramedics and the emergency room at the hospital, the heart attack victim would have also been treated with the best of care. It wasn't a matter of whether he was a veteran or not.

If it wasn't for this facility, many of our husbands, fathers, brothers, sisters and veterans would not have a decent hospital and doctors to take care of them on a daily basis, regardless of insurance. And as we all know, medical treatment is expensive and for some unaffordable. Please give them a break.

Anne Bartlett, New Port Richey

Avoid universal health care

As a concerned taxpayer, I resent the fact that the Democratic Party and some weak conservatives are once again calling to implement a multimillion-dollar universal health care plan. This will put an unprecedented burden on the hardworking taxpayer.

Why are so many taxpayers unaware of the cost and the consequences associated with a universal health care plan? If Congress is successful in implementing this, it will be the surest way to bankrupt small business owners and force them to lay off hundreds of employees.

America's current health care system understandably is not perfect, but it still remains the envy of many. I am amazed at the number of international doctors and nurses who leave their homelands to come work in American hospitals. They, like many hardworking citizens, have no intention of abusing our federal government and the taxpayers.

Joan Atkins, Palm Harbor

Next, pooch will take Pilates - Aug. 6, Floridian story

Make sure Fido is fit

As an owner/operator of Royal Treatment Pet Sitting in Tampa and a volunteer for the Humane Society, I strongly caution dog owners to be sure their pets are in excellent health before they send them out to Bayshore Boulevard with an in-line skater. While this type of exercise may be ideal for some dogs, it could cause serious problems for others.

Per Dr. Joann Wagner at the Humane Society of Tampa: "We receive numerous calls on a daily basis regarding heat exhaustion in pets during these hot, humid summer months. Heat exhaustion can be a killer. Imagine putting on a fur coat to go jogging in 90-plus degree heat. The only method of cooling themselves for dogs is to pant. If the air is too hot and humid the dog may not be able to pant enough to cool itself, thus, heat exhaustion can occur."

ENDING PIP COVERAGE IS A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

Also, as mentioned in the article, dogs can burn and wear down the pads on their paws when they run on an extremely hot surface. The article does state that the runners at Barks n' Wags are aware of these problems and hopefully have some pet first-aid training under their belts. If your veterinarian gives you a thumbs up, and this is the best way for your dog to get its exercise then, by all means, go for it. Just be cautious for your dog's sake.

Jackie Stouffer, Tampa

Put real news first

When I opened the paper Friday morning, my first thought was on the situation in Utah where several miners' lives are at stake. I had hoped that perhaps during the night rescuers had reached them and that they were alive. That's what I had hoped to see in the headlines.

But once again, sports take priority in this town. If not the Bucs, it's the Lightning. I'm really sorry that Mike Alstott has been injured. But I'm more concerned about the real news, not the fluff. Can't we leave that stuff to the Sports section, not the headlines? I guess I'll stick to NPR for the real news.

Brenda Balla, Tampa

Sales tax holiday

Exemptions too often miss the mark

This is my second year as a Florida resident and college student, and my second chance to use the sales tax holiday in August. It is also the second year that I have been thoroughly confused by the lists of taxable and exempt items.

I thought the idea was to exempt clothing, school supplies and books to ease the burden on students and parents during an expensive time of year. However, the vast majority of what I need as a nursing student is fully taxable. The \$819 I spent on required textbooks the other day was almost entirely taxed - as a result of USF packaging several books together "for our convenience." But I should have waited until this week to buy the new Harry Potter.

The thick binders, printer paper and ink, and new stapler that I need are taxable, but if one can find a tuxedo or clerical vestments for under \$50, they are tax-free. Fanny packs and fishing vests are also exempt, but not my correction fluid or highlighters.

These exemptions seem to be more of a benefit to manufacturers and retailers than they are to students or parents, but this being Florida, that was most likely the actual intent of the law.

I propose a better back-to-school tax holiday: Exempt all clothing, books and school supplies purchased by anyone who can produce a valid student ID or proof of enrollment during the dates allowed by law. This would eliminate the need for a document detailing which items are eligible, and would have the added benefit of reducing costs for the people it is supposed to help.

Either that or the manufacturers of staplers and computer supplies need to start making larger campaign contributions, because as a poor college student getting poorer by the minute, my only power is my vote.

Maura White, Tampa

Graphic

ENDING PIP COVERAGE IS A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

PHOTO, MAURICE RIVENBARK - Times: With the state's increasingly crowded roads, Floridians shouldn't have to face the prospect of dealing with auto accidents without mandatory personal injury protection. PHOTO, Photos.com: Stack of Books

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BUSHISM IS NEO-FASCISM

The Nation (AsiaNet)

April 29, 2007 Sunday

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Byline: DR. S.M. RAHMAN

Body

It is not the unipolarity alone which has rendered the world as if it were a theatre of Greek tragedies. Enormous human blood had spilled in the outgoing century, to characterise it as the bloodiest one in human history, and there are ominous indications that the ongoing one would be no different. Mega-death and destruction do not arouse human compassion. A dehumanised sensibility masquerades as civilisational glory. Instruments of death have achieved sophistication in their killing propensity. Mass annihilation of innocent men, women and children are summarily dismissed as "collateral damage". Chomsky, a conscientious objector of the savagery let loose by USA by its much too pampered ally - Israel - laments the callousness of an Israeli soldier triumphantly putting his boot on the chest of a slain Palestinian, while posing for a snapshot.

Alison Weir narrates the humiliation and child abuse at Israeli checkpoint. Sometimes mothers and children are strip-searched together, at other time little girls are taken from their parents and strip-searched alone. Women are required to remove sanitary napkins, sometimes with small daughters at their side. Sometime women are strip searched in the presence of young sons." (Counterpunch, reproduced Daily Time March 17.07).

The implicit idea is that the humiliation so caused will impel them not to get back to their homeland now under Israel's occupation. What is even more immoral about it is that USA remains purposely blinded to such a perverse policy of human degradation and doles out its taxpayers' money to the tune of over \$8 million per day to Israel.

No country, ever in history has spent so much of money for reinforcing terrorism. Who can swallow such preposterous remarks by President Bush that his 'friend' the former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, 'was a man of peace', when the entire Muslim world would declare him a pathological war criminal. If at all Nuremberg-like trial of war criminals were to be held, he would be another Eichmann of the recent history.

Death of Muslims, be they Palestinians, Afghans, Kashmiris or Bosnians does not cause any concern or sympathy. More than 200,000 Bosnians, who were extra liberal and modern Muslims were killed and the world witnessed the carnage on TV, rather passively. What can one say about the mad remarks by Madeline Albright, the former US Permanent Representative to the UN when she was asked on a TV interview, whether the death of 50,000 Iraqi children due to the imposition of sanctions, was worth it. Without any moral qualms she answered, "Yes, we think, it is worth it."

Bob Woodward, a gifted journalist asked Mr. Bush, if he ever turned to his father, Bush Sr. for advice. "No, never, I get my advice from my 'higher father'". In his presidential speech he had acclaimed: "we have a calling from beyond the stars to stand for freedom and promote liberty abroad, by the greatest force for good on this earth and the greatest nation on earth." The fascist sensibility is in his bones and marrows: And this is how he conducts himself in

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the affairs of the world. The propensity to dominate and expand the US empire's preponderance is his strategic obsession.

The lofty ideals that were laid down by the great and tall leaders like Abraham Lincoln, Benjamin Franklin, Jefferson, Wilson and Roosevelt, and whole lot of others, symbolised USA's emergence as a power based on moral strength. No one despised those ideals. Not even the most radical Islamist. It is wrong to contend that the 'terrorists', be they Palestinians or from the Al-Qaeda, the Taliban or Kashmiris for that matter, had any hatred for the values for which the forebears of USA stood for. It is the radical derailment of those values giving rise to double standards, discriminative justice, condoning Israel's belligerence and defiance of UN Resolutions, illegal occupation of others' lands and plundering of their wealth and resources, that have created antipathy against USA. The colonisers were hated but not George Washington's USA, which stood for the right of the colonised - the wretched of the earth. The transformation of USA into Great Britain's like image and sensibility is at the root of the widespread dislike.

A dispassionate introspection will reveal that when one stifles the legitimate freedom right of a nation, one does earn a bad reputation. When USSR was strong and thriving, USA stood for the struggle of 'freedom' of people under Soviet Empire. When the Cold War came to an end, the stand of USA drastically changed. The freedom struggles of the people of Palestine or Kashmir or elsewhere, were characterised as 'terrorism'.

If today, Palestinians get justice in getting back their land, the Kashmiris the right to exercise their choice as promised through UN resolutions and commitment made by Jawaharlal Nehru and USA withdraws its troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, the scourge of 'terrorism' will substantially be reduced. It is as simple as that. The Taliban who are so despised and maligned today, when they were trained to defeat the formidable Red Army of USSR, they were called 'freedom fighters'. One recalls that some of these very radical and bearded Muslims were invited to the White House by President Reagan and showered with praises. They were characterised as the moral equivalents of Jefferson or words to that effect. If a broad-based government in Afghanistan had come into being through US involvement, comprising important freedom fighters, there would have been no Al-Qaeda or the menace of warlordism or Taliban. It is the denial of justice and freedom that Afghanistan is in such a bad shape.

The USA indeed is instrumental in augmenting 'terrorism' and spreading chaos in the world. Chomsky while analysing Washington's heightened aggressiveness points out a detailed study of the "Iraq effect" by terrorism experts like Peter Berger and Paul Cruickshank, which reveals that the Iraq war "has increased terrorism sevenfold worldwide". And "Iran effect" could be even more severe. For the US, Chomsky says, "the primary issue in the Middle East has been, and remains effective control of its unparalleled energy resources. Access is a secondary matter. Once its oil is on the seas it goes anywhere. Control is understood to be an instrument of global dominance. Iranian influence in the crescent challenges US control". (Tasting Blood, Khaleej Times, reproduced Post, 12-3-07).

In his Guardian article, "Their view of the world is through bombsight", he further contends: "It is no secret that Israel has helped to destroy secular Arab nationalism and to create Hezbollah and **Hamas**, just as US violence has expedited the rise of extremist Islamic fundamentalism and jihad terror." (reproduced Daily Times September 2, 2006).

Bushism is a pernicious legacy of the so-called proponents of realpolitik, like Henry Kissinger, Brezizinski and the most prominent guru of all strategists in USA, George Kennan, the author of the doctrine of containment, who had formulated several decades ago what US must do in order to retain its hegemony. It must hold under its sway the oil resources in the Middle East to control its supplies to the industrial powers. Look how bluntly he propagates an immoral idea. USA, he says has "Worlds' 50% of the world wealth but only 6.3% of its population. In this situation our real job in the coming period is to maintain this position of disparity. To do so we have to dispense with sentiments. We should cease thinking about human rights, the raising of living standards."

One may write volumes on what Kissinger characterised by his own boss President Nixon, who actually deformed the US foreign policy into an extension of Israel's agenda in the region and beyond. Brezezinski, the author of Grand Chessboard, made out a detailed plan for maintaining the primacy of USA in the post cold war era by restructuring Eurasia to be capable of dominating Eurasia. The Greater irony is that Brezezinski now is of the view

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that America is terrorised by 'War of Terror.' "The atmosphere", he says, "generated by the War on Terror, has encouraged social discrimination and legal and political harassment of Arab Americans. Nor surprisingly, animus towards the US has intensified, while its reputation as a leader in fostering constructive inter-racial and inter-religious relations has suffered egregiously." (Washington Post reproduced, daily Times March 25, 2007).

The change of regime in USA, perhaps may act as a therapeutic device against the deranged sensibility, which has caused so much embarrassment, leave alone the rest of the world to America itself. Hillary Clinton, whom I have had the opportunity of listening to an extempore speech made at Social Summit at Copenhagen in 1995, is an outstanding lady with a gift of great persuasive power. She should, I think reignite the flame contained in the US 'Declaration of Independence'. To quote Howard Zinn: "The Declaration of Independence, revered as a document but ignored as a guide of action needs to be read from pulpits and podiums, on street corners and community radio stations throughout the nation... Whenever any form of government become destructive of these ends it is the right of the people to alter or abolish and institute new government." There lies the remedy against Bushism.

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For Barack Obama, a careful courting of Jewish vote

Christian Science Monitor

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Byline: Ariel Sabar Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: Washington

Body

For a candidate intent on courting the Jewish vote, some of the headlines for Sen. Barack Obama in recent weeks have been less than heartening.

"Obama comment draws fire from Jews," the Des Moines Register declared after the senator's unscripted remark at an Iowa campaign stop in March that "nobody is suffering more than the Palestinian people" from stalled peace efforts with the Israelis.

"Obama on the Mideast: Not quite comfortable," The Chicago Jewish Star said after his first major policy speech on the Middle East, to a pro-Israel group in his hometown.

And at last week's Democratic presidential debate in South Carolina, Senator Obama's omission of Israel in response to a question about America's top allies gave moderator Brian Williams an opening to revisit the Iowa flap in front of a television audience of more than 2 million.

Some analysts say the miscues add up to a faltering start for Obama with a group of politically active voters and donors who could play an important role in a tight Democratic primary, particularly in states with larger Jewish populations like New York, New Jersey, Florida, Nevada, and California.

But Obama's advisers contend the sharp questions are a result of scrutiny any newcomer to the national stage would face on terrain as knotty as Middle East politics.

"I think it's coming significantly just out of the newness factor," says Dan Shapiro, an adviser to the Obama campaign. "We've known, and he's recognized since the beginning, that for someone who's only been in national office for two years lots of people are going to have lots of questions."

To answer those questions, Obama has delivered a series of speeches since March before Jewish audiences - two before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the influential pro-Israel lobby, and one, last week, before the National Jewish Democratic Council here.

Recalibrated remarks

Even in that short span, his remarks have undergone a subtle evolution.

For Barack Obama, a careful courting of Jewish vote

In March, he spoke of relaxing restrictions on aid to the Palestinians and said "both the Israeli and Palestinian people have suffered from the failure to achieve" the "goal" of "two states living side by side in peace and security." While asserting that the United States should isolate Hamas and other Palestinian Islamic militants, he said that "Israel will also have some heavy stones to carry" in any peace process.

By last week, however, the references to Palestinian suffering and Israeli heavy-lifting were gone, replaced by a less nuanced pro-Israel stance nearly indistinguishable from that of his chief rival for the Democratic nomination, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York.

"When I am president, the United States will stand shoulder to shoulder with Israel in search of this peace and in defense against those who seek its destruction," Obama told an audience at the National Jewish Democratic Council (NJDC), where his staff also handed out a 29-page "American-Israeli Relationship Issue Packet."

Yet two days later, when asked at the debate at South Carolina State University to name America's three most important allies, Obama listed the European Union, NATO, and Japan.

"I didn't hear you mention Israel," Mr. Williams interjected, asking whether the senator still stood behind his statement that "no one is suffering more than the Palestinian people."

"What I said is, nobody has suffered more than the Palestinian people from the failure of the Palestinian leadership to recognize Israel, to renounce violence, and to get serious about negotiating peace and security for the region," Obama replied. "Israel has been one of our most important allies around the world."

Senator Clinton learned the price of striking an off note on Middle East politics early in her first Senate campaign. In 1999, she kissed Suha Arafat, the wife of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, moments after Mrs. Arafat accused Israel of gassing Palestinian women and children. Clinton later claimed Mrs. Arafat's remarks had been mistranslated and eventually denounced them, but the episode threatened to derail her campaign.

"It played very poorly," recalls Steve Rabinowitz, a press aide in the Clinton White House. "For the next six years, she really worked the community and now she reaches into every corner, from the most secular Upper East Side Jew to the most religiously observant, even Hasidic.

"If we're measuring [Obama] against Hillary Clinton and John Edwards, and even to some extent [Sens. Joseph] Biden and [Christopher] Dodd, he's got a lot of catching up to do," says Mr. Rabinowitz, who says he is unaffiliated with any candidate this campaign season.

One reason is simply that Senators Biden and Dodd, like Clinton and former Senator Edwards, have occupied the national stage longer than Obama has. "They have a tremendous head start because they're very well-known quantities in the community," says Rabinowitz.

Jews make up 2 or 3 percent of the US population, but they vote at disproportionately high rates and are major Democratic Party donors, according to analysts. In the New York primary, as much as 25 percent of the Democratic turnout could be Jewish, analysts say.

Jewish base of support in Chicago

Obama has lined up a number of prominent Jewish fundraisers, including Penny Pritzker, the Chicago billionaire and Hyatt hotel heiress, and Alan Solomont, a Boston business magnate. And he has deep ties in Chicago's Jewish community, Jewish leaders there say.

"There are a large number of people from the Jewish community who have been supportive of Barack for years and years, since he first ran for the state legislature," says Lynn Cutler, a former official in the Clinton White House who is a lead fundraiser for Mrs. Clinton in Chicago. "There is an enormous affection for him."

By one measure, Obama's efforts seem to be paying off. A March survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press found that 2 percent of Obama's Democratic or Democratic-leaning supporters were Jewish,

For Barack Obama, a careful courting of Jewish vote

compared with 5 percent of Clinton's. When the survey was bolstered with new data from April, Obama had pulled even with Clinton, with Jews making up an equal share - 4 percent - of their bases of support.

Still, the Obama camp remains sensitive to its portrayal in Jewish websites and news organizations.

A few weeks ago, his campaign contacted at least one member of a panel that the Israeli newspaper Haaretz had convened to rate the candidates' attitudes toward Israel, according to Shmuel Rosner, the newspaper's chief US correspondent.

The panel of Israeli academics and former diplomatic officials had consistently ranked Obama last or second-to-last in a field of hopefuls from both parties. Obama's Chicago speech to AIPAC in March resulted in only a minor boost, placing him ahead of former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee (R) and Sen. Chuck Hagel (R) of Nebraska but well behind the top-rated names, former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani (R), former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R), and Clinton.

The low rating reflected unease about Obama's shorter track record in foreign affairs and his support from left-wing Democrats who may be less sympathetic to a hard-line defense of Israel, says Mr. Rosner. The Obama campaign had "wanted to make sure the panel had read the Chicago speech, and they also sent some other quotes," says Rosner, noting that other campaigns had also contacted the panel, which calls itself The Israel Factor.

For many American Jews, a candidate's record on traditionally liberal social and economic issues carries more weight than slight nuances in their positions on Israel, says Ira Forman, executive director of the nonprofit NJDC and coeditor of the book "Jews in American Politics."

Obama has played as much to those mainstays of Jewish-American politics as he has to the issue of Israel's security, using speeches before Jewish audiences to talk about the civil rights struggle, global warming, and the genocide in Darfur. His early opposition to the Iraq war has also reverberated with Jewish Americans, who, according to Gallup polls, are more likely to view the war as a mistake than are Americans of any other faith.

Robert Seidemann, a semiretired business owner who pressed Obama for reassurances on his Israel views at the NJDC speech last week, said afterward that he was still on the fence about the Illinois senator.

"As a Jew, it's a little easier to support a Hillary or an Edwards, because their record on Israel has been proven," he said in a phone interview from his home in West Palm Beach, Fla. "It's more a lack of knowledge than it is a fear that his position is less than what I want it to be. We need to know more about him."

Lee Diamond, a social activist from Falls Church, Va., says he was sold on Obama from the moment he heard of the senator's early years as a community organizer on the South Side of Chicago.

"I believe in the social justice values of Judaism," Mr. Diamond says. "He appeals to that because his whole career has been about public service."

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Chiquita case puts big firms on notice

Christian Science Monitor

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Byline: Sibylla Brodzinsky Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: APARTADolombia

Body

Rows of stout trees hang heavy with bright green bananas on plantations near Colombia's border with Panama. Workers slice off each bunch and package the fruit in boxes with a label recognized worldwide for its fresh bananas: Chiquita.

In Colombia, however, the Chiquita name has recently come to symbolize the confirmation of a long-suspected relationship between multinational firms and illegal armies fighting in the nation's four-decade-old war.

Chiquita Brands International admitted in US court last month that it paid \$1.7 million to Colombia's brutal right-wing militias over the course of eight years. The company said it did so to protect its employees and agreed to pay a \$25 million fine. The case is sparking outrage in the capital, Bogota, where officials want to see company executives on trial.

<P/>

Many in Uraba, Colombia's banana growing region, shrug off the payments as normal. Chiquita pulled out of Colombia in 2004 by selling its Banadex subsidiary to a local company for \$43.5 million. But the case could have implications for other companies doing business here or in other conflict areas around the world, analysts say.

"It's one of the first - if not the first - times that a [US-based] company is indicted and pleads guilty to providing material support to an organization known to commit widespread human rights abuses," says Arvind Ganesan, director of the Business and Human Rights program at the New York-based Human Rights Watch.

"But it's actually not a case about human rights," he says. "It's a unique case where terrorism is the crux of the whole thing." The single-count indictment against Chiquita was for "engaging in transactions with a specially designated global terrorist."

The right-wing United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) joined the ranks of Al Qaeda and ***Hamas*** on the State Department's list of terrorist organizations in September 2001. Colombia's two main leftist rebel groups, known as FARC and ELN are also on the list.

Companies across the globe should be looking at the Chiquita case as a cautionary tale, says Mr. Ganesan. "Even if [the security providers] are not on a terrorist list, [the Chiquita case] should provoke a real rethinking of security arrangements," he says. The AUC was not on the US terrorist list when Chiquita began making its payments.

Chiquita case puts big firms on notice

At least three multinationals operating in Colombia - coal mining giant Drummond, Nestle, and Coca-Cola - have been targeted in civil lawsuits in the US that claimed these companies paid paramilitaries to kill or intimidate union workers. The Chiquita case could pave the way for investigations into other companies, as well. "Corporations are on notice that they cannot make protection payments to terrorists," said Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Wainstein on announcing the plea agreement. A Justice Department spokesman declined to say whether probes into those firms are under way.

Chiquita case could be a precursor

"If Chiquita can be prosecuted, then Drummond can," says Terry Collingsworth, an attorney with the International Labor Rights Fund which supports civil lawsuits against Drummond, Nestle, and Coca-Cola.

Chiquita is "now a sitting duck" for legal action by families who believe the company may be liable for their loved ones' deaths, Mr. Collingsworth says.

Colombia's chief prosecutor Mario Iguaran said Colombia may ask for the extradition of the eight Chiquita executives who according to court papers authorized or knew of the payments. "This was not payment of extortion money. It was support for an illegal armed group whose methods included murder," Mr. Iguaran said.

In 2001, more than 3,000 Central American rifles and millions of rounds of ammunition were unloaded at a Colombian port by Banadex and eventually ended up in the hands of paramilitary forces, according to an investigation by the Organization of American States. As part of an ongoing investigation into the shipment, Iguaran's office recently sent a formal request to the US Justice Department asking for all court documents relating to the plea agreement and all information the department may have that may pertain to the Colombian investigation. Chiquita spokesman Michael Mitchell told the Associated Press in an e-mail regarding the shipment that 'there is no information that would lead us to believe that Banadex did anything improper.' "

Iguaran also said his office has opened a criminal investigation against Drummond.

Revelations of details about Chiquita's payments to the AUC has coincided with a widening political scandal in Colombia as ties between the paramilitaries and some of the country's top politicians and government officials come to light. Eight lawmakers and a governor are currently in jail on charges they colluded with the militias. Last week, arrest warrants were issued for six mayors.

Today, workers on what used to be one of Chiquita's farms lower their voices to talk about the case and are curious about why the company felt compelled to admit to making the payments. "Don't they all do it?" asked one supervisor at the packing plant that still supplies Chiquita.

'No secret' that firms paid militias

"It was no secret that the multinationals, especially in Uraba, paid that money," said Freddy Rendon, alias "the German," the head of a paramilitary bloc that operated in the banana region. Mr. Rendon is one of 57 paramilitary leaders who demobilized along with some 30,000 fighters as part of a deal with the government.

Chiquita did not just pay the AUC. It also admitted to - but was not prosecuted by the Justice Department for - paying the FARC and ELN rebel armies before the paramilitaries took control of the region.

Despite the nature of the AUC - blamed by human rights groups for some of Colombia's most gruesome crimes - Chiquita is only accused of breaking US law beginning in October 2001 when the AUC was officially named a "foreign terrorist organization" by the US State Department.

Mitchell said in a telephone interview from the company's US headquarters in Cincinnati that the motive behind the payments was to protect its employees. "We believe they saved people's lives," he said.

Chiquita case puts big firms on notice

However, during the time Chiquita was paying the paramilitaries, thousands of people across Colombia died at the hands of the right-wing militias, which expanded from Uraba. In the banana belt alone between 1997 and 2004, paramilitary forces are blamed for 22 massacres in which 137 people were killed, according to government figures.

On one particularly bloody day in January 1999, 14 people were murdered in a killing spree that spread throughout the banana belt's four municipalities, after then AUC chief Carlos Castano called off a Christmas-time truce. Hundreds more died in individual killings.

Alberto is a tall, self-assured man in his early 40s. But his voice drops to a whisper when he says he personally witnessed at least 10 murders on one of Chiquita's 26 plantations where he worked for 11 years.

He vividly remembers the last murder he saw on the Banafinca farm in 1999. When Alberto and his coworkers arrived on the plantation they saw two men known to be paramilitary henchmen standing menacingly near the packing plant. The thugs waited until everyone took up their workstations and then went into the field where one of Alberto's coworkers was climbing a ladder to bag a banana stem. "No one knew who they had come for that day," Alberto says.

The thugs waited until everyone took up their workstations then went into the field where one of Alberto's coworkers was climbing a ladder to bag a banana stem. "They cut off his head with a machete, dumped the weapon, then calmly walked to their motorcycle and drove off, without saying a word," says Alberto, who asked that his real name not be used.

Alberto cannot say whether the murder had anything to do with Chiquita's payments. But he says that the company's contributions to the paramilitary groups helped strengthen them and allowed them to expand throughout the country. "The money Chiquita paid helped finance the paramilitaries. Their coffers grew, and they were able to buy more weapons.

Jose Benitez, a leader of the banana workers' trade union, said Chiquita and the other firms that have paid paramilitaries must be held accountable.

"It's like they are trying to erase all those deaths with money that the victims here will never see. If there is justice, the Chiquita executives will see the inside of a Colombian prison," says Mr. Benitez.

Yolanda Rua, a member of a women's peace organization in Uraba, says however that it serves little purpose to lock up company executives. Instead, she says, the \$25 million that Chiquita will pay to settle the Justice Department's investigation should go to the victims of the paramilitaries that Chiquita supported. "We don't need a long prison sentence for them. We need to see some sort of reparation."

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The New Review

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First Edition

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Body

impose on a woman to wear it. And it's against human rights too. People have to know they have the choice. The struggle is to empower the women in our societies, and education is the key."

His own children, four of them, were educated at mainstream state schools. Ramadan thinks that faith schools are OK for the people who want them, but that he and his children have benefited from mainstream education. His eldest daughter, he says with paternal wonder and pride, "is in her twenties now, and a liberated women". He corpses for a moment, then raises his eyebrows. "A very liberated woman???" I decide it isn't seemly to go there, though I'm hugely tempted to invade his family's privacy and ask him what he means. Ramadan considers Muslim violence largely to have emerged from similar roots to Muslim misogyny. "Violence is against Islam, but still you have Muslims using violence, and in a profoundly wrong way, so you have to challenge this. It's a necessary internal and intra-community debate, and our non-Muslim fellow citizens have a role to play. The questions they are asking are necessary. The only problem is the way these questions are asked. If you approach issues, from the cartoons to the niqab, by saying, 'We have absolute freedom of speech, and you don't,' then we are struggling - the West on one side, Islam on the other side. This polarisation provokes a victim mentality. Both sides feel: 'They are against our values.' Both are wrong.

"It's a two-way process. We have to change our way of looking at the West. When you are born and raised in the West and you understand the history, the mentality, the collective psychology, you can integrate so many things that are better than their equivalents in the culture of origin.

"Every single human being is selective, or should be selective, with his or her culture. Take democracy. For years there was talk among Muslims about how we shouldn't promote democracy. But this is now really moving. There's a silent revolution. In the States, in Canada, here in Europe, it's changing."

He's aware, of course, that the rather louder revolution, which crashes aeroplanes into iconic western buildings, and kills blameless Londoners on tube trains, tends to divert attention away from this charmingly seductive process of warmly generous cultural exchange. Again, he's able to come up with a plausible response. Ramadan was part of the "task force" gathered by the Government in the wake of the 7/7 London bombings, and is clear on what he sees as the aberrant minority behaviour of some British Muslim men.

No title set.

"None of them were long-standing, practising Muslims - sometimes it had just been two or three weeks before they became involved. They were very well integrated in the Western culture, but they also had this binary vision - us versus them. They were not psychologically integrated; you can be intellectually and socially integrated, but not psychologically integrated, because the sense of belonging is missing.

"We have to share the responsibility in this culture to give value to this presence. It's very important for the Muslim communities to have a very strong discourse about their perception of what it is to be in the West. People say: 'How can I integrate into the British culture when the British culture is all about going to pubs? Pubs mean alcohol and we cannot drink.' You have to say, 'Look, you have a very simplistic impression of what the culture is.'"

Ramadan himself, though, is unhappy with much of what he perceives as typically Western culture. In *Western Muslims And The Future of Islam*, he talks of the tendency in developed societies "to dive into the most intense feelings and emotions, which even if they are not real or deep, give us the sense that we exist". This pinpoints the motivating force behind all sorts of risky and destructive behaviour, I think, and certainly provides a useful commentary on the progress of some of my own madder little adventures in the liberal fleshpots.

His own belief is that the daily practice of Islam protects against such "demeaning " trends, and thereby makes the West a less dangerous place for Muslims to be than for materialists. But with neo-liberal economics, above all else, he sees no possible accommodation. Western Muslims, he says, should not "work for a multinational that plunders the planet, or in an armaments industry that produces death, or banks that fuel a murderous economic order". He insists that "economic resistance" is a western Muslim's duty, and he fervently believes that the introduction of Islamic moral values would mitigate many of the excesses of the global economy. It is here that Ramadan's socialistic vision of Islam forms a clear alliance with the far left. As president of the think-tank the European Muslim Network, he is actively involved in the anti-globalisation movement. Again, though, such views are hardly confined to Islamicists.

Some people have suggested to Ramadan that his promotion of economic resistance was the real reason why the US would not allow him into the States to take up his post as Professor of Islamic Studies and Luce Professor of Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana. He was told he wasn't going to get a visa just a few days before moving there, and it took him two years before he wrung a specific explanation out of the Americans, who said that he couldn't come in because he had "endorsed or espoused a terrorist activity". The activity was making a donation of about \$900 to a European charity that gave aid to Palestinians. It is now black-listed in the US, but not in Europe, for allegedly giving money to Hamas. At the time he made the donation, the charity was not black-listed, even in the US.

One can't help feeling that his family connection to the Muslim Brotherhood - an organisation set up in 1928 and dedicated to the establishment of a worldwide Islamic caliphate - might have been a factor. It is almost universally reported that Ramadan "claims" not to be a member, even though his views are not at all compatible with those of the widely influential and widely despised organisation. Once more, Ramadan explains his position with a clarity that is nuanced rather than categorical.

"There are things my grandfather did that I respect totally. First, he was a spiritual man. All the stories I got from my mother and from my father about him, and the people who were around him when I came back to Egypt - people of strong faith - say that he was coming from a Sufi tradition, which is what I try to do.

"Second, he did something that if I had been in his position at his time I would have done - he resisted colonialism. And he built or adapted 2,000 schools, half of them for women, and built or supported 1,500 social enterprise institutions to help the people.

"He created an organisation that came with slogans. I am suspicious of slogans. When you say "The Koran is our constitution," the way he was saying it, was not the same as the way his followers were saying it, so I'm critical of that, and I'm critical of his perception that Muslims had to have a strong hierarchical organisation.

No title set.

"But people confuse my grandfather at the start of the movement, with what the movement became after he was killed, and Nasser began his revolution. So when people ask about my grandfather, I don't have a simple answer - he was bad or good. People want me to condemn the whole thing, and I say, "No, I'm not like that."

What is Tariq Ramadan like then? He's like a man who is doing his best to build bridges between sets of values that seem at times, even by his own optimistic credo, to be irreconcilable. He's like a person who is trying his best to find a way forward during a fearful and difficult time. He's like a guy who will defend what he loves about his homeland and about his religion, to the hilt. "The rule of law, equal citizenship, universal suffrage, the accountability of elected leaders before the people who elected them, and the separation of church and state." These, he says, are the most precious assets of Western democracy. "Do we have, as Muslims, a problem with these five principles? No."

I, for one, see no harm at all in taking a small punt on his sincerity. Sure, a number of my own beliefs can never be compatible with Islam, just as they can't reach an accommodation with Catholicism or Scientology. But I do share with Islam - apparently - a belief that people who think differently to me should be defended as far as it is possible to do so. That so many people are so unwilling to trust Ramadan on this point, is very much part of the problem. s
Tariq Ramadan's 'The Messenger: the Meanings of the Life of Muhammad' is published by Penguin at £20

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End of Document

Prince and the Middle East revolution; MUSIC

Australian Financial Review

January 6, 2007 Saturday

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Byline: Joseph Braude. Joseph Braude is the author of *The New Iraq: Rebuilding the Country for Its People, the Middle East, and the World*.

Body

An army of Arabic pop stars, led by their boss Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal, rival mosque preachers and politicians for the attention of Arab masses, writes Joseph Braude.

During the Arab-Israeli war last year, Beirut tabloids were filled with the expected denunciations of Israel, along with the occasional shot at Hezbollah for sparking the conflict by kidnapping two Israeli soldiers. But they saved plenty of outrage for a local group of powerful elites they charged with wounding Lebanon's fighting spirit: a crew of sexy, wealthy pop stars, accused of fleeing by limo and private jet as soon as the going got tough.

"The first missile had barely been launched on South Lebanon," fumed music critic Iman Ibrahim in the online Arabic-language daily Elaph, "before most of the artists of Lebanon had packed their suitcases".

Among the first to skip town, wrote Ibrahim, was curvaceous Beirut beauty Haifa Wehbe, dubbed "the sexiest woman in the Middle East" by People magazine last spring - herself a native of the Shiite-dominated Lebanese south where Hezbollah has most support.

Behind the pundits' outrage lies the story of a revolution in Arab pop culture that started in Lebanon and has turned seductive young vocalists and dancing divas into influential public figures. In most Arab capitals recently, street protesters hoisted banners cheering Hezbollah and demanded Arab elites adopt a similar stance. But Wehbe and other top-selling Arab pop stars don't answer to the Arab street.

If they take orders from anyone, it's Al-Waleed bin Talal, the wily Saudi prince whose entertainment empire dominates Middle Eastern music and satellite television. A nephew of Saudi King Abdullah, the tall, wiry, mustachioed prince (whom Forbes called the fifth-richest man in the world) earned his fortune in the Saudi construction industry. He is also a major shareholder in Planet Hollywood and Euro Disney and made headlines when his huge investment in News Corp stock protected Rupert Murdoch from a hostile takeover.

"Royals, in general, they earn their living by being royal," Saleh Al-Ghoul, an executive director for the prince's flagship Kingdom Holding Company, noted in Al-Waleed's authorised biography. "What made him different is that he earned his way."

Prince and the Middle East revolution MUSIC

Back in the mid-1990s, Prince Al-Waleed noticed that millions of Arabs were installing rooftop satellite dishes and tuning into American MTV, French soft porn, and the then-fledgling Al-Jazeera. "There was a gap, there was an opening," the prince recalled in an interview with biographer Riz Khan. "Whenever I see an opening, I like to fill it."

It's one thing to sneak a satellite dish onto your roof, however, and quite another to ask a conservative Saudi girl to dance half-naked for the camera - even if you are a prince. So Al-Waleed took his idea and his chequebook to Lebanon, where a more risque entertainment industry had been thriving for decades.

The music empire he built, Rotana Audio Visual Company, manages the careers of about 120 leading Arab vocalists, owns the rights to their songs, and produces their American-style music videos.

The company operates the five biggest satellite channels on which Arabic music is broadcast, reportedly drawing tens of millions of viewers per day, and it also rules major concert venues.

Video clips produced by Rotana have become more than just a lucrative business venture. In addition to offering viewers a taste of Western-style pop culture, they are a vehicle for self-expression of a sort that is truly revolutionary.

While Haifa Wehbe sings and dances a slow flamenco in the rain wearing a slinky red dress, a steady stream of Arabic text-messages that viewers have paid to transmit via their mobile phones crawls underneath the image like the stock exchange ticker tape. Subscribers to the service can express their personal desires in a way that was unimaginable even five years ago.

"People are sending in messages, saying, 'Hi, I'm 23, looking for a hot girl in Cairo', " says Patricia Kubala, a Cairo-based graduate student from the University of California at Santa Barbara.

In a society in which sex and flirtation have long been relegated to the bedroom, Rotana and other music networks have given young people a risk-free outlet for self-expression.

"That's a major component of the video clip phenomenon that bothers and perplexes a lot of people," Kubala says.

For the prince, who claims credit for introducing the concept, it's also good business. "My channel pays for itself with just these messages and advertising," he told his biographer.

Supporters of Hezbollah and **Hamas** have alleged a conspiracy to corrupt Arab youth. Music television producers "want us to dance over the wounds of our people in Palestine and Iraq", another leading Islamist has been quoted as saying.

In the Iraqi holy city of Karbala in 2005, a thousand people demonstrated against an alleged affront by Lebanese idol Nancy Ajram.

Despite vigorous attacks, pop idols rival mosque preachers and politicians for the attention of Arab masses. Their fans, mostly in their teens and 20s, comprise one of the largest baby booms in human history. And what may be most disturbing to Arab hardliners is that Prince Al-Waleed's most popular vocalists, having won the hearts of Arab youth, have also begun to vocalise a progressive political agenda.

When millions of Lebanese gathered peacefully in downtown Beirut a year ago to demand that Syrian troops withdraw from Lebanon, Haifa's Let Me Live was played on the PA system. She told Arabic **women's** magazine Laha she had recorded the song deliberately to send a message, "because it discusses . . . freedom, considered to be among the most basic of human rights".

Lebanese diva Elissa allegedly pushed the matter further by calling on Syrian troops to withdraw. After al-Qaeda bombers killed scores of Egyptians and Westerners in the Sinai resort town of Sharm el Sheikh in July 2005, Ajram announced her plan to hold a two-day charity concert on behalf of the victims.

Prince and the Middle East revolution MUSIC

The benefit concert never materialised - but over the ensuing months, Ajram toured hospitals in which bombing victims were being treated and reportedly donated proceeds from her concerts to their medical fees.

All these liberal pronouncements by Rotana artists in turn seem to affirm the tradition of progressive Arab politics that Prince Al-Waleed grew up with. As a young man, his father, Prince Talal bin Abdul Aziz, called unsuccessfully for sweeping political reforms, declaring himself a socialist in the early 1960s and briefly broadcasting anti-monarchist radio propaganda from his exile in Cairo. The elder prince eventually reconciled with Saudi leadership and returned to the kingdom, on the condition that he refrain from all political activity. By way of Rotana, the young Prince Al-Waleed appears to have found an indirect way to channel his father's values through dozens of singers.

Enter Hezbollah and its recent war with Israel. More than 2000 bombs were dropped by Israeli planes on the Islamist-controlled Lebanese south as well as selected targets throughout the country. Yet Rotana's extensive Beirut studio facilities in the mostly Christian neighbourhood of Ashrafiya remained unscathed.

There's no evidence the Israelis see Rotana as especially friendly to their cause, but the fact is most Rotana artists declined to profess support for Hezbollah fighters - and their silence spoke volumes.

And despite Arab tabloid reports of sexy Lebanese singers' mass exodus from Lebanon, several of the most prominent Rotana faces remained in Beirut, in solidarity with their fellow Lebanese. They just didn't incite young men to join the battle.

Witness sultry starlet Nawal al-Zoghbi, who, by visiting classrooms on daily goodwill missions, has focused her efforts on keeping kids in school despite the violence.

With the Hezbollah-Israeli war now in remission, Prince Al-Waleed's major performance venues have been hosting a series of fund-raising concerts to support the reconstruction of Lebanon. Among the lyrics sung at those concerts is a popular refrain by al-Zoghbi:

"I do not want you to burn my life," she sings. "I want to live. I want to live."

In the context of rising Islamic extremism, which promotes an eagerness to die for a sacred cause, that's a pretty radical idea. As the late leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, put it: "We have men who love death as you love life." It's nice to know they also have at least one prominent woman who's willing to lend her powerful voice to the opposite sentiment.

Graphic

TWO PHOTOS: East meets West . . . Haifa Wehbe, above, and Nawal al-Zoghbi. Photo (above) AFP

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World Report

Windsor Star (Ontario)

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Final Edition

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Byline: Compiled from Star News Services

Body

MIDEAST

ISRAEL BRANDS GAZA 'HOSTILE ENTITY'

JERUSALEM - Israel declared Gaza a "hostile entity" on Wednesday and said it would limit supplies to the Hamas-run territory, overshadowing U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's latest peace mission.

The decision by Israel's powerful security cabinet cleared the way for the government to shut off supplies of electricity and fuel to the impoverished territory -- home to 1.5 million Palestinians -- in response to frequent rocket attacks from Gaza.

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said Israel needed to answer what she termed daily "terror attacks" on its soil from the Gaza Strip, as she explained the decision at a news conference with Rice.

"We made this decision according to our legal advisor, so it is according to international law," she claimed. "It is not going to affect the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip."

BUSH 'CONCERNED' ABOUT BLACKWATER DISPUTE

WASHINGTON - U.S. President George W. Bush is "concerned" about the Blackwater controversy in Iraq, the White House said Wednesday, as Washington and Baghdad sought a compromise to end the damaging dispute.

At the same time, Bush spokeswoman Dana Perino appeared to reject Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's forceful calls to replace the company, repeatedly insisting that civilian U.S. workers in Iraq "need protection."

Officials on both sides signaled that they wanted a solution that would ultimately let the mammoth private security firm continue to operate in war-torn Iraq, where it protects civilian U.S. employees.

Asked about Bush's reaction to the dispute, triggered Sunday when Blackwater contractors opened fire in a Baghdad neighbourhood, killing 10 people and wounding 13, Perino replied: "Obviously he said he was concerned."

EUROPE

POLISH PARTY POSTS NUDE POSTERS FOR ELECTION

World Report

WARSAW - A new Polish women's political party risks shocking the majority Catholic country by plastering nude posters of their female candidates for the upcoming Oct. 21 parliamentary election.

Seven women, including Women's Party (Partia Kobiet, PK) founder and president, writer Manuela Gretkowska, have launched their campaign with nude posters of themselves with the logo "The Party of Women. Poland is a Woman" masking their private parts.

The poster also incorporates their electoral slogan: "Everything for the future ... and nothing to hide."

"This poster is intended to shatter stereotypes in the anachronistic world of politics, which is more often dominated by uncommunicative men with their black tie outfits," Gretkowska told Agence France-Presse.

ROMANIAN SELF-IMMOLATOR DIES FROM BURN INJURIES

MADRID - A Romanian immigrant who suffered horrific injuries after setting fire to himself a fortnight ago in Spain has died, the sub-prefectural office in the eastern city of Castellon said Wednesday.

The man doused himself in flammable liquid and set himself alight outside the prefectural building in an incident which was captured live on Spanish television.

The man's daughter said he had been falsely promised work and housing in Spain and in desperation had called on the local authorities to finance his family's return home, which would have cost around US\$550.

MAN HIDES SEX TOYS IN SAUSAGE FOR DUBAI TRIP

BERLIN - Staff at a German butcher's shop were shocked to discover a customer had hidden two sex toys in their sausages for transport to Dubai, police said Wednesday.

"It was two latex dildos with a natural look," said a spokesman for police in the southwestern city of Mannheim.

After shopping there earlier in the day, the man, who spoke broken English, returned to the butcher's with two large Schwartenmagen sausages. He asked a shop assistant to wrap and cool them until he departed for Dubai the next day.

But the assistant noticed the goods had got heavier and alerted police. Officers discovered the man, who was about 50, had removed some of the meat and packed the dildos inside.

"He could have used a loaf of bread," the spokesman said. "It's not against the law here. But obviously I can't speculate on what customs in Dubai will have to say about it."

BEAR GETS MORE THAN HE BARGAINED FOR

BUCAREST - A brown bear looking for food in a Carpathian Mountains sanatorium overnight got more than he bargained for, staff said Wednesday.

The bear entered the building in the resort of Predeal through a window, found some food in a garbage can, and proceeded to lick its way to the bottom before its head got stuck in the bin.

Sanatorium workers found it at dawn and called hunters to come and tranquilize it in order to liberate it from the unintended trap. Lightly groggy, the bear stumbled into the neighbouring forest after it was freed.

BRITISH PROF WINS PRIZE FOR BAR-FIGHT RESEARCH

STOCKHOLM - Rowdy bars may no longer be quite as dangerous thanks to a British professor who won a criminology prize on Wednesday for his work showing how injuries from broken glass can be reduced.

World Report

Jonathan Shepherd, a face surgeon and professor at Cardiff University, won the Stockholm Prize in Criminology with his research into bar fights and glass-related injuries.

His work compared drink glasses and the different ways they shatter and has "led pubs in the UK to use the glass that causes far fewer injuries," a statement said.

He shared the prize with U.S. professor David Olds, from the University of Colorado, who has developed methods to prevent child abuse.

Olds's research involved sending nurses to visit at-risk young mothers before and two years after their first child was born, resulting in fewer cases of child abuse.

NORTH AMERICA

POPE TO VISIT U.S. NEXT YEAR, VATICAN ANNOUNCES

VATICAN CITY - Pope Benedict XVI is due to visit New York next year, most likely in April, following an invitation from UN chief Ban Ki-Moon, Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi said Wednesday.

"The Holy Father will visit the United States next year, most probably in April. We cannot however exclude the visit taking place in autumn and this would also depend on the dates of the UN General Assembly," he told Agence France-Presse.

MALE SEX ORGAN NEW SOURCE OF STEM CELLS

PARIS - A man's testicles could one day provide a plentiful and accessible supply of adult stems cells to help him fight off disease or regenerate damaged organs, according to a study published Wednesday.

Researchers at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York have already isolated the multi-purpose cells in mice, and successfully coaxed them to grow into cardiac cells, brain cells and working blood vessel tissue.

If the same technique can be extended to men, the study points out, it would sidestep the morally charged debate over using embryonic stems cells for the same purpose.

EX-ASTRONAUT WANTS EVIDENCE TOSSED OUT

ORLANDO, Fla. - Former NASA astronaut Lisa Nowak testified on Wednesday that she asked in vain for the right to speak to a lawyer during her police interrogation and denied that she had consented to a search of her car.

Nowak, who once flew on the space shuttle, is accused of assaulting a romantic rival. Her attorneys want the Florida court to throw out her interrogation and key evidence found in her car because she was denied her basic legal rights.

On the witness stand on Wednesday, Nowak disputed the testimony of an Orlando police detective, who said she had given police permission to search her car through nods and mumbles of consent, and said she asked for a lawyer even though there was no evidence of that request in a transcript.

Her trial, originally scheduled for Monday, was delayed after her lawyer said Nowak might claim she was insane when she allegedly attacked Shipman. The new trial date of April 7 gives prosecutors more time to prepare for an insanity defence.

OCEANIA

UNWANTED TWIN HURT 'ABILITY TO LOVE'

SYDNEY - A lesbian who had twins through IVF but only wanted one child had lost some of her ability to love as a result, her partner told an Australian court Wednesday.

World Report

In the first case of its kind in the country, the couple are seeking damages from their doctor after one of the women was implanted with two embryos instead of one as requested and subsequently gave birth to twin baby girls.

The women, who cannot be named, are suing prominent obstetrician Robert Armellin for more than US\$330,000 to cover the cost of raising one of the non-identical children, who are now aged three.

The Supreme Court in Canberra heard that the couple's relationship suffered from the stress of twin parenthood and that the birth mother had changed after delivering the babies.

"She always said that she had a big heart filled with love," the woman's partner told the court, Australian Associated Press reported.

"I find (now) that she doesn't have the same ability to love that she used to and the same capacity to, I guess, embrace differences and issues as a couple or as a team." The women also said that her partner had felt angry and desperate once she knew she was carrying twins and that she had hoped one embryo would just go away.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Eloy Alonso, Reuters; A SPLASH OF BRAZILIAN COLOURS IN SPAIN: A Brazilian dancer performs during a parade in central Oviedo, northern Spain, Wednesday. The Asturian capital is celebrating its traditional Day of America, when there is a huge parade. ;

Colour Photo: Tzipi Livni ;

Colour Photo: Pope Benedict XVI ;

Colour Photo: Lisa Nowak ;

Load-Date: September 20, 2007

Turkey plays waiting game

Australian Financial Review

August 1, 2007 Wednesday

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Byline: Tony Walker Tony Walker is the AFR's international editor

Body

The re-election of Tayyip Erdogan raises questions about Turkey's future as a secular nation, writes Tony Walker in Istanbul.

When Kemal Mustafa Ataturk, father of modern Turkey and scourge of the ANZACS at Gallipoli, died on November 10, 1938, a *female* admirer observed that "Turkey has lost her lover and must now settle down with her husband".

The comment is included in the prologue to Lord Kinross's excellent biography, Ataturk: The Rebirth of a Nation.

Some 70 years later in the wake of a historic election this week in which a charismatic leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan (pronounced Ardwan), was returned to power in a landslide, Turks are asking themselves whether they'll be settling down with an Islamist scold or a genuine moderniser.

Doubts persist among an urban elite and within the military about Erdogan's intentions. Will he continue in the secular tradition laid down by Ataturk, a fierce opponent of religious interference in affairs of state, or will he seek to Islamise the country?

Debate among elegant Turks in gracious salons overlooking the Bosphorus and in academic circles in the capital Ankara this week focused on whether Erdogan, who makes no attempt to hide his Islamist orientation, will facilitate a process under which political Islam asserts itself in the world's most secular Muslim country.

"I found the result chilling," one of Turkey's most senior former diplomats told me in remarks that reflected fairly widespread alarm among the elite at the election result.

But whether these concerns are justified is not clear and may be exaggerated; although if you believe that politicians remain relatively true to their core beliefs, then secular Turks have cause for concern.

Erdogan does have form. As mayor of Istanbul, Turkey's future Prime Minister observed: "Democracy is like a streetcar. You only ride it to get to your destination."

This is the sort of remark you might expect from a leader of *Hamas*, not in modernising Turkey with ambitions to become a member of the European Union.

Turkey plays waiting game

In 1997, the Islamist-leaning Welfare Party, of which Erdogan was a member, was banned for seeking to undermine Turkey's secular regime. Erdogan himself was imprisoned for reading, while Istanbul's mayor, a poem that likened minarets to bayonets.

It is also true - as I discovered on a searingly hot day when the temperature exceeded 40 degrees Celsius - it is harder to get a beer in street-side cafes in some parts of Istanbul than used to be the case - a legacy of Erdogan's tenure as mayor.

But it would take a leap of paranoia to assume that Erdogan, who has pressed ahead determinedly with market-friendly economic reforms, is going to turn Turkey into another Iran, as some of the more excitable secularists suggested during the campaign.

The man himself sought to reassure voters in a speech welcoming his resounding victory that he would not compromise Turkey's secular principles. "We will never make concessions over the values of people, the basic principles of our republic. We will embrace Turkey as a whole without discriminating," Erdogan told a rally in Ankara.

The question is whether he is to be believed. The response to such a conundrum should be of more than passing interest to Turkey's North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies and further afield in countries like Australia, which have a manifest stake in the success of a modernising, predominantly Muslim country, after the hash that has been made of neighbouring Iraq.

Yusuf Kanli, editor of The Turkish Times, has no doubt that Turkey is at a historic moment in which lie risks to the experiment that was born from Ataturk's vision of a modern Turkish state emerging from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire.

"The polarisation in the country - which became even more evident with the Sunday vote - has to be urgently addressed and the rhetoric of 'two Turkeys' must be brought to an end. In achieving this, the responsibility lies with the [Justice and Development Party] AKP and Erdogan himself," Kanli says.

Asked whether he trusts Erdogan, Kanli is far from alone among Turkey's social democrats. "I tend to believe they have a secret agenda, but 50 per cent of the Turkish nation is saying 'no'," he says.

Erdogan's AKP got 46.7 per cent of the vote, becoming the first party in 53 years, since the second election of the former Democrat Party, to increase its share of the vote for a second term.

Faruk Logoglu, Turkey's former ambassador to Washington and now head of an Ankara think-tank, sees trouble on the horizon, especially if Erdogan's pledge to modernise Turkey's constitution results in an infringement of its secular characteristics.

"If the governing party interprets the huge increase in their vote (from 34 to 46.7 per cent) as a blank cheque to pursue their Islamist instincts, they would be making a huge mistake," Logoglu says.

But these concerns are not universal among Turkish intellectuals. Ibrahim Kalin, a US-educated academic who is soon to take up a professorship at Georgetown University in the US, says "paranoia among secularists is very deep but not very widespread".

Kalin regards the Erdogan phenomenon as signalling the emergence of a new centrist and inclusive bloc to replace an elite old guard that had sought to perpetuate a "crude black and white" version of Turkish history, in which Islamist-leaning groups were portrayed as subversives.

"Turkish secularism did not come out of a process of democracy," he notes.

Recent history here is important. The election itself arose from a dispute over Erdogan's attempts to install his foreign minister, Abdullah Gul, as president. Turkey's secularists went into overdrive since Gul's wife, a devout Muslim, wears a headscarf, or as it is called in the Arab world, a hijab.

Turkey plays waiting game

Headscarves are banned by regulation in public buildings - female politicians are barred from wearing headscarves in parliament, for example - and the prospect of the wife of the head of state wearing such garb was too much for Turkey's avowed secularists, including the military, which launched what has been described as the first "e-coup" in history.

On April 27 it made its objections known in a posting on its website that further stimulated secular agitation and prompted Erdogan to call early elections. They were not due until November.

Ibrahim Kalin joked that after three major military coups - in 1960, 1971 and 1980 - the generals had experimented with a "post-modernist" "soft coup" - no tanks permanently on the streets - in 1997 and then followed up with an "e-coup" this year.

"From tanks to email," he observes. "Next time we'll probably get an SMS message: We've just made a coup."

The mechanics of the "e-coup" may be amusing, but to modern, secular Turks like Nur Batur, a veteran journalist and commentator, the situation in Turkey is not funny. She likens it to a frog being gradually boiled alive. "The frog doesn't feel anything, but after a while it dies," she says.

Batur mentions the rise of fascism in Germany in the 1930s and notes that just as religion was banished from the public square in Turkey so is fascism banned in the German Republic today.

Newly elected deputy Zeynep Dagi of the AKP regards all of this as melodramatic. An assistant professor of international relations, she is one of the new breed of AKP members who are part of a broadening process instituted by Erdogan to counter an impression that his party is an Islamic Trojan horse.

Dagi became involved in AKP politics, she says, because she objected to the old guard interfering in the democratic process. The army "e-coup" was the last straw.

She describes herself as a "very secular, very liberal, very democratic person". She believes that Erdogan and his colleagues have undergone a transformation.

"When you look at their transformation, it's an ongoing transformation," she says.

In one important respect, Erdogan and his fellow modernisers score well with sections of Turkey's intellectual establishment. Former Central Bank governor Sureyya Serdengeçti gives the AKP credit for pressing ahead with an IMF-inspired stabilisation program instituted in 2001 that has brought rampant inflation down to single digits for the first time since the 1970s and has enabled 22 consecutive quarters of economic growth. Turkey's economic growth, averaging about 7 per cent, is significantly higher than the EU average.

"The government understood the need for structural reform [of Turkey's outmoded statist economy] and also benefited from the strength of the global economy," Serdengeçti says.

But it is not as though Turkey is without economic problems. Its current account deficit represents something like 9 per cent of GDP, which makes it vulnerable to sudden shifts in the global economy. Its economic performance is heavily geared to a continued inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) and portfolio investment.

Foreigners own something like 30 per cent (by value) of stocks listed on the Turkish stock exchange and more than 60 per cent of treasuries. FDI amounted to something like \$US20 billion (\$23.5 billion) last year.

The economic tide for Turkey has washed in, but it could wash out again. This is not the least of constraints on Erdogan's political agenda.

Foreign investors, crucial for Turkey's continued success, would certainly take a dim view of a country brought to a standstill over whether the wife of the president should be allowed to wear a headscarf to the opening of parliament.

Graphic

PHOTO: A metaphor for the nation: lacy undergarments or Islamist headscarves. Photo: MICHELE MOSSOP

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End of Document

Army lays siege to Palestinian refugee camp amid worst internal violence since civil war

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

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Byline: Bassem Mroue Associated Press

Body

TRIPOLI, Lebanon -- Lebanese troops pounded a Palestinian refugee camp with artillery and tank fire for a second day Monday, raising huge palls of smoke as they battled a militant group suspected of ties to al-Qaida in the worst eruption of violence since the end of the 1975-90 civil war.

Nearly 50 combatants were killed in the first day of fighting on Sunday, but it was not known how many civilians have been killed inside the Nahr el-Bared camp on the outskirts of the northern port city of Tripoli, the scene of the worst violence.

Palestinian officials in the camp reported at least nine civilians were killed Monday, along with 40 wounded. The figures could not be confirmed because emergency workers or security officials have not been able to get in.

Black smoke engulfed the skies over the camp as fires raged and heavy gunfire and explosions rang out constantly. The fierce fighting resumed after a brief truce that allowed the evacuation of 18 wounded civilians, according to Saleh Badran, an official with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.

The battle was an unprecedented showdown between the Lebanese army and militant groups that have arisen in Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps, which are home to tens of thousands of people living amid poverty and crime and which Lebanese troops are not allowed to enter.

The troops were fighting a group called Fatah Islam, whose leader has said he is inspired by al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and was training militants to carry out attacks in other countries. Lebanese officials have also accused Syria of using Fatah Islam to stir up trouble in Lebanon, a charge Damascus has denied.

Lebanese officials said one of the men killed Sunday was a suspect in a failed German train bombing -- another indication the camp had become a refuge for Fatah Islam militants planning attacks outside of Lebanon. In the past, others affiliated with the group in the camp have said they were aiming to send trained fighters into Iraq and the group's leader has been linked to al-Qaida in Iraq.

Hundreds of Lebanese army troops, backed by tanks and armored carriers, surrounded the refugee camp Monday. M-48 battle tanks unleashed their cannon fire on the camp, home to 30,000 Palestinian refugees. The militants fired mortars toward the troops at daybreak.

An army officer at the front line said troops directed concentrated fire at buildings known to house militants in the camp. He said troops also had orders to strike hard at any target that directed fire back at them.

Army lays siege to Palestinian refugee camp amid worst internal violence since civil war

"Everything we know that they were present in has been targeted," he told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

A spokesman for Fatah Islam, Abu Salim, warned that if the army bombardment did not stop, the militants would step up attacks by rockets and artillery "and would take the battle outside Tripoli."

He did not elaborate on the threat, holding authorities responsible for the consequences.

"It is a life-or-death battle. Their aim is to wipe out Fatah Islam. We will respond and we know how to respond," he told the AP.

Earlier in the day, another refugee camp, Ein el-Hilweh in southern Lebanon, was tense after Lebanese troops surrounded it and armed militants went on alert.

At least 27 soldiers and 20 militants were killed Sunday, Lebanese security officials said. But they did not know how many civilians had been killed in the camp because it is off-limits to their authority.

Lebanon says it has no authority to enter the camps under understandings with the Palestinians that give the PLO the authority in the camps. But Lebanon also is believed to be leery of entering for fear that any such actions would cause widespread unrest, be very costly and could spark pan-Arab sympathy for the Palestinian refugees that would trigger a backlash against the country.

There were conflicting reports Monday about the arrangement of a truce that medical officials on the camp's edge said would allow the distribution of food and supplies and the evacuation of the wounded. Army officials said there was no cease-fire in place yet, but Hamas' Lebanon representative, Osama Hamdan, said an agreement was reached.

The clashes were triggered when police raided suspected Fatah Islam hideouts in several buildings in Tripoli, searching for men wanted in a recent bank robbery. A gunbattle erupted at one of the buildings between the group's fighters, and troops were called in to help the police.

Militants then burst out of the nearby refugee camp, seizing Lebanese army positions, capturing two armored vehicles and ambushing troops. Lebanese troops later laid siege to the refugee camp where Fatah Islam militants were believed to be hiding, unleashing fire from tanks, artillery and heavy machine guns.

It was unclear whether Lebanese authorities had known El-Hajdib's whereabouts, or the whereabouts of the group's leader, a Palestinian named Shaker al-Absi, before the gunbattle first broke out in Tripoli.

Al-Absi, wanted in three countries, told The New York Times in March that he was trying to spread al-Qaida's ideology and was training fighters inside the camp for attacks on other countries.

He would not specify which countries but expressed anger toward the United States. And he was sentenced to death earlier in absentia along with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq killed last summer by U.S. forces in Iraq, for the 2002 assassination of an American diplomat in Jordan.

Al-Absi had been in custody in Syria until last fall but was released and set up his group in the camp, where he apparently found recruits, Lebanese officials said.

Lebanon's national police commander, Maj. Gen. Ashraf Rifi, said Damascus was using the Fatah Islam group as a covert way to wreak havoc in the country. He denied Fatah Islam's al-Qaida links, saying it was a Syrian-bred group.

"Perhaps there are some deluded people among them but they are not al-Qaida. This is imitation al-Qaida, a 'Made in Syria' one," he told the AP.

Army lays siege to Palestinian refugee camp amid worst internal violence since civil war

Lebanese security officials said Fatah Islam has up to 100 members who come from Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia and Syria, as well as local sympathizers who belong to the conservative Salafi branch of Islam.

The Lebanese Broadcasting Corp. TV station reported the dead militants included men from Bangladesh, Yemen and other Arab countries. Some of those killed were wearing explosive belts, security officials said.

Officials identified the suspect in the failed German train bombing as Saddam El-Hajdib, the fourth-highest ranking official in the Fatah Islam group, an official said Monday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. El-Hajdib had been on trial in absentia in Lebanon in connection with the failed German plot.

Mohammed Hanafi, identified by Al-Jazeera as a human rights activist in the camp, said 34 people had been killed inside, including 14 civilians, and 150 wounded. But that could not be independently confirmed and other estimates of civilian deaths were lower.

Ahmed Methqal, a Muslim cleric in the camp, told Al-Jazeera that five civilians had been killed.

"You can say there is a massacre going on in the camp of children and women who have nothing to do with Fatah Islam," he said. "They are targeting buildings, with people in them. What's the guilt of children, women and the elderly?"

He said sniper fire had confined the camp's 30,000 residents to their houses.

Lebanon has struggled to defeat armed groups that control pockets of the country -- especially inside the 12 Palestinian refugee camps housing 350,000 people, which Lebanese authorities can't enter.

Some camps have become havens for Islamic militants accused of carrying out attacks in the country and of sending recruits to fight U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq.

Palestinian officials in the West Bank sought to distance themselves from Fatah Islam and urged Palestinian refugees in the camp to isolate the militant group.

Palestinian officials who met Monday with Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Saniora said he was focused on saving lives and left it to him to decide whether to send the army into the camp.

"Entering the camp does not mean it will be easy to get rid of this (Fatah Islam) phenomenon," PLO representative Abbas Zaki warned.

Lebanese Sunni political and religious leaders backed the army and the government.

Lebanon was already in the midst of its worst political crisis between the Western-backed government and Hezbollah-led opposition since the end of the civil war. Saniora said Sunday the fighting was a "dangerous attempt at hitting Lebanese security."

Late Sunday, an explosion across the street from a busy shopping mall in the Christian sector of Beirut killed a 63-year-old woman and injured 12 other people, police said.

Beirut and its suburbs have seen a series of blasts in the last two years, many targeting Christian areas. Authorities blamed Fatah Islam for Feb. 13 bombings of commuter buses that killed three, but the group denied involvement.

Syria has denied involvement in any of the bombings. Associated Press Writer Hussein Dakroub in Beirut contributed.

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Army lays siege to Palestinian refugee camp amid worst internal violence since civil war

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Prophet and loss: why it counts; ISLAM

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

May 19, 2007 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: SPECTRUM; Books; Pg. 37

Length: 1620 words

Byline: Reviewed by Stephen Crittenden, Stephen Crittenden is a broadcaster with a special interest in religion.

Body

Three new biographies of Muhammad offer different insights into the origins of modern Islamism.

The Truth About Muhammad: founder of the world's most intolerant religion

By Robert Spencer

Regnery Publishing, 224pp, \$48.95

Muhammad: prophet for our time

By Karen Armstrong

HarperCollins, 256pp, \$29.99

The Messenger: the meanings of the life of Muhammad

By Tariq Ramadan

Allen Lane, 254pp, \$29.95

FOR ALMOST TWO centuries, the Bible and the life of the historical Jesus have been the focus of relentless historical and critical inquiry. Individual believers may not all hold with the conclusions but there has nonetheless been a ripple-down effect, a note of scepticism that has left Christian culture more open to change and to the idea that other people hold different positions.

For almost as long, Western scholars have been using similar methods to investigate the life of the historical Muhammad and the origins of Islam. This is an intellectual onslaught that Islam is not well-equipped to deal with, which is why, for example, archaeology is banned in Saudi Arabia.

Much of this scholarship is happening in Germany. In 2000, Christoph Luxenberg (a necessary pseudonym) published an important book, *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran*, which argues that the Koran is at least partly compiled from pre-existing Christian sources and poorly translated into Arabic. If true, this would demolish the central Islamic belief that the Koran was dictated to Muhammad in instalments by the Archangel Gabriel.

Prophet and loss: why it counts ISLAM

More recently, Professor Karl-Heinz Ohlig of Saarland University has used numismatics to argue that Muhammad never existed. He says Islam began as a Christian sect and the name Muhammad ("the blessed one") was originally a title referring to Jesus Christ. The concept of an individual person called Muhammad emerged only later.

Of the three authors under review here, only Robert Spencer touches briefly on these questions of historicity. Thereafter he joins Tariq Ramadan and Karen Armstrong in taking the standard view, as do I. All three are writing about Muhammad because they know that one of the biggest debates of our generation - whether Islam is a religion of peace - swings on his actions and teachings. All three rely heavily on the classical Islamic sources - the Koran itself, the collections of hadith or deeds and sayings of Muhammad, and the sira or early full-length biographies that began to appear about 150 years after his death.

But where Ramadan and Armstrong shamelessly cherrypick from these, airbrushing away anything unpalatable or inconvenient, Spencer says that ignoring the unpleasant elements of Muhammad's teachings or actions won't make them go away: "Jihadists the world over will still commit violence in emulation of their Prophet."

Robert Spencer is director of the website Jihadwatch, which essentially seeks to grind down contemporary Islam by systematically exposing its flaws. Spencer's book was banned in Pakistan last December and, because of its provocative title, may prove hard to find in Australian bookshops. It is part biography and part high-grade polemic; he uses the various episodes of Muhammad's life as talking points, jumping forward to show how a particular action or teaching is still making itself felt today.

His Muhammad is charismatic, certainly, but also a warlord, a brigand and one who lusts after other men's wives and licensed the sexual enslavement of women seized in war. (Spencer refers here to sura 4.24 of the Koran, which says: "You are also forbidden to take in marriage married women, except captives whom you own as slaves.")

Spencer's tough-minded conclusion is that we should stop describing Islam as a religion of peace, make Western aid contingent on renunciation of jihad ideology and revise our immigration policies with jihad ideology in view - developing immigration forms that ask "hard questions" about the applicant's views on specific Western values and freedoms and "make it clear that those who hope ultimately to transform Western republics into sharia autocracies are not welcome". He adds that the need for such policies has been obscured by concerns about racism but "this is not a racial issue". Spencer is right to say this and it is interesting to note that the Dutch Government's recent film for new immigrants warns people that they are coming to a liberal society that values freedom and self-expression.

Born in Switzerland, Tariq Ramadan is the grandson of the founder of the Islamic Brotherhood, the world's largest Islamist organisation, which aims to re-establish the Caliphate. The father of modern jihadist ideology, Sayyid Qutb, was a member and it has been alleged that Australia's Sheikh Hilali is also. Tariq Ramadan has publicly repudiated violent jihad and is often regarded as a leading hope for reforming Islam, arguing that it is compatible with Western societies or, rather, that they are compatible with it. But when he was offered a professorship at Notre Dame University, in Indiana, in 2004, the US State Department refused him a visa on the grounds that he had donated money to Palestinian charities that are fronts for Hamas.

Ramadan's book is part hagiography, part missionary tract. His Muhammad is a mystic whose life is totally absorbed in contemplation of the Oneness of God and whose message is all about freedom and love. Ramadan sees Islam as having the potential to fill the spiritual void in the modern West but, from the serene first page to the last, there is not a single reference to whether contemporary Islam is actually functioning properly. Islam is perfect and no explanations are necessary.

Unlike Ramadan, Karen Armstrong goes in for endless hand-wringing. An ex-nun who has written numerous bestsellers about religion, she has transformed herself in recent years into Britain's leading exponent of the view that Islam has only ever been the innocent victim of Western bigotry and aggression. Unlike Ramadan, she knows there are great slabs of Islam that Westerners simply will not swallow. For example, the word Islam means "submission" but to any Westerner submission is the fate of a slave (free people don't submit, they co-operate). So Armstrong just changes the meaning to "peace and reconciliation".

Prophet and loss: why it counts ISLAM

Somewhat surprisingly, this is her second biography of Muhammad. She explains that she felt it was necessary write a new book in order to counter post-September 11 "Islamophobia" - but given the subtitle, prophet for our time, I think we are entitled to wonder whether she may actually have converted to Islam. Everything in this book is in soft focus and Muhammad is made to seem like the saintly Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* - a champion of "monotheistic pluralism", "universal human rights", "complete sexual equality" and (this really is bizarre) that idea that "the individual was free and sovereign". Of course, this is complete rubbish and deserves to be treated with contempt, especially when the Taliban and al-Qaeda are working day and night to recreate Muhammad's commonwealth in every detail. But this does not prevent her being invited back as a regular commentator by *The Guardian* and the BBC.

One telling example of Armstrong's selective use of the traditional sources involves her denial that Muhammad's marriage to his youngest wife, Aisha, was consummated when she was only nine years old. Several of the early sources say this is indeed what happened. Spencer is interesting here. He points out that in Armstrong's earlier biography she claimed the 9th-century historian Tabari says the marriage was only consummated after Aisha reached puberty and that until that time she continued living with her parents. But then Spencer shows what Tabari, quoting Aisha directly, does say: "The Messenger of God married me when I was seven; my marriage was consummated when I was nine." Armstrong is caught red-handed.

Spencer himself dismisses the charge that Muhammad was a paedophile on the grounds that such categories were meaningless in the 7th century. But he also reminds us that in the Islamic Republic of Iran it is legal for girls to be married at nine today - and that the Ayatollah Khomeini married a 10-year-old when he was 28.

According to both Armstrong and Ramadan, Muhammad never went to war except in self-defence and in victory he was (almost) always mild and forgiving. When Muhammad cries out: "Will you listen to me, O Quraysh [the name of his tribe]? By him who holds my life in his hands, I bring you slaughter!" Armstrong puts this down to "a temporary loss of composure."

But when Muhammad orders the execution of 700 Jews of the Qurayza tribe after defeating them in battle, even Armstrong balks at endorsing mass murder: "The tragedy of the Qurayza may have seemed expedient to the Arabs of Muhammad's time, but it is not acceptable to us today. Nor is it what Muhammad set out to do. His original intention had been to end the violence ... but he was now behaving like an ordinary warlord." Perhaps this should be the subtitle of her third biography.

Religion is always going to be controversial because it is about the stories we tell ourselves about who we are. Spencer's book about Muhammad is a valuable and reliable contribution to present debates. But Ramadan and Armstrong face insurmountable problems because they won't admit there are any problems, as to do so would immediately negate the idea of Islamic perfection. That, in a nutshell, is the key problem faced by Islam today and always.

Finally, if you're after a life of Muhammad that is shrewd, erudite and beautifully written, you still can't go past Maxime Rodinson's magisterial *Mohammad*, from 1961. It deserves a place in every serious library and on every high school syllabus.

Graphic

PHOTO: Indonesian faithful at prayer ... a question of perfection in an imperfect world. Photo: Reuters/Supri Supri

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That was the Week that Was...

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

April 8, 2007 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 33

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Byline: Compiled by Anne-Marie Conway

Body

Home news

Iran's 'guests' come home

On Wednesday President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced that Iran had "pardoned" its British hostages, and was releasing them as an Easter/Passover/Mohammed's Birthday gift to the people of Britain. Back on British soil the next day, the 15 sailors and Marines revealed that far from being treated as "guests", they had been subjected to "constant psychological pressure", including a mock execution. Only then did we learn of US offers (declined) to undertake "aggressive patrols" in Iranian airspace, and a plea from the Pope to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iran's request on Friday for a "positive" response from Britain seemed to bear out Tony Blair's insistence that the hostages had been released "without any side agreement of any nature".

Respect and the voices of unreason

Benefit claimants in north London have to watch what they say now, after Harrow council announced on Thursday that it would be using lie detector software to weed out cheats.

And yobs, litter louts and drunks will soon hear what their lamp-posts think of them, after 20 councils applied for "Respect" funding to install talking CCTV cameras to reduce such antisocial behaviour.

Heated discussions continued about whether the Confederation of British Industry had (according to the Treasury) or had not (according to the CBI) supported the Chancellor's "tax raid" on pension funds a decade ago.

And in a week when three men from Leeds were charged with conspiracy in the July 7 suicide bombings in London, the Communities Secretary, Ruth Kelly, announced plans to slap Asbos on radical preachers.

Births of a nation

Women with fertility problems could find IVF even more fraught and time-consuming if the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority carries out its plan to penalise clinics that produce too many twin pregnancies. Because many **women** are implanted with more than one embryo at a time, 40 per cent of IVF babies are twins, and therefore more likely to be premature and have health problems. The fertility watchdog plans to have a three-month public consultation on whether there should be a strict cap on the number of embryos implanted.

That was the Week that Was...

Pregnant women should, however, find it easier to give birth at home, after the Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt pledged to make maternity services a "higher priority" (although not enough to find extra funding to counteract the chronic shortage of midwives). Home deliveries would have the added benefit of making it cheaper for new mothers to spread the good news, after Patientline, which supplies most of the NHS's bedside phones, announced a 160 per cent hike in the cost of calls from 10p a minute to 26p.

One step forward, two steps back

Just as the first women soldiers went on guard at Buckingham Palace - a duty previously reserved for the boys - the Government was telling their sisters not to go to pubs on their own, for fear of being drugged and raped. Feminists were not alone in thinking it might be more useful to warn against binge drinking.

Working mothers were wrong-footed - yet again - by a Government-funded report that said children in full-time nursery care were more likely to display antisocial behaviour (unless, of course, they were among the ones that became more sociable and self-confident).

Good Friday for pets

Let your dog get fat and you could be fined up to pounds 20,000 or imprisoned for almost a year, under the Animal Welfare Act, which came into force on Friday. This introduced a new offence of failing in the duty of care towards a captive animal for people who fail to provide their pets with a suitable diet or provide them with opportunities for socialising.

International news

Middle East horrors continue

Iran's British hostages dominated the headlines but the Middle East's other troubles continued. Four British soldiers, two of them women, were killed by a roadside bomb in southern Iraq. One was a Sandhurst friend of Prince William, reinforcing fears for Prince Harry's safety as he prepares to accompany his regiment to Iraq.

On Friday, a suicide truck bombing at a police checkpoint in Ramadi killed at least 35 people, and there were clashes between the Shia Mahdi Army militia and US-Iraqi forces in Diwaniya.

Britain suspended its boycott of the Hamas-controlled Palestinian government on Thursday, for talks about Alan Johnston, the BBC journalist missing in Gaza since March 12.

US and China sign up to climate change report

On Friday, days after a tsunami struck the Solomon Islands, killing 28 and making more than 1,000 homeless, the UN warned that 50m of the world's poorest people, most in Africa and Asia, could be environmental refugees by 2010. After a lengthy debate, the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change managed to persuade both the United States and China to sign up to its gravest warning yet about global warming.

People

Lavender's blue at the BBC

"A lot of nonsense has been written about the 1976 resignation honours," said Lady Falkender (formerly Marcia Williams) after settling her libel action against the BBC. Harold Wilson's former political secretary is to be paid pounds 75,000 damages over her portrayal in BBC4's drama-documentary The Lavender List, which wrongly implied she had undue influence over the then prime minister.

Ashes turned to Stone?

Rolling Stone Keith Richards shocked the squeamish by claiming to have snorted his father's ashes with a bit of cocaine, then claimed it was just a joke.

That was the Week that Was...

Deaths noticed

- * Peter Semmens, 79, Britain's No 1 train-spotter and author of 36 books.
- * Michael Dibdin, 60, the bestselling crime writer and creator of Aurelio Zen.
- * George Sewell, 82, an actor renowned for his shifty villains and cynical cops, notably in Z-Cars and Get Carter (1971).
- * Anthony Pusey, 56, pioneer of animal osteopathy, whose patients included horses of the Household Cavalry.
- * Sparky, 36, the last deep-pit pony.

Business

Apple has to face EC music

Shares in EMI rose on Monday after the music giant announced a deal with Apple to allow iTunes users to download tracks free of anti-piracy blocks. The EC then accused the iTunes store of "restrictive business practices" in its higher charges for UK customers.

Interesting times

Barclays completed its purchase of Equifirst, the US mortgage-lender, and sold part of its own credit card business to CompuCredit Corporation for pounds 390m. But its negotiations to acquire ABN Amro, the Dutch bank, could be thwarted by Royal Bank of Scotland, which was said to be waiting for Barclays to make a firm offer before launching its own counter-bid.

On Tuesday Lloyds TSB became the first mainstream UK bank to launch a shariah-compliant account for Islamic businesses.

Reports from the marketplace

Saga, the travel and financial services group for the over-50s, said it was "exploring future ownership options", which could lead to an initial public offering later this year.

In the absence of a new Harry Potter novel, profits at JK Rowling's publisher, Bloomsbury, plunged 74 per cent to pounds 5.2m last year, it said on Tuesday.

Sport

Roma 2, United 1, Hospital 11

"Criticising the police is a sport. The British always like to do it," said Rome's chief of police, explaining that his forces, shown baton-charging the crowd during Manchester United's Championship League 2-1 defeat by Roma on Wednesday, had merely been "going in strong" against violent fans. Eleven United supporters ended up in hospital.

Similar scenes followed in the Spanish city of Seville on Thursday, when riot police bloodied Tottenham Hotspur fans both before and during the Uefa Cup quarter-final, where Spurs were beaten 2-1 by Sevilla.

Some parts Heineken can no longer reach

Britain is already set to dominate the final stages of the Heineken Cup, with three English clubs going through to the semi-finals, against, er, one Welsh club (Llanelli Scarlets), at the end of the month. That, however, didn't stop Premier Rugby voting on Monday to back a French boycott of next year's championship, leaving its future in doubt. Llanelli's Stuart Gallacher described the decision as "a mortal blow for the Celtic nations", and the cash-strapped Scottish Rugby Union also expressed anxiety.

That was the Week that Was...

US tycoon buys himself

a piece of Arsenal

On Thursday, barely a week after his spokesman insisted he had "no interest" in Arsenal, the American sports tycoon Stan Kroenke snapped up ITV's 9.9 per cent stake in the Premiership side for pounds 65m, fuelling speculation that he could be positioning himself to take over the only one of the top four Championship clubs still in British hands.

India finds a new coach to take on Bangladesh

After India's humiliating "early bath" in the Cricket World Cup last month, the former Australian batsman Greg Chappell announced his resignation as national coach. Yesterday Ravi Shastri agreed to step in for next month's tour of Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Jamaica said it was sending detectives to Pakistan to talk to the cricket team about "ambiguities" in their statements following the murder of their coach, Bob Woolmer. And, despite some reservations, Woolmer's widow, Gill, gave the go-ahead for a September publication of his coaching manual, co-written with the South African sports scientist Tim Noakes.

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LETTERS FROM READERS

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

December 12, 2006 Tuesday

THIRD EDITION

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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.

LETTERS FROM READERS

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?

LETTERS FROM READERS

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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Does Islam encourage terrorism?

The Irish Times

August 13, 2007 Monday

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Body

YES says Susan Philips. NO says Syyed Siraj H Zaidi. Join the online debate @ www.ireland.com/head2head.

YES Susan Philips says Islamist terrorism is rooted, not in political conditions, but in the sacred texts of the religion.

On September 11th, 2001, as Mohammed Atta flew American Airlines Flight 11 into the World Trade Center, he screamed "Allahu akbar" (Allah is great). And when video tapes emerged after the July 2005 London bombings, Sidique Khan, in his Yorkshire accent, clearly stated "our words are dead until we give them life with our blood. Our religion is Islam, obedience to the one true Allah". These men had a deep religious conviction that they were carrying out their Quranic duty to extend the kingdom of Islam worldwide. No matter what moderates argue, countless suicide attacks by jihadis against the western infidel, as well as against fellow Muslims whose interpretations of their faith seem to vary from their own, are given a religious justification.

The rise of a radical element within Islam is undeniable. Islamists take issue with mainstream Islam, which they say fails to fully follow the seventh-century classical teachings of Muhammad. Many fundamental groupings such as **Hamas**, Hizbullah and Jamaat-I Islam base their inspiration on Muslim Brotherhood ideology, which emanated from Egypt during the second part of the 20th century.

Such influence was based on earlier writers who struggled to make sense of the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of western colonial rule. Sayyid Qutb, the godfather of modern radical movements, blamed Muslim leaders such as Jamal Abdul Nasser for failing to establish pure Islamic states and for espousing a watered-down version of Islam. Their viewpoint was that incorrect interpretation had crept in, resulting in a downfall after many centuries of golden rule.

Qutb urged a return to seventh-century truths as the only solution for the bruised and humiliated ummah (world body of Muslims) and he set out a list of milestones for the onward passage of Islam, arguing that the creation of a truly Islamic government is a divine commandment for every Muslim. Modern radical groups may vary according to cultural norms, but central to their manifestos would be Qutb's interpretation that jihad was to be a proactive tool for forcing a return to the sovereignty of Allah. Nearer to home, and advocating similar ideology, we find Al-Muhaniroun, the party associated in Britain with Abu Hamza from the Finsbury Park mosque, whose seditious preaching influenced the London bombers.

It is true that certain Qur'an verses forbid suicide. However, to many Muslims, the word jihad (to struggle or to strive) refers to the means to trade this life for the life to come. Militant groupings often quote Muhammad Abd el

Does Islam encourage terrorism?

Salem Farag who, taking his inspiration from Qutb, made the critical point that jihad in the form of violent confrontation had to be reinstated.

Quoting the so-called "sword verse", which directs followers to "slay the unbelievers wherever you find them, arrest them, besiege them and lie in ambush everywhere for them", he concluded that "there can be no excuses, there can be no middle way, it is jihad and Islam or there is blasphemy". This allows Islamist leaders to argue that suicide bombing attacks are not suicide but acts of martyrdom, and therefore not punishable. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi invoked this interpretation at the July 2003 meeting of the Dublin-based European Council for Fatwa and Research, when suicide attacks against Israel were deemed permissible.

Other verses from the Qur'an and hadith clearly advocate violence. To those who point to earlier and more peaceful suras, it is important to understand that the rule of abrogation places greater emphasis on later Medinan verses in situations where verses seem in contradiction to each other. Moderate Muslims may say that such an interpretation is incorrect. Radicals accuse them of not taking the Qur'an seriously. And where Islamists read "fight them until there is no more disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah, and every kind of worship is for Allah alone", they see this as referring to Islam ruling the world. Moderates have a difficult time explaining away verses that incite violence, because Islam teaches that the Qur'an was dictated by Allah.

Factors such as the existence of Israel and the occupation of Iraq by western armies may provide a focus for Islamists. But none of these so-called provocations existed in the seventh century when Islam spread like wildfire, mainly by the sword.

Many consider Islam to contain peaceful approaches, but within its literature, significant space exists to nurture a radical vanguard force, which is religiously driven and committed to world domination through a process of jihad. Unless Islam is understood in such terms and is held in check by world opinion, the power of western institutions or moderate Islamic elites, it will continue unchecked in its quest to establish a global caliphate.

Susan Philips is a political analyst and author of a recent study, *The London Bombings*.

NO Syyed Siraj H Zaidi says Islam and terrorism are contradictory terms. A terrorist cannot be a Muslim and a Muslim cannot be a terrorist.

The word Islam is derived from the word slim, which means reconciliation, peace, submission and deliverance. Before Islam, all previous revelations had been sent to particular nations. For the first time in human history, Islam came as the religion for all humanity and the Prophet Mohammad was the first to be honoured with a duty towards all humanity.

Islam - like all monotheist religions - is a religion of peace and tolerance. Prayers (salat), fasting, pilgrimage, alms giving and defending it from annihilation (jihad) are the main pillars of Islam. There over one billion Muslims in the world today - over 20 million in the EU - and 52 predominantly Muslim countries. Islam has 72 various sub-sects or schools of thought. However, all Muslims believe in the fundamental principles of Islam. The sole prerequisite for Islam is that one should "really" believe and live accordingly. It is the fastest growing way of life in the world today.

Islam is the religion of unity. That is to say in the field of faith, this is a religion based on believing only in one God. Its view of life and the social system all call for the unity of humanity, brother and sisterhood, equality in basic rights and the abolition of all discrimination based on colour or race. Islam has declared that all people have honour, with no socio-political, material, spiritual, racial or cultural discrimination. It is therefore categorically untrue to claim that terrorism is a principle of Islam.

If one looks into the history of Islam, one would find that this most sublime religion became the victim of extreme brutality and terrorism by so-called Muslims who did not follow the Prophet's instructions and teaching of Qur'an, immediately after his demise. Khilafat - a false so-called Islamic political system - was imposed upon Muslims in the sixth century of the Christian era at the expense of the correct and rightful system of Imamatus. The same people have revived militarism to their twisted ideologies and erroneous understanding of Islam, and called it "Islamic ideology". They contradict what Islam is really about.

Does Islam encourage terrorism?

"Does Islam encourage terrorism?" The question directly points a finger at the religion as opposed to this specific sect which believes in terrorism, and implies that there is something inherently wrong with it. This absurd question shows a profound lack of knowledge of Islam. One cannot even juxtapose the word terrorism with Islam - they are contradictory terms. In true Islam, terror does not exist. In Islam, killing a human is an act equal in gravity to unbelief.

No person can kill a human. No one can touch an innocent person, even in times of war. No one can give fatwa - a legal pronouncement in Islam - in this matter. There is no such thing as a Muslim terrorist; a terrorist cannot be a Muslim; a Muslim cannot be a terrorist. Islamic criteria cannot justify or permit suicide attacks. Islam, always, in all circumstances, approbates peace. The Qur'an regards human life as being exalted and inviolate. Islam considers murder as one of the gravest sins and as a capital crime. In Islam, even in warfare, there are rules to be observed; even trees and crops have rights and non-combatant innocent people cannot be killed. Women and children are protected. Islam regards suicide attackers as heinous murders.

The Qur'an says that killing an innocent person is the same as killing all people: "If someone kills another person - unless it is in retaliation for someone else or for causing corruption in the Earth - it is as if he had murdered all mankind. And if anyone gives life to another person, it is as if he had given life to all mankind. The instructions came to them with clear signs, but even after that many of them committed outrages in the Earth." (Q. 5:32)

In this Quranic verse, Muslim morality is explained: "To be one of those who believe and urge each other to steadfastness and urge each other to compassion. Those are the companions of the right." (Q: 17-18)

Islam, as described in the Qur'an, is a modern, enlightened, progressive religion. A Muslim is above all a person of peace; he is tolerant, with a democratic spirit, cultured, enlightened, honest, and knowledgeable about art, science and civilisations.

A Muslim educated in the fine moral teaching of the Qur'an approaches everyone with the love that Islam expects. He shows respect for every idea and values art and aesthetics. He is conciliatory in the face of every event, diminishing tension and restoring amity.

In societies composed of such individuals, there has to be refined higher civilisation, a higher social morality, more joy, happiness, justice, security, abundance and blessings than in the world's most modern nations.

Syyed Siraj H Zaidi is an actor, film and TV producer and distributor and a founding member of the Three Faiths Forum of Ireland which brings together Muslims, Jews and Christians

Load-Date: August 13, 2007

A bonkers plan to clear up conkers

EVENING CHRONICLE (Newcastle, UK)

October 11, 2006 Wednesday

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Byline: By The Evening Chronicle

Body

Newcastle Council has gone bonkers and is spending a fortune on picking conkers.

I have heard it all now. However, I did not think there were those as mad as those responsible for this idiocy.

My son and my daughter-in-law are highly qualified horticulturists in South Africa and between them cover a good three quarters of the country.

I have e-mailed the article to them and you will be pleased to know it is doing the rounds of the different departments, where it is causing guffaws of laughter. They were convinced it was a joke until I assured them that it is not.

I fell out of many a tree when young during the course of conker-picking or apple-scrumping.

What fun it was, even more fun if there was a bobby to chase us.

How sorry I feel for today's children. They will never know the fun and freedom we enjoyed, even though there was a war going on.

They are bogged down by stupid, petty rules and regulations, supposed to be for their protection but just to stunt their enjoyment.

I am 72 on the outside and 30-something on the inside. I love young people and enjoy their company. Leave their conkers alone.

I dread to think of the amount of money being spent on this stupidity.

Don't those men perched up there in their cherry-pickers (pictured) feel right twerps? I would.

Imagine Sonny Jim being asked what his daddy does for a living and coming back with the answer, 'He picks conkers.'

How embarrassing.

PATRICIA COULTAS, Rowlands Gill.

A bonkers plan to clear up conkers

Come and pick up my leaves

REGARDING the picking of horse chestnuts before they fall for health and safety reasons, it reminded me I must phone Envirocall so they can take the leaves off the tree in my back garden before they fall and I slip on them.

I would not want to risk my wife slipping on the wet leaves when hanging out the washing.

Who is paying for this under the guise of safety?

Yes, you've guessed it, its us, the taxpayers!

Also if Envirocall were as safety-conscious as it leads us to believe, they would set a good example if they had told the tree surgeon pictured in the article to wear his face guard down, thus protecting his face when leaning into the tree, instead of leaving it up.

DP, Newcastle, by email.

Less paper - more action

NOT a bird, not a plane - but Super Gary responds.

It is always satisfying to be quoted in the Press, but it is even better to see the feathers of one's local councillor ruffled to the extent of Coun Wallace on October 6, when he tried to make much of his party's activity in recent weeks.

It appears from Coun Wallace's response to my letter of October 3 that the Liberal Democrats in the Dunston and Whickham areas of Gateshead appear to measure their activity solely on the basis of the quantity of paper they deliver to residents.

I, on the other hand, would prefer to concentrate on the quality of service I am able to give to local residents in dealing with their concerns.

Ask the residents of Oakfield Road in Whickham who got the application to bring an off-licence to their estate withdrawn.

Ask the residents of the Lakes Estate in Whickham who informed them of the return of the opencast application last weekend.

Ask the residents of Dunston who arranged for the resurfacing of a footpath on their estate.

You can ask residents these questions and many more like them but I suspect that they would rather have someone on their side getting things done rather than politicians producing yet more grumble sheets about life in Dunston and Whickham.

If life here is so bad, why do so many want to live here and send their children to our schools?

GARY HALEY, Dunston and Whickham Action Team.

Veil debate needs goodwill

JACK Straw , the Labour MP and Leader of the Commons, deserves credit for taking issue over whether, by covering their face, Muslim women are making a barrier to communication.

This is not about political point-scoring but an important issue of community relations which may simply be a difference of culture.

Straw (pictured below) is making a request.

A bonkers plan to clear up conkers

It is important to recognise the enormous contribution for the good that the world's faiths have made over the centuries, and therefore discuss such issues with an attitude of respect.

Freedom of religion or conscience remains the most fundamental human right.

However, should a Muslim or person from another persuasion show generosity about areas that might not be essential to their belief, they generate a wellspring of goodwill.

We should build community relations focusing on shared values.

Multiculturalism has been mistaken in this regard.

There are differences, which should be respected, but we should focus on the broad ground that is shared, building foundations of trust, co-operation and mutual prosperity.

Men generally shake hands to show openness and respect in greeting each other.

Members of the Muslim or Jewish faiths may share words of peace.

Jack Straw is simply pointing out that in British tradition, face-to-face communication is considered the best way of expression.

This small gesture of openness allows the listener to appreciate the point of view or request of the person speaking.

Alternately, for those unfamiliar with Islam, observing someone that is veiled and dressed in black can be unsettling in the present climate.

Modesty in women's dress should be recognised as an important element of faith in upholding values of the family in Muslim, as in Christian, tradition.

A recent survey concluded that the majority of conscientious people felt that for women to wear revealing clothes in public is not appropriate.

Why should women be obliged to dress in such a way in order to conform? Does such dress encourage a lack of self-respect and disrespect towards men?

We should be grateful to Muslims, members of the family of faiths of Abraham, for remaining firm in their commitment to values of the family,

TREVOR BROWN, Universal Peace Federation, Newcastle.

Do-as-I-say democracy

WHEN George Bush and Tony Blair talk about democracy what they mean is puppet governments set up like those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The disgraceful action taken against a democratically elected Palestinian government in Gaza, cutting off funds which pay the wages of the people, is the evil act of Bush, enthusiastically assisted by Tony Blair and EU countries.

They are trying to create conditions for a civil war with USA and British support for anyone opposed to the elected Hamas government, hoping a servile government will take over in Gaza which will bow to Uncle Sam and the murderous regime in Israel.

Since the last world war, America has interfered in the affairs of many countries in South America and the Middle East, with sometimes the military taking over ruling with a mailed fist attitude, rounding up supporters of democracy, who are then tortured and killed.

A bonkers plan to clear up conkers

Millions were killed through US intervention in Korea and Vietnam. Those days are over, George, despite your massive power on land, sea, and air, helped by, not much longer I hope, by your puppet at No 10.

Millions in Latin America, the Middle East and the Far East are throwing off the shackles of imperialism and electing the people they can trust.

Should the Democrats sweep the board in the US mid-term elections, hopefully with a policy of dis-engagement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, we will see how the lame-duck president Bush copes.

LES MAY, Washington Gardens, Gateshead.

We are making cemeteries safe

AS A councillor for the area including the Heaton and Byker Cemetery on Benton Road (not the Heaton and Jesmond cemetery, as your article stated), I feel I should respond to your recent article's criticism of the policy of laying down old gravestones which have become fragile or unstable.

Many of those in question date back more than 100 years.

Nevertheless, this is clearly a delicate issue and the council tries to deal with the issue in a sensitive manner. The policy is followed by many local authorities following advice from the Health and Safety Executive after an incident in which a six-year old child was killed in Harrogate in 2000 by a toppling headstone.

A Government minister speaking on this topic last year noted that there have been 21 serious injuries and three fatalities caused by falling gravestones in the past six years, many of these involving children.

I am certain that if a similar incident had happened in Newcastle, the Chronicle would be highly critical of the council for not taking action to address the risk.

While I accept that some cemeteries do appear to be suffering from neglect or vandalism, I do not feel that Heaton and Byker cemetery is in this category.

My colleague, Coun Bob Jackman, and I, with council neighbourhood environmental staff, conducted an inspection visit over the summer and agreed actions to maintain the site, including arranging for tree surgery to be carried out.

If users of this cemetery do have suggestions about potential improvements, I would encourage them to contact me via Newcastle Civic Centre.

COUN GREG STONE, Lib Dem, North Heaton ward

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Violent agenda carefully veiled

The Australian (Australia)

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All-round Country Edition

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Byline: Rebecca Weisser

Body

The British plot has led to renewed calls for a ban on Hizb ut-Tahrir, writes Rebecca Weisser L

AST week Attorney-General Philip Ruddock said he would look again at whether Hizb ut-Tahrir should be banned in Australia. If Ruddock decides it should, Australia will become the first Western nation to proscribe the shadowy organisation, which is active in more than 40 countries across the world.

Former British prime minister Tony Blair came close to banning Hizb ut-Tahrir two years ago after the July 7, 2005 bombings. But in the end it was decided there wasn't sufficient evidence to show Hizb ut-Tahrir was a terrorist organisation or provided material support to terrorists.

The US came to the same conclusion. In Australia, NSW Premier Morris Iemma has called for the organisation to be banned. But although ASIO has investigated it on two separate occasions, there has never been sufficient evidence linking it to terrorism to outlaw it.

According to Zeyno Baran, director of international security and energy programs at the Nixon Centre in Washington, DC: "Hizb produces thousands of manipulated brains, which then graduate from Hizb and become members of groups like al-Qa'ida. Even if Hizb does not itself engage in terrorist acts, because of the ideology it provides, it acts like a conveyor belt for terrorists."

Wassim Doureih, a Sydney-based spokesman for Hizb ut-Tahrir in Australia, last week denied the conveyor-belt claim. When asked on ABC's Lateline whether his primary allegiance was to Australia, he said that as a Muslim his primary identity was derived through his allegiance to Islam. Doureih said that he supported the line in the Koran that exhorts Muslims to kill Jews wherever they find them, but denied that Hizb ut-Tahrir was anti-Semitic.

He was also confident the organisation would not be banned. "They have conducted reviews previously in this country and in the UK, and there is no basis whatsoever under current legislation to tie Hizb ut-Tahrir to any form of violence," he said.

Probably the most famous member of Hizb ut-Tahrir to become a terrorist is Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was the leader of al-Qa'ida in Iraq until he was killed on June 7, 2006. According to New Statesman journalist Shiv Malik, who cited intelligence sources, Zarqawi was a former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, as was the mechanical engineer Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged September 11 mastermind who has been implicated in a host of other

Violent agenda carefully veiled

terrorist plots over the past 20 years including the World Trade Centre bombing of 1993, the Bali nightclub bombings and the murder of the Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl.

Radical cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed was the leader and spiritual head of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain until 1996, when he split with the group. Bakri praised the September 11 hijackers, has raised funds for Hamas and Hezbollah, reaffirmed the fatwa on Salman Rushdie, called for terror attacks on Dublin airport because US troops transited there on their way to Iraq, and secretly called for nine terrorists to capture a Muslim soldier in the British army and videotape his beheading. He fled to Lebanon after the July 2005 bombings and has been banned from returning to Britain.

When author Ed Husain, a former member of the radical Islamist party, called in May for the organisation to be banned in Britain, his plea fell on deaf ears. But two months later his impassioned demand had been taken up by British Opposition Leader David Cameron, and featured in Prime Minister Gordon Brown's first prime ministerial question time. Cameron accused Hizb ut-Tahrir of "poisoning the minds of young people" and of calling for Jews to be killed wherever they are found.

The role of Hizb ut-Tahrir in the radicalisation of terrorists was demonstrated when it was revealed that four of the seven suspects in the failed terror attacks on London on June 29 and in Glasgow on July 1 had links to a Hizb ut-Tahrir cell in Cambridge. A Hizb spokesman has denied that anyone detained over the terror attacks was a member of the organisation, but Husain says that the group deliberately withholds membership from some of its associates so it can deny links with them if they break the law.

Another former Hizb ut-Tahrir member, Shiraz Maher, says that engineer Kafeel Ahmed, who drove the jeep into Glasgow airport, and his passenger, Bilal Abdulla, were both actively associated with the Cambridge cell members.

Hizb ut-Tahrir literature openly states that "Islam will naturally be at odds with, or even in conflict with, every other civilisation or ideology". But although Hizb ut-Tahrir has been able to take advantage of tolerant pluralist societies in the West to spread its message of Islamist intolerance, it has been banned in many countries in the Middle East, including Jordan, where it originated.

Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in 1953 by a Palestinian court official, Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, living in East Jerusalem, which was then part of Jordan. It seeks to establish a global caliphate under strict sharia law. This would include the death penalty for any Muslim who renounced their religion, and a complete ban on adultery and alcohol. Hizb ut-Tahrir is opposed to democracy because it is government by people rather than by God. The only election allowed is that of the caliph by Muslims. The primary role of women is as wives and mothers, and the caliph cannot be a woman. There would be segregation of the sexes and Muslim women would be required to wear a jilbab, a long, loose-fitting garment, plus a headscarf.

Hizb ut-Tahrir is openly anti-Western. Nabhani blamed British plots and Western imperial conspiracies for preventing the return of the caliphate. In his book *The System of Islam*, Nabhani claimed that the Muslim world had stagnated not because it had failed to westernise but because it abandoned its adherence to Islam and because Muslims allowed foreign cultures and concepts to occupy their minds.

Hizb ut-Tahrir has been compared by Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation to the Trotskyite wing of the international communist movement. Its goals are Islamist but its method of organisation is Leninist.

It has a three-stage plan to establish the global caliphate. In the first phase it recruits members who operate in secret cells; potential members are invited to join only after two years of study. In the second phase, members build support among Muslims for a caliphate and infiltrate government institutions. Once the organisation believes there is support for a caliphate, it will seek to overthrow the government through a coup d'etat, by gaining the support of army generals and other influential people.

Hizb ut-Tahrir has been involved in failed coup attempts in Jordan, Syria and Egypt. It is banned in much of the Middle East as well as in Russia. Its members have been arrested in Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. It was proscribed in Pakistan but the ban was lifted.

Violent agenda carefully veiled

Hizb has not been proscribed anywhere in the West because it disavows violence as a means of establishing a caliphate. It was banned from public activity in Germany after handing out anti-Semitic leaflets that quoted the Koran as saying: "The stones and trees will say: O Muslim, o slave of Allah, here is a Jew behind me so come and kill him."

A Danish court also handed down a 60-day suspended sentence to a Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman in 2002 for distributing racist propaganda. The leaflet said of the Jews, again quoting the Koran: "And kill them wherever you find them and turn them out from where they have turned you out."

Husain says Hizb ut-Tahrir advocates that British Muslims' allegiance should be to the coming caliph in the Middle East, rather than to Queen and country. "This caliph would instruct us to act as agents of the caliphate in Britain and open a home front by assisting the expansionist state," he explains. "We believed that all Arab governments were not sufficiently Islamic and were liable to removal; entire populations would submit to the army of the caliph, or face extinction."

According to Husain, Hizb ut-Tahrir members believe Britain, France, the US and Russia are enemies and the army of the Islamist state would "march on Downing Street and raise the Islamist flag above Westminster".

The main problem facing Western governments in deciding what to do about Hizb ut-Tahrir is that it is extremely careful not to overstep the boundaries of what is acceptable in Western societies in its public statements, while preaching something different to its members.

Although it ostensibly eschews violence, Husain says it actually calls for "an expansionist, violent, totalitarian Islamist state".

Others such as Ameer Ali, the former chairman of the federal Government's Muslim Community Reference Group, claim that while banning Hizb ut-Tahrir in a Muslim country might be appropriate, it is totally inappropriate in Australia.

Ali told Radio Australia in January that the utterances of Hizb ut-Tahrir should be monitored, but banning it wouldn't be a wise move, "because once you ban them they go underground. That is much more dangerous."

Rebecca Weisser is a Sydney-based reporter.

LIFE OF THE PARTY

* Hizb ut-Tahrir (sometimes abbreviated to Hizb) means Party of Liberation. It is a radical Sunni Islamist organisation whose goal is to establish a global caliphate (khilafah) and establish sharia law.

* Hizb ut-Tahrir has a constitution for its proposed Islamic state with 187 articles.

* It was founded in 1953 by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani (1909-1977), a Palestinian Islamic jurist in Jerusalem, then part of Jordan.

* Hizb was immediately banned by Jordan and in 1955 Nabhani was banned from returning to the country. He settled first in Damascus and then Beirut, from where he continued to lead the party.

* Hizb ut-Tahrir's present leader is Ata Khalil Abu-Rashta (born 1943), a civil engineer who joined the party in the mid-1950s and became its first official spokesman.

* Hizb ut-Tahrir is said to be active in 40 countries. Its membership is not known but in 2004 an estimate by Shiv Malik put it at one million members worldwide, and its influence in Central Asia at 10 million.

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Violent agenda carefully veiled

End of Document

World Report

Windsor Star (Ontario)

March 29, 2007 Thursday

Final Edition

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Byline: Compiled from Star News Services

Body

ASIA

KIDS PLAY WITH DOLL, EAT ICE CREAM IN HOSTAGE CRISIS

MANILA, Philippines - A young girl waved a Barbie doll while a boy licked an ice cream cone. Another girl casually finished a bottle of water while chatting with a classmate.

Dozens of children were taken hostage on a bus Wednesday by a day-care owner armed with grenades and guns, but the youngsters took the ordeal in stride, eating pizza, smiling and waving from the windows throughout the day.

The crisis ended after 10 hours when 56-year-old civil engineer Jun Ducat, who staged the incident to denounce corruption and demand better lives for impoverished children, released the children, put the pin back in a grenade and surrendered to police.

Jubilant parents were quickly reunited with their children as they filed off the bus clutching dolls, toys and backpacks. Ducat was led to a waiting police car and driven away.

BROTHEL ABDUCTION SPARKS PAKISTAN PROTESTS

ISLAMABAD - **Female** students at an Islamic school in the Pakistani capital kidnapped a brothel owner, sparking an angry stand-off Wednesday between police and hundreds of stick-wielding fundamentalists.

Tensions mounted after police arrested four **female** teachers Wednesday from the hardline Jamia Hafsa religious school near the city's Red Mosque in connection with the abduction.

The seminary's vice-principal, Abdul Rashid Ghazi, warned of a "holy war" if the teachers were not released. He also called for police to file a case against the abducted woman.

The incident comes amid concerns about the increasing "Talibanisation" of Pakistan, especially in its northwestern regions bordering Afghanistan, with extremists seeking to impose their vision of Islamic Sharia law.

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OCEANIA

World Report

THREE KILLED, ONE MISSING IN SYDNEY BRIDGE ACCIDENT

SYDNEY - Three people were killed and a 12-year-old girl is missing after a ferry hit a private boat near the Australian capital's iconic Harbour Bridge, reports said today.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported that the ferry hit the pleasure boat, which was carrying about 12 people.

Two men and one woman died after the smaller boat rolled and many of the passengers were thrown into the water, the paper's website said.

"We have three deceased. Two women with serious injuries have gone to hospital," a New South Wales Ambulance Service spokesman said.

Eleven of the 12 people believed to have been on board the smaller boat were accounted for.

Rescue helicopters, a naval patrol boat and police divers were still searching for the missing girl.

A witness, Clive Marshall, said the passengers on the boat were thrown into the water on impact. "The boat basically just disintegrated," said Marshall, who was on a passing ferry.

BURNING SPACESHIP NEARLY HITS PASSENGER JET

WELLINGTON - A passenger jet was less than a minute from being struck by the burning wreckage of a Russian spaceship as it fell from orbit.

The pilot of the plane, which was flying from Santiago, Chile, to Auckland, New Zealand, reported seeing flaming space junk over the Pacific about five miles away.

Travelling at roughly 805 km/h, that means the Airbus A340, owned by LAN Airlines of Chile, was less than a minute from the wreckage.

The pilot told air traffic controllers in Auckland that he could see a piece of debris lighting up as it fell through the atmosphere on Tuesday. He could hear it "rumbling" over the aircraft's engines.

New Zealand aviation officials Wednesday blamed Russian space authorities for supplying inaccurate information about the spacecraft's re-entry time and location.

BINDI IRWIN'S NATURE SERIES TO DEBUT IN JUNE

NEW YORK - Bubbly eight-year-old Bindi Irwin, daughter of the late "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin, will make her debut this summer as a nature-loving TV host.

Bindi: The Jungle Girl, designed to help get more children interested in wildlife conservation, premieres June 9 on the Discovery Kids Channel.

Bindi will interact with a variety of animals, from koalas to elephants and snakes, while explaining how all animals -- both cute and not-so-cute -- need to be given respect and protection, the network said Tuesday.

Steve Irwin died last September after a stingray's poisonous barb pierced his chest while he was diving in the Great Barrier Reef.

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AFRICA

AT LEAST 89 DIE IN NIGERIAN TANKER FIRE

World Report

KANO, Nigeria - At least 89 people were killed when an upturned oil tanker burst into flames as it was being looted in northern Nigeria, officials said Wednesday.

More than 100 survivors were being treated for burns, they said.

"From our initial record, 85 people lost their lives.

"But the figure has now risen to 89 because four more people died in hospital," Kaduna State Emergency Management Agency executive secretary Aliyu Saleh Raminkura said.

"The figure is likely to be higher. One hundred and one survivors, mostly youths, are being treated ... for varying degrees of burns."

Police said the accident happened Monday evening in Kaduna state as the tanker tried to park in the village of Katugal, some 150 kilometres south of the state capital Kaduna.

Villagers were thronging around the vehicle to loot its valuable cargo when it erupted in flames.

ZIMBABWE MUST END HARASSMENT: AMNESTY

LONDON - Amnesty International demanded on Wednesday that the Zimbabwean government cease its harassment and intimidation of opposition activists, and called on regional governments to put pressure on President Robert Mugabe's regime.

The London-based human rights group's comments were prompted by claims from the main opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which said that party leader Morgan Tsvangirai was among a group arrested by police during a raid on the party's headquarters.

However, security forces denied they had detained Tsvangirai barely a fortnight after his arrest on March 11 when he was badly beaten in detention.

"We are very concerned by reports of continuing brutal attacks on opposition activists in Zimbabwe and call on the government to stop all acts of violence and intimidation against opposition activists," said Kolawole Olaniyan, the director of Amnesty's Africa program.

The arrests came as Mugabe jetted off to a summit of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the Tanzanian capital Dar es Salaam, with Amnesty urging regional leaders to take the 83-year-old president to task.

- - -

MIDEAST

PALESTINIANS CYNICAL OVER SAUDI PEACE PLAN

RAMALLAH, West Bank - The Arab League unanimously reaffirmed Wednesday its support for a five-year-old Saudi peace proposal that the U.S. and Israel have recently decided might be the best vehicle to revive the Middle East peace process, which has been in a deep coma since 2000.

However, with Israel and the Palestinians' Hamas-led government still far from agreeing on terms that might allow them to even speak with each other, there was deep cynicism in the Palestinian provisional capital Wednesday regarding the land-for-peace deal that Arab leaders were speaking enthusiastically about at their Riyadh summit.

"It's the same! It's the same! It's the same! They can talk as much as they like. Nothing will change," said shoe salesman Salim Bakri. "We may get Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin and Hebron (cities in the West Bank) but we will never get what we consider to be Palestine."

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The Saudi proposal, first floated by King Abdullah when he was the crown prince, has been aggressively pushed in recent weeks by U.S Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

In return for Israel leaving parts of the West Bank it captured in the 1967 Six Day War and the creation of a Palestinian state, the Arab states would make peace with the Jewish state and establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

Aside from the emotive question of what to do about several hundred thousand Israelis who now live in the West Bank and the future of Jerusalem, which both sides claim as their capital, the Saudi proposal -- unless it is significantly altered -- faces immense difficulty gaining Israeli acceptance because it calls for the return of several million Palestinian refugees to their former homes in the Jewish state.

- - -

NORTH AMERICA

NO SERIOUS INJURIES IN FIRE ON ROOF OF HIGH-RISE

CHICAGO - Thick smoke poured from the roof of a 45-storey office building Wednesday, forcing workers into the downtown streets as firefighters rushed inside.

The fire was contained to equipment on the building's rooftop, and was not coming from inside, Fire Department spokesman Larry Langford said.

He said authorities were not ordering an evacuation, but were assisting people who wanted to leave. Emergency medical responders were checking some people as "a precaution," Langford said.

RESIDENTS USE SNOWPLOWS AFTER TUMBLEWEED INVASION

BOZEMAN, Mont. - Montana residents are used to digging out from snowstorms, but residents of one neighbourhood had to put a snowplow to different use: clearing mounds of tumbleweed from their driveways.

Strong wind blew the tumbleweed in on Tuesday, covering sheds, burying mailboxes and blocking a street and driveways. On Shooting Star Lane, residents had to use a snowplow and pitchforks to clear it out.

Cindy Bowker had to tunnel through the weeds to get to her car. "It was up over the headlights," she said.

700 EVACUATED AFTER FIRE AT CHEMICAL PLANT

HUMBOLDT, Tenn. - Fire broke out in an agriculture chemical plant Wednesday, forcing as many 700 people to evacuate homes and businesses in the area, officials said.

Homes downwind from the plant were evacuated because of the smoke, and workers at nearby manufacturing plants were told to leave by emergency officials as a precaution, Mayor Allen Barker said. No injuries were immediately reported.

"The smoke is blowing in a northwesterly direction away from where it can cause harm," the mayor said. "The evacuations are precautionary."

Graphic

Colour Photo: Associated Press; A HUSBAND TO LOOK UP TO: Bao Xishun, the world's tallest man, poses with his new wife Xia Shujian in Chifeng, in China's Inner Mongolia region. The two officially married on Monday. Bao, at

World Report

seven foot nine, is listed by the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's tallest man, while his wife is five foot six. ;

Colour Photo: Bindi Irwin. ;

Colour Photo: Morgan Tsvangirai. ;

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Liberalism, Democracy, and the Jewish State

The Chronicle of Higher Education

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Body

The future of the state of Israel is once again a topic of heated public debate. For good reasons: The possibility of a nuclear threat from a hostile Iran is one; deadlock in the peace process in the region, and the chance of a gradual shift into chronic civil war between Israelis and Palestinians, is another. But it has become common in some circles to ask not only whether Israel can survive, but also if it has a right to.

Some commentators believe that "the Jewish Question" that has been buzzing around in the West for some three centuries -- the question of how this ancient people, the Jews, should fit into a modern political order -- should be reopened. National self-determination for Jews in a state of their own, such critics say, can no longer be part of a morally acceptable answer. That is a telling development. As in the past, Western attitudes to the "Jewish Question" are reliable indications of larger political moods and of the shifting meanings of political concepts.

The first thing one senses about the framing of the topic today is hardly a surprise: the growing unease with nation-states. The horrors of Fascism and Nazism made us all wary of extreme nationalism. Until the 1970s, national-liberation movements in rapidly collapsing Western colonies still reminded the democratic world that nationalism is not always the enemy of liberty but sometimes its ally. But the decline of colonialism and the deterioration of liberation movements into third-world tyrannies, combined with the rise of the European Union and globalization, changed that. The postcolonial era gave rise to a hope of transcending nationalism, and has relegated nationalist sentiments in the West's political imagination to the parties of reaction. Current debates about Israel's future clearly reflect that trend. But they also indicate a less-obvious feature of the antinational mood: a growing rift between liberalism and democracy.

A recent wave of books on the future of Israel offers a glimpse into that tendency. The four discussed here (there are many others) are polemical rather than scholarly, and they are vastly different from one another. One is an autobiographical account, by Daniel Cil Brecher, a German Jew who immigrated to Israel and then back to Europe; another is the work of a French Jewish journalist, Sylvain Cypel, who spent more than a decade in Israel; the third is a fiery anti-Zionist exhortation, by Joel Kovel, a Jewish psychiatrist and now a professor of social studies at Bard College, who challenged Ralph Nader for the presidential nomination of the Green Party; and the last is an analysis of the challenges facing Israel, by Mitchell G. Bard, a pro-Israeli, Jewish-American activist. It is hard to imagine these four authors getting along around one dinner table. But they do share something: All are, to various degrees, uneasy with the idea of national identity.

Unease may be too strong a term for Bard's *Will Israel Survive?* A trace of discomfort does appear, though, in his understandable anger, as an American, toward those Israelis who insist that if you are Jewish and consider yourself a Zionist, you must immigrate to Israel. Bard's definition of Zionism is considerably more flexible. It includes all who

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generally sympathize with Israel. That helps sidestep the core of the original ideology: The founders of Zionism thought that under modern conditions, Jews would preserve their identity and sense of "peoplehood" only by shifting from a religious to a modern and national basis. They insisted that Jews have a collective right, like other peoples (as Israel's Declaration of Independence declared), to self-determination. Bard does not object to that idea so much as he is ambiguous about it. His justification of Zionism heavily accentuates anti-Semitism (especially from contemporary fundamentalist Islam) and downplays self-determination. His support of Zionism is thus more negative than positive.

In *Walled: Israeli Society at an Impasse*, Cypel, a senior editor at *Le Monde*, targets nationalism more directly. In his view, Israel suffers from collective egocentrism. Both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict see themselves as victims, and both deny the victimhood of the other. The key to any solution is therefore putting an end to denial. But Israel, Cypel thinks, has gone the opposite way: It has built a wall, and the wall is about blocking, not seeing, the other side.

Cypel greatly exaggerates denial. He takes little note, for example, of the fact that many of the harsh truths he discusses, and which Israel, he says, denies, were not unearthed from dusty archives by his own journalistic efforts. He relies heavily on works of Israeli scholars and on *Haaretz*, Israel's single highbrow daily newspaper. Those are hardly clandestine sources. Contrary to Cypel's assertion that none of the works of the Israeli historian Benny Morris, for instance, appeared in Hebrew until 2000, Morris's seminal *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-49* was actually published in Hebrew in 1991 and stirred a lengthy, high-profile debate in the Israeli popular news media. For someone who spent more than a decade in Israel, Cypel, now based in Paris, is curiously out of touch with Israeli politics.

It is still true that Israel's public, like Palestine's, dwells more on its own pains than on those of the other side. That is probably true of all conflicts, but Cypel nevertheless makes it the center of his analysis of this one. On that basis, he reasons that any resolution must first cure both peoples of the inherent collective egocentrism of their national narratives. Cypel, however, is a Frenchman, and France is both strongly republican and decidedly national. He also remembers the Algerian movement of national liberation. So he isn't easily tempted to say that doing away with the desire for national independence is the key to peace -- or the necessary precondition for democracy. Instead he classifies Israeli and Palestinian nationalism as the wrong kinds of nationalism. The problem: They are "ethnic" national identities. Cypel does not make clear exactly how the term "ethnic" applies to Israel's national identity. But he clearly has in mind the contrast with France's brand of republican nationalism, which formally (although not necessarily in social practice) equates citizenship with national identity: If you receive French citizenship, you automatically acquire, at least in theory, a French identity.

A Stranger in the Land: Jewish Identity Beyond Nationalism, Brecher's book, is written in a more minor key, and details his personal search for an escape from the contradictions of identity. History and political analysis are woven into biography here. Brecher's parents fled Europe in the great upheavals of World War II, wound up in Israel, but never felt at home there. They finally settled in Germany in 1953. Their son, Daniel, however, was uncomfortable as a German Jew and immigrated to Israel in 1976. But its very nature as a national Jewish state was jarring to Brecher. His own humanistic view was shaped by the experience of "a minority group harmed by nationalism," and so he was uneasy with what he saw as Israel's drive for an "ethnically pure society." Falling out of love with Israel began with minor political dissent, greatly exacerbated after he served in a reserve unit in the first Lebanon war (which began in 1982). Brecher's stationing seems in retrospect singularly ironic: He served with other academics in a lecturers' unit assigned to raise soldier morale.

The book's tone is uniformly morose. But it does have a happy ending, with the author moving back to Europe and finding his home in the cosmopolitan environs of Amsterdam. The personal is also the political here: Brecher's reconciliation with himself, he believes, also applies to Israel. Israel should transcend nationalism and become "a state of all her citizens," he says, one where "the rights and development of the individual citizen are protected and promoted regardless of race and religion, where freedom and human rights stand in the foreground rather than the dogmas of Zionism."

Liberalism, Democracy, and the Jewish State

In Joel Kovel's *Overcoming Zionism: Creating a Single Democratic State in Israel/Palestine*, nationalism is even more clearly equated with evil. Kovel is a man of unequivocal judgments, and his verdict on Zionism, as a particularly bad kind of nationalism, is fierce. Israel is, he says, "absolutely illegitimate," a "monstrous venture" of "state-structured racism." The history of the Zionist creed interests Kovel very little, since the problem, in his view, begins with Judaism. Judaism, he says, always had two opposing tendencies: exceptionalism and universalism. Zionism is a direct descendant of the exceptionalistic side. Its origins are in the idea that the Israelites were God's chosen people. According to Kovel's slapdash Hegelianism, all forms of identity are negations of others: If they do not negate each other, they do not achieve universalism, and they are therefore malignant. Nationalism in general, and Zionism in particular, fail. They define themselves by excluding others; thus they violate nothing less than natural justice (which Kovel more or less equates with liberalism).

A more vigorous editor would have done the book a great deal of good by tuning down Kovel's shrill evangelical tone and maybe counseling against zoological metaphors. It would have been wiser, for example, not to court charges of racism by comparing Jewish settlers to "those insects who lay an egg in the interior of the prey's body, whence a new creature hatches as a larva that devours the host from within."

But the truth is that Kovel is not a racist, just an absolutist kind of liberal zealot. His crusade for "overcoming" Zionism is militant because there can be no compromise with absolute evil. He strives for complete destruction of Zionism as a creed, by calling first for a blacklist of all those who support pro-Israel lobbies in North America; then for organizing cultural and economic boycotts of Israel; and finally for overwhelming the Jewish majority with returning Palestinian refugees. Only then can reconstruction begin. Kovel would have little truck with the suggestions of a binational state currently circulating. Reconstruction should aim for something like Brecher's non-national liberal democracy.

Before Israel was founded, a Zionist leader who was to become its first president, Chaim Weizmann, said Israel would be Jewish in the same sense that England is English. What is it, then, that makes the idea of a Jewish democratic state seem more contradictory to so many critics today than an English democratic state?

The issue does not seem to be the connection of the state to Judaism as a faith. From its outset, Zionism wrought a secularizing revolution in Jewish identity. That is why most Orthodox Jews initially objected to it. To this day, the large ultra-Orthodox minority in Israel, although it takes an active part in Israel's politics, abhors Israel's national identity. It is still true, however, that Zionism preserved many ties to Judaism as a religion, and often made concessions to the Orthodox. The result is no clear separation between church and state. Is that what singles Israel out as nondemocratic? Probably not. England has a state church, as do Denmark and Norway, and that doesn't seem to constitute evidence of a nondemocratic character. The Greeks identify their religious with their national identity; the Poles don't clearly separate Roman Catholicism from theirs. But those states, too, are considered democratic. Moreover, a strict separation of church and state, as, for example, in France is not necessarily more egalitarian. France is extremely aggressive toward minorities whose religion has a public dimension (like Muslim women who cover their heads in school). Israel's Muslim minority is, in that respect, better off: Israel has a publicly financed Arab-language school system, for example, and a state-sponsored system of Muslim courts for marriage and family status. Arabic is one of the official languages of the state.

But then there is the Law of Return. The law grants automatic citizenship to immigrating Jews. Is that what makes Israel nondemocratic? Hardly. Many other countries with diasporas have such laws: Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, and Poland, to name a few.

Or is the core of the problem, as Cypel says, that Zionism is an "ethnic" national identity? The term "ethnic democracy" is often used in the controversy over Zionism, ever since the Israeli sociologist Sammy Smoocha coined it to describe Israel in 1996. Smoocha was short of clear on what the term indicates, but he certainly did not mean what today's critics insinuate and what Israeli law clearly forbids: confining full civil rights to Jews only.

Despite repeated usage, it is still not clear why the term "ethnic" is useful for describing Israel, which is far less ethnically homogeneous than, say, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Poland, or Sweden. In what sense does "ethnic" describe the common identity of Israeli Jews from Argentina, England, Ethiopia, Germany, Morocco,

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Russia, and Yemen? And how does one classify the ultra-Orthodox, a large group that does not share Israel's national identity but is nevertheless Jewish? Are they part of the ethnos but not of the nation? The real dividing lines in Israel are national -- between those who do and those who don't share the national Jewish identity. And apart from adding a pejorative ring, substituting "ethnic democracy" for "national democracy" does not accomplish much.

Nor does the existence of national minorities within Israel's boundaries present any unique problem to its democracy. Other nation-states also have national minorities that want to preserve their separate identities: the Basques in Spain and the Germans in Poland, say. Few observers, however, make that grounds for denying the rights of the majority in Poland or Spain to national self-determination. Granted, Israel's situation is peculiarly complicated by the fact that the state is in conflict with the Palestinian nation, to which a minority in Israel belongs. But that, too, is not the root of the intuitive feeling that the Israeli state is inherently malignant. The origin of unease has more to do with four decades of Israeli occupation in Gaza and the West Bank.

The alleged contradiction between "democratic" and "Jewish" is thus, at bottom, a reading of the occupation back into Zionism. Increasingly, Israel's most vehement critics tend to see things this way: Zionism is a blood-and-soil ideology that postulates that the land belongs exclusively to Jews. Therefore the occupation is its natural extension. And so an end to the occupation may alleviate some of the symptoms but not cure the disease. That is why Kovel and Brecher, along with many others, believe that the only way to make Israel fully democratic is to make it non-Zionist -- that is, not a nation-state.

It is ironic that such a reading comes at a time when the most important change Israel has undergone is best described as the triumph of Zionism over the occupation. Contrary to the blood-and-soil theory, such a clash was inevitable. For the founders of Zionism, the idea of self-determination preceded -- logically, and often historically -- the decision to realize it in Zion. They considered Argentina, Australia, the Crimea, Madagascar, North America, and Uganda, among other places, for a homeland. None of those locations was more politically feasible than Zion, and none had Zion's nostalgic draw. But for mainstream Zionism, it was nevertheless clear that the land of Israel was the means, while democratic self-determination was the goal.

Hence, in Israeli public opinion, the "two-state solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has won over the ideology of a Greater Israel. Shortly after the occupation began, the left (which by the early 1990s had grown to about half the electorate) insisted that the occupation undermined the very moral grounds on which Zionism rests, the "natural right" of all peoples to self-determination. Then, in recent years, many on the political right, which for decades had supported settlement in the territories, began to realize that the occupation would drag Israel into binationalism. In that case, without a clear Jewish majority, Israel would eventually have to give up democracy to preserve its Jewish identity. Very few on the right were ever willing to consider that possibility. And so the preservation of Israeli democracy necessitated turning against settlements.

It was precisely the interdependence between national identity and democracy that led even staunch hawks like Prime Ministers Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert to turn their backs on the occupied territories. What is commonly referred to as "the demographic question" (extensively treated in Bard's book) is also "the democratic question," which, in turn, is the question of national self-determination. That is something Israel's current radical-liberal critics find so hard to imagine: that national sentiments can act to maintain and protect democracy; that Israel's national identity was the force that gave the final blow to support for the occupation. For them nationalism is, at best, an unpleasant bedfellow for democracy at worst, its simple opposite.

But nationalism and democracy were born together, and that was no coincidence. In fact, it was the rise of modern nationalism that made modern democracy feasible.

Most 18th-century political thinkers were dubious that large states could be republics. Shaped by classic republican ideas, they believed that republics had to be grounded in the virtue of their citizens. Only a stern political education would train citizens to overcome their private egotistic passions and act in the name of Reason, for the public good. Such education was problematic in large states, the political thinkers believed. The great revolutions in America and France proved them wrong. It was passion, not its overcoming, that sustained republics: Love of one's country --

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patriotism -- would transcend egotism and make citizens jealous guardians of their nation's interests, as well as of the liberties of their fellow citizens.

That love, revolutionaries believed, also transcended national chauvinism. It fueled what the French revolutionaries called the War of All Peoples Against All Kings. Still, the Terror that followed swiftly on the revolution in France gave republicans pause. Today, especially after the horrors of the 20th century, we remember well how extreme nationalism can turn against democracy. We easily forget, however, the extent to which democracy is functionally dependent on the nation-state.

Although some of the authors discussed here are European, today's unease with national sentiments has a distinctly American flavor. That has less to do with any short-lived hope in Europe that the European Union has transcended nationalism than with globalization. The winds of globalization have spread an American form of liberal principles around the globe, casting today's discussion in largely American terms. That includes America's tendency to misunderstand the nature of its own national democracy.

Americans often tend to believe that they have a "pure" liberal democracy -- that is, a democracy above and beyond the "identity" (the way the term is used in the multicultural paradigm). To be sure, identity is in vogue in America: In the mantra of multiculturalism, a plethora of hyphenated self-definitions are created and re-created. But the unarticulated premise is that "identity" is what comes before the hyphen; what comes after -- "American" -- somehow stands for democratic procedures that form a universal liberal framework.

Not only does that ignore how much "American" is a strong identity, it also confuses the procedures of liberal democracy with that identity. Ever since the late 18th century, blindness to their own strong nationalism has led many Americans to believe that imposing the American Way on others is tantamount to liberating them. From Jefferson's vision of an "empire for liberty," to Woodrow Wilson's determination to "teach" South Americans to "elect good men," to George W. Bush's badly conceived war in Iraq, that streak has persisted. At its best, America was and is a true champion of liberty. But it is not at its best when liberty is confused with Americanization.

So when Joel Kovel lays out his plan of attack against Zionism, or when Daniel Brecher demands that Israel renounce its Jewish character in favor of an American-style liberal democracy, or when far more sophisticated intellectuals like New York University's Tony Judt propose, as he has repeatedly, a "one-state solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (one neutral political entity encompassing both nations), they are reiterating the same old blunder: For all their sometime criticisms of American foreign policy, they, too, confuse Americanization with liberation.

Imposing America's model of one liberal state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea would mean suppressing the aspirations of both Jews and Palestinians to self-determination. It may be noble of such writers to shoulder what was once called the White Man's Burden, and take it upon themselves to teach the natives the right form of self-determination. But from the point of view of the natives, that does not seem like a way to promote democracy. It seems more like an assault on self-determination with a liberal accent.

Kovel, and, for that matter, Judt on Israel are closer to Bush on Iraq than they would like to believe: American notions of democracy are what count, not what Iraqis, or Palestinians, or Israeli Jews want. And, as in Iraq, such a solution would mean civil war. If anyone needed a demonstration of that, Hamas's military takeover of Gaza has supplied it. If Hamas and Fatah cannot reconcile their differences without resorting to force, then throwing a Jewish minority into the mix is unlikely to produce a peaceful liberal democracy.

If the foreseeable future holds stability for Israel's democracy, democratization for Palestine, and peace for both, that future will be tied to national self-determination. It will have to rely on stable nation-states. Transcending nationalism would be, in this case, promoting civil war.

Looking beyond the case of Israel and Zionism, one wonders if the rising anti-national mood does not indicate a more general flow in contemporary liberal logic: Liberalism and democracy may be drifting apart.

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Reducing democracy to liberalism's protection of individual rights, and positing them in opposition to nationalism, may indeed be a step on the way to transcending nation-states. But transcending nation-states may prove to transcend democracy along with them. Some very important individual human rights may be increasingly guarded, but citizens may lose control over their institutions and political fates.

Institutions that transcend the nation-state -- whether one looks at multi-national corporations, the International Court in the Hague, the World Bank, or the European Union -- may stand at the vanguard of the liberal faith. But the same institutions also exercise great influence, even jurisdiction, over people and peoples who have little or no democratic control over them. The liberal assault on nationalism is also beginning to look like an assault on the principle of government with the consent of the governed. That is worrisome, because liberalism without democracy is likely to be just as unsustainable as democracy without liberty.

Gadi Taub is an assistant professor of communications and public policy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is the author of a number of works of fiction, as well as of *The Settler and the Struggle Over the Meaning of Zionism* (in Hebrew; Miskal-Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 2006).

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The hostage industry; ANALYSIS; Terrorist groups with few resources are increasingly using a weapon with big impact: kidnap. Why? And how can captives be freed?

The Sunday Herald

June 3, 2007

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Length: 1689 words

Byline: By Diplomatic Editor Trevor Royle

Highlight: PICTURED ABOVE Top row, from left: Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl was beheaded in Karachi by an Islamic militant group in 2002. Two of four peace activists kidnapped by The Swords of Righteousness Brigade in Iraq 2005. Aid worker Margaret Hassan was murdered in Iraq in November 2004, though who was responsible remains unclear. Algerian diplomat Ali Belaroussi, along with colleague Azzedine Belkadi, was killed in 2005 by al-Qaeda in Iraq headed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Second row, from left: Briton Norman Kember was kidnapped in 2005 along with three other peace activists including American colleague Tom Fox, who was killed before Kember and the other hostages were freed by British special forces. Faye Turney was the only woman among the 15 British navy personnel seized by Iranian forces in March 2007 and accused of violating Iranian territorial waters.

All were later released. Ken Bigley, from Liverpool, was abducted in Iraq in September 2004. The Tawhid and Jihad Islamist group led by al-Zarqawi released a video of Bigley and two Americans kidnapped at the same time before beheading them. BBC reporter Alan Johnston, kidnapped in March this year by Palestinian gunmen, remains captive somewhere in the Gaza Strip.

Body

IVE Westerners are taken hostage in Baghdad in a daring and outrageous operation involving suspected Shi'ite militia disguised as police. In Gaza the BBC journalist Alan Johnston is still languishing in captivity, a victim of the wider war between the Israelis and Palestinian insurgency groups. In the same part of the world, the Israeli army went to war in south Lebanon last summer in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to liberate one of their men who had been taken hostage by Hezbollah guerrillas. There is still no sign of any of the victims being freed.

Earlier this year, the Iranian Republican Guards tweaked the nose of the Royal Navy by snatching 15 sailors and marines in the Persian Gulf and keeping them at their government's leisure for an embarrassing week before disdainfully letting them go. In Russia, rebels loyal to Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev had a much more sinister purpose when they moved into a school at Beslan in north Ossetia in September 2004 to take schoolchildren prisoner and threaten the authorities with their death unless their demands were met. Almost 400 people were killed, the majority of them civilians and children, when the security forces mounted a botched rescue bid.

The hostage industry ANALYSIS Terrorist groups with few resources are increasingly using a weapon with big impact: kidnap. Why? And how can captives be freed?

Further casualties had been caused in a Moscow cinema two years earlier when the same security forces moved against Chechen terrorists who were holding around 700 people hostage. In the counter-attack, 41 Chechens and 129 hostages were killed after the security forces attempted to contain the situation by pouring nerve gas into the cinema building. Every week in Nigeria, oil workers are taken hostage, and the numbers are so high that the incidents are rarely reported.

Welcome to the shadowy world of global terrorism, where innocent people become pawns in an increasingly deadly game in which lightly armed terrorists can take on the might of world powers by holding them to ransom. Not only does it give them a powerful bargaining counter but, as the cases of the Baghdad hostages and Alan Johnston have shown, it keeps the hostage-takers' grievances in the public eye. In the modern world of terrorist warfare, where there is no discernible front line and causes often remain bewilderingly unclear, the taking of hostages has become the new battlefield multiplier.

"If you're in command of a terrorist cell containing people who are little more than lightly trained and fanatical desperados, it's difficult to make a lasting impression on the security forces," says a British military source. "You will have access to arms and explosives and you will be able to use them, but unless you come up with a spectacular you're not going to make much impression on the politicians. But you might just strike it lucky if you manage to get hold of high-value hostages."

In the counter-insurgency war in Iraq, hostage-taking has become such a routine gambit that most incidents involving local people are not even reported. Most of them are staged by criminal gangs who take the opportunity to abduct wealthy or influential Iraqis and demand ransoms for their release.

They might claim to be operating for a political purpose, but the reality is that they are simply operating a terrorist franchise in a failed society where law and order has broken down and the police forces are powerless to intervene.

In Iraq, those same police forces often aid and abet the hostage-takers and may even be hostage-takers themselves.

All that changes when the victim is a Westerner, because they are usually the type of high-value target described by the British military source. The official line is that Western governments will not give in to hostage-takers, far less negotiate with them. As soon as anyone is seized by the terrorists the word goes out that there will be no talks, no deals and no compromise. The reality is rather different. As the fates of the British hostage Ken Bigley and the US journalist Daniel Pearl showed, the end game for some of those caught by extremists is the terrible fate of decapitation and the release of television pictures showing in grisly detail the victim's last moment.

For the governments concerned this is an outcome which is painful and humiliating as it makes a nonsense, in Iraq at least, of the claim that their security forces are in control of the situation.

In both cases, strenuous attempts were made to discover where the men might be hidden, and in Bigley's case he came within a whisker of being sprung by the SAS. Operations of that kind do not happen by magic or good luck. To have any chance of getting close to the perpetrators of the crime, the potential rescuers need to get out and about to talk to people who might know the identities of the terrorists. In so doing they have to discover what sort of demands are being made and what is on the table as bargaining chips. Great patience is required, as it takes time and a good deal of hard-nosed bargaining to find any common ground. Neither side will trust the other, and it goes without saying that the security or intelligence services will always have a plan B - the use of overwhelming force once they know the whereabouts of the place where the hostage is being held.

There are exceptions. In Iraq and Afghanistan there were strong suspicions in the diplomatic community that the Italian government had cut deals with terrorist organisations to allow civilian hostages to be freed.

In March 2005, the journalist Giuliana Sgrena was released from captivity in Iraq following negotiations, but the operation ended in tragedy when US forces opened fire on the convoy taking her to the airport. Her bodyguard, Nicola Calipari, was killed in the incident. Last March a similar deal was struck in Afghanistan allowing Daniele

The hostage industry ANALYSIS Terrorist groups with few resources are increasingly using a weapon with big impact: kidnap. Why? And how can captives be freed?

Mastrogiamomo of La Repubblica newspaper to be released in return for the freedom of five Taliban gunmen. The negotiations were carried out by the Afghan administration on behalf of the Italian government.

"Regarding hostage demands, the negotiator attempts to avoid giving anything without getting some concessions in return, avoids suggesting possible demands, avoids offering anything unless it is requested, avoids giving more than is requested and avoids dismissing any demand as trivial." All negotiators agree that basic essentials such as food, water and medicine are negotiable and that transportation and media coverage are "situational" - that is, a commodity which can be given in return for important concessions - but the granting of weapons or the exchange of hostages are completely non-negotiable. The trick to a safe outcome is to keep the hostage-takers talking and at all costs to avoid confrontation. If armed police or snipers are present, they have to be kept well out of sight. Above all, terrorist groups crave publicity, and the careful use of media manipulation can often bring results at crucial stages in the negotiations.

"Kidnapping can bypass this dynamic by drawing out media attention and by allowing reporters to personalise the victim and humanise their story," argue Michael Rubin and Suzanne Gershowitz in a recent paper on hostage-taking for the Middle East Forum. "For journalists, an assassination or bombing is anticlimactic; the press only begins its coverage after the operation has ended.

But uncertainty about whether a hostage remains alive creates the suspense necessary for a good news story." Most armies have specialist psy-ops personnel such as Colonel Jones who are trained in hostage negotiation, but hostage-taking is not a recent phenomenon; it has a long history. As soon as Western European countries started opening up and establishing trade routes in the late middle ages, an opportunity opened to take advantage of the presence of wealthy passers-by who could themselves be a source of income. In the Mediterranean and Atlantic, Barbary pirates caused havoc as corsairs from the north African coast captured Western ships, put their crews into slavery and held anyone of any importance, especially women, to ransom. It was a lucrative business, as most ransoms were eventually paid, and those passed into slavery provided a handy income.

THE Barbary pirates were mainly Muslim and their usage of hostage-taking continues today in Afghanistan and the main centres of the Middle East which are caught up in violence. It has been a fact of life in the armed struggle between Palestinian insurgents and the Israeli defence forces, who have made it a matter of honour to track down and find any soldier in the hands of Hamas or Hezbollah.

Perversely, the taking of hostages is a tactic which is forbidden by Islam, but in the main points of conflict in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq and Israel it has turned into a highly effective weapon for Muslim terrorists.

"Hostage-taking has become a particularly effective tactic. Terrorists crave an audience. With the spread of terrorism in the late 20th century, audiences became inured to violence," argue Rubin and Gershowitz. "Suicide bombings which might once have garnered headlines and commentary for a week now pass with bare mention. For a bombing or slaughter to win significant public attention, it must either target children - the Palestine Liberation Organisation's slaughter of school children in Ma'alot in 1974, or Chechen jihadists' seizure of a Beslan school 30 years later - or result in several hundred or thousands of casualties, such as occurred in the East Africa embassy bombings in 1998 and on 9/11." None of this will be of any comfort to Alan Johnston, who has been a hostage in Gaza for three months, or to the five taken hostage in Baghdad last week, but according to the terrorism specialist Profesor Paul Wilkinson of St Andrews University, as long as there are insurgency wars of the kind being waged in Iraq there will be terrorists who are willing and able to take hostages.

"It is extremely cheap and requires only small numbers of hostage takers armed with standard, widely available weaponry," argues Wilkinson in his study Terrorism v Democracy.

"Above all, it is one of the very few terrorist tactics with a track record of success in forcing governments to major concessions."

The hostage industry ANALYSIS Terrorist groups with few resources are increasingly using a weapon with big impact: kidnap. Why? And how can captives be freed?

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'Violence is inherent in Islam - it is a cult of death'; . Islamic faith schools must close . Sharia law could happen here . Multiculturalism has failed . Islam is the new fascism

The Evening Standard (London)

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Byline: DAVID COHEN

Body

AYAAN Hirsi Ali, never one to shrink from controversy, has some words of advice for Prime Minister Tony Blair. "Close the Islamic faith schools today," she says.

"Britain is sleepwalking into a society that could be ruled by Sharia law within decades unless Islamic schools are shut down and young Muslims are instead made to integrate and accept Western liberal values."

Hirsi Ali, 38, the Dutch-Somali human rights campaigner who lives under 24-hour police protection and is in London to promote her provocative new book, *Infidel*, argues that Catholic and Jewish schools can stay because the values they teach are not a threat to liberal democracy. "I haven't seen anybody coming out of a Catholic or Jewish school advocating violence against women or homosexuals, or wanting to murder innocent people in the name of their religion."

Having grown up within Islam, Hirsi Ali believes she is uniquely placed to warn the British public that they are living under a "great deception" about the true nature of Islam. "They have deceived themselves that the men arrested in the [alleged] beheading plot last week and the 7/7 bombers are a fringe group of radical Muslims who've hijacked Islam and that the majority of Muslims are moderate.

"But they are not. The plot to murder Muslim soldiers in the British Army is consistent with the purest teachings of Islam, which encourages you to kill Muslims who join the infidel army. Violence is inherent in Islam - it's a destructive, nihilistic cult of death. It legitimates murder. The police may foil plots and freeze bank accounts in the short term, but the battle against terrorism will ultimately be lost unless we realise that it's not just with extremist elements within Islam, but the ideology of Islam itself."

But surely she must see, I counter, that the majority of British Muslims are moderates?

'Violence is inherent in Islam - it is a cult of death' . Islamic faith schools must close . Sharia law could happen here . Multiculturalism has failed . Islam

Sitting in her publisher's office in an elegant grey-flannel trouser suit and pearl earrings, she fixes me with her lucid brown eyes. "If the majority are moderates, why did the Muslim community never take to the streets to abhor the 7/7 bombers? Why is it that the only time we see Muslims protesting en masse is when Islam is allegedly insulted, like with the Danish cartoons, or the Pope's comments?

"I'll tell you why: because Islam is the new fascism. Just like Nazism started with Hitler's vision, the Islamic vision is a caliphate - a society ruled by Sharia law - in which women who have sex before marriage are stoned to death, homosexuals are beaten, and apostates like me are killed. Sharia law is as inimical to liberal democracy as Nazism.

Young Muslims need to be persuaded that the vision of the Prophet Mohammed is a bad one, and you aren't going to get that in Islamic faith schools."

Suddenly Hirsi Ali halts her no holds barred polemic, a quizzical look creasing her brow. "When will this interview be published?" When I tell her, she breathes a sigh of relief and in a rare moment of caution, says: "Whew!

Thankfully I'll be out of the country!

I don't know what's possessed me, but I've been more forthright with you than in any other interview so far."

It is two years since I last interviewed Hirsi Ali and now, like then, I am struck by the contrast between her physicality - soft voice, waiflike figure, and perfectly manicured long fingernails - and the explosiveness of her rhetoric. If anything, she is more inflammatory and hardline now than she was then.

Yet, as she reminds me, a lot has happened since we met, including the murder of Theo van Gogh, the Dutch filmmaker who made her film, Submission, in which verses from the Koran of a man's alleged right to beat his wife are superimposed on an actress's body.

Van Gogh's assassination in late 2004 propelled Hirsi Ali from being well known to world famous, because plunged into his chest by his Dutch Moroccan killer, Mohammed Bouyeri, was a knife with a letter addressed to her, warning that she was next. The political fallout from this public death threat has dramatically affected her life ever since and has made her into the new Salman Rushdie.

It costs the Dutch government about 83.5 million (Pounds 2.5 million) to provide armed guards for her round-the-clock protection, she says, and it means that she lives "in fear and looking over my shoulder", but insists it's a personal price worth paying. Initially forced to flee to a safe house, her neighbours hounded her out, saying her presence put their lives (and real estate stock) in danger. The ball that began rolling that day has led, via a few detours, to her leaving Holland, where she'd served as an MP for the conservative Liberal Party, and taking a position as an analyst at the Right-of-centre American Enterprise Institute in Washington DC.

To some, like Time Magazine, which in 2005 proclaimed her one of the "100 most influential people in the world", she is venerated almost as a prophet, certainly as a hero. But to others she is reviled as a troublemaker, Islamaphobe, and someone who simply transmigrated from one extreme position on Islam to another. She has certainly travelled far: from the privations of Africa to the West, from devout Muslim to apostate, from a five-year-old girl subjected to the mutilation of circumcision and arranged marriage to fervent defender of women's rights.

But is it true, I ask, that she "regretted" writing Submission, as claimed by a British national newspaper in its headline last week.

She seems surprised to hear this. "I absolutely wish that Theo had not been killed," she says. "But I don't regret that I made it. In fact, I'm proud of that film. To feel otherwise would be to deny everything I stand for."

Recently, says Hirsi Ali, she met Salman Rushdie at a writer's festival in Manhattan and confessed that as a Somali Muslim in 1989, she had supported the fatwa against him. "Rushdie said that if I can believe he should be killed in 1989, and now believe what I do today, it fills him with optimism because hopefully other Muslims will follow the same path."

'Violence is inherent in Islam - it is a cult of death' . Islamic faith schools must close . Sharia law could happen here . Multiculturalism has failed . Islam

When I ask Hirsi Ali why she's become even more outspoken since we last met, she says that it's because she's realised that "being diplomatic and politically correct" gets you nowhere. "The world is now in a far more dangerous position than it was then. Hamas is in power in Palestine, Iran is ruled by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and in the West, we are engaged in a war against the enemy within as well as without.

"The mistake that Blair and Bush made is that they called it a War on Terror, whereas in fact, it's a War on Islamic Fascism. It's a war of values and the only way we are going to win it is to be honest about what we are fighting. This plot to behead Muslim army recruits is a warning to all potential recruits and it can be supported by what is in Islam."

Hirsi Ali says that on current projections of immigration growth and birth rates, British Muslims will be the dominant group within the next 50 years. A recent poll, in which 40 per cent of young Muslims said they would prefer to live under Sharia law, and a majority said they were in favour of women taking the veil, should worry liberals.

"We risk a reverse takeover. In 50 years, a majority Muslim society could democratically vote for Sharia law, and then what you face is that Britain will slowly start to look like Saudi Arabia. Women will be veiled, driven away from the public sphere, polygamy will be rife."

She takes in my sceptical look and says: "You think it can't happen? The problem with liberals is that we believe other people are as reasonable and tolerant as we are. How naive is the self-deception of the West to continue to talk of moderate Islam? We're trying to appease Islam, but we are headed for a terrible confrontation between fascist Islam and Rightwing fascists who will step in when liberals fail to do so. Why do Britons think that what happened in the Baltics, with fascist Right-wingers murdering Muslims, can't happen here? It can, and it will, unless we stop burying our heads in the sand."

But there is a glimmer of hope, she says, borne out of the increasing realisation that multiculturalism has failed in the UK. So what does she believe should be done?

"We have to fight their values with ours," she says. "We have to persuade young Muslims that liberal democracy is superior, that what the Prophet Mohammed said is not right, that the Koran is a manmade brutal doctrine of death whose time has long passed. We have to show the next generation of Muslims, the children, that they have a choice and to do that - to have any hope whatsoever - we have to close down Islamic faith schools."

Unsurprisingly, Hirsi Ali says she is much happier living in America than in Europe, because "people really appreciate what I do, and the personal risks I take, whereas here they prefer to shoot the messenger."

When I ask how she sees her role going forward, she begins talking to me about her new book. Indeed, it is typical of her honesty - and infamous lack of tact - that, within earshot of her publishers, she tells me that Infidel, a book detailing her life story, is "far less interesting" than the philosophical one she's currently writing, called Short Cuts to Enlightenment.

"It's about the Prophet Mohammed waking up in the New York Public Library and having his absolutist ideas challenged by John Stuart Mill, Frederick Hayek and Karl Popper, my favourite liberal thinkers," she says.

Do they convince him? She smiles. "No, they don't. But something happens to throw the Prophet Mohammed into doubt so that by the end of the book, he's no longer completely convinced by his own dogma." She pauses. "I suppose that is the most I can do - creating chinks of self-doubt where previously there was none. I can start the revolution within Islam but it will be up to others to finish it."

. Infidel, by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, is published by Free Press, Simon & Schuster, Pounds 12.99.

Graphic

'Violence is inherent in Islam - it is a cult of death' . Islamic faith schools must close . Sharia law could happen here . Multiculturalism has failed . Islam

CONTROVERSIAL: AYAAN HIRSI ALI, ABOVE, BELIEVES THE BRITISH PUBLIC IS LIVING UNDER A "GREAT DECEPTION" ABOUT THE TRUE NATURE OF ISLAM

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A mirror on the world A city at the crossroads of the pivotal issues of our time, Cairo offers a vision of where we are headed, says Rahul Jacob

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Byline: By RAHUL JACOB

Body

I was in a small bookstore in downtown Cairo looking for the English translation of a local bestseller when a retired chemical engineer asked me whether he should read *The End of History* by Francis Fukuyama. The book, published in 1992, famously argued that with the end of communism, the great battle over ideologies was over. This sixtiesomething Egyptian wondered if I could suggest something more topical. I had no answer. By then, I believed that one need only keep a journal in Cairo for a vision of where the world is headed.

Most of us journey to Cairo to marvel at the fabled necropolis on its outskirts and the still teeming medieval city at its heart that visitors from Florence gawked at in the 14th century. But Cairo is at the crossroads of all the chasms of our time: between east and west, between maintaining democratic liberties while battling terrorism, between the pseudo-socialism of so much of the developing world and imperfect moves to liberalise economies. And, most significantly, the real clash of civilisations between moderate Muslims, who want to be religious yet secular; and extremists, who want control of the state and are newly empowered by the catastrophic US and British invasion of Iraq.

The largest city in Africa and the Middle East, with a population of 17m, is also a mirror of the pell-mell urbanisation under way from New Delhi to Lagos, a crash-course development that has resulted in Californian-styled suburban communities and Dickensian slums. Cairo is the axis upon which our 21st-century dystopia turns.

The day before I arrived in mid-May, the supreme administrative court overruled a lower court and decreed it lawful to put civilians - in this case 40 members of the ever more popular Muslim Brotherhood - on trial before a military tribunal. The ruling followed a constitutional referendum in March, which paradoxically gave President Hosni Mubarak more autocratic powers.

But in Manshiet Nasser, the infamous 800,000-strong shantytown set amid limestone quarries on cliffs above Cairo, the *Daily Star* reported both the registering of title deeds for long-time residents and the building of better sewage facilities. And the charismatic Egyptian preacher Amr Khaled had just spoken about his role model, Prophet Muhammad, at a New York dinner hosted by Time magazine to honour those on its most influential list.

Even when you put the newspapers away, however, contemporary Cairo just keeps coming at you. Seeking breakfast on my first morning, I was immediately darting between cars on the wide avenue that runs alongside the Egyptian Museum. (Cairo's streets can in theory accommodate half a million cars - against the reality of 2.5m

A mirror on the world A city at the crossroads of the pivotal issues of our time, Cairo offers a vision of where we are headed, says Rahul Jacob

engaged in a daily demolition derby.) A policeman gallantly escorted a few of us tourists across. Several cars came to a grudging halt but a grey pick-up truck showed no signs of stopping. The policeman kept walking till I panicked and pulled him out of harm's way. (How often does one have a chance to save a policeman's life?)

An hour or so later, two of us sign up for a half-day tour of old Cairo. We start at the wooden-roofed Coptic Church of Abu Sarga, which follows rituals dating back to AD61, and has a crypt where Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus rested on their escape to Egypt. The church has an icon of a fantastically aged Joseph looking, I thought, balefully at the baby Jesus, seemingly taking stock of everything that has befallen him since the child's arrival. But the concerns of 21st-century Cairo kept intruding. We heard about the guide's friend who married an Englishwoman. The marriage contract was registered with the local embassy but his friend was denied a visa anyway. "I do not want to go abroad to be taken out of an immigration line because my name is Mohamed," he says.

There is lots to see at the Muhammad Ali Pasha mosque and the Citadel but by then our guide is relishing telling us about the French king who, in the mid-19th century, gave a clock as a gift for the nearby tower in exchange for an obelisk now in Paris. The clock has never worked - what else would you expect from the west, he asks. The Citadel was built by the brilliant Arab general Saladin during the Crusades. "We are awaiting another Saladin," our guide remarks in an oft-heard refrain.

It was, in any case, a bad week to be anything but a fatalist about the region's prospects. At dinner on an enormous boat cruising down the Nile, I sat next to someone working in development in Palestine, whose exhaustion with the violent infighting between Hamas and Fatah and the brutal excesses of the Israeli government there was infectious. Meanwhile, the Lebanese army and an offshoot of al-Qaeda were engaged in a war to the end in northern Lebanon. "The whole world's a blazing pyre," says Amina early in the second of Naguib Mahfouz's Cairo Trilogy. In mid-May it did not seem just a comment on the almost 40Degrees C weather.

Egypt itself has suffered terrorist attacks on tourists in 2005 in Sharm el Sheikh and in 2006 in the Red Sea resort of Dahab. When I visited the pyramids and the sphinx, I saw part of an abandoned stage-set for Verdi's Aida, the performance of which was called off after the challenge of providing security for so many diplomats proved too big. In a nearby tomb, I was moved by a 4,000-year-old bid for posterity on the walls: " My name is Kar. I am a scribe and a judge . . . "

The midday sun was bouncing off the pyramids as if they were prisms made of magnifying glass so we retreated to the cool of the J Goppi cafe in downtown Cairo. The cafe is a monument to nostalgia for turn-of-the-century Cairo with enormous silver salvers near its entrance that are never used. Close by is the Yacoubian building, the setting for the bestselling novel of the same title by Alaa Al Aswany. In his telling, the building is floor upon floor of dashed hopes and exploitation, a multi-storeyed indictment of modern Egypt, whose government's partiality for torture and detention without trial are depicted as pushing the country to extremism.

The trouble with literary pilgrimages is that, the tombs aside, walls can't speak. Yet when we stand in front of the building, its fall from grace is all too apparent. Grime from the street works its way up the walls to meet the garish billboards advertising a tailor's services hung over the balcony a few floors up. "When I was young, the aristocracy lived here," says Amr Rageh, our urbane guide, shaking his head. "Now the mediocracy do. Look at those advertisements." The clouds never hover long in Cairo, however. He is soon pointing to the art deco Metro cinema across the street and fondly recalling how his father took him there to see films starring Rita Hayworth.

At that street corner, I came to understand the charm of Cairo. Millions of us have been making historical pilgrimages there since Thomas Cook's first boats went down the Nile in 1886 but, while we seek in essence an open-air museum, the average Cairo citizen sees tourism as a full contact sport. After a while, all the minarets blur and seem little more than inverted exclamation marks that highlight all the stories they have told you along the way. One man recounts being swindled of his life savings but just as you are feeling sorry for him, he adds, "I live quite comfortably and I need relatively little." The next day, a fiftysomething taxi driver matter-of-factly tells you he is an engineer on a construction project by day and a taxi driver by night but that his children tell him his second job is demeaning.

A mirror on the world A city at the crossroads of the pivotal issues of our time, Cairo offers a vision of where we are headed, says Rahul Jacob

The Egyptian who depresses me with tales about the entrapment of gay men on the internet by local police then directs me to a barber's shop in one of the side-streets of downtown Cairo, which are more amiably languid than even those in Asia - everyone is engaged in a board game, conversation or sipping tea. Soon I am part of it too. His uncle is prised away from his game to say hello and the barber comes out to make two teasing observations - that my hair is too sparse to cut and that I am pretending to be Indian but am actually Nubian.

"The stranger is kin," goes a line from an Arab poem yet it is surprising that these old courtesies endure at all in a frenetic city of several million people. A British expat who has lived there for years told me of being spontaneously invited to wedding parties of relatively poor people in Cairo that played out on its streets when he chanced upon them. And even the salesmen hawking tourist tat - "Madam, please try our perfume. It will drive your husband crazy" - in Khan al Khalili are far more entertaining than their counterparts in Istanbul, say, or Delhi.

Not that much has changed. Medieval recollections of the city similarly found it convivial, sensual and polluted. The 14th-century traveller Ibn Battutah reported of an elaborate fete to celebrate the recovery from a fracture the ruler had suffered. A doctor from the 11th century complained of a "troubled, blackish vapour (that) hangs over the city." Max Rodenbeck's biography of Cairo (see below) relates the story of a medieval ruler's bizarre attempt to clamp down on homosexuality; the sultan forbade women from cross-dressing as men, a strategy forced upon them "because the love of men (had) spread among the nobles".

Rodenbeck underlines that Cairo was mostly tolerant about religion long before the capitals in Europe were. Muslims and Christians celebrated the festival of Epiphany together in the 10th century. When nationalist feeling was running high in 1919, Muslim students were so delighted by the oratory of a Christian priest, who declared Englishmen had rosy cheeks because they sucked Egyptians' blood, that they carried him on their shoulders to the pulpit of Al-Azhar mosque.

One afternoon, I stepped into a shutter-gate lift that wheezed and grunted on its way to a decrepit sixth-floor pensione whose rooms had been taken over by an exhibition entitled Occidentalism. Several artists had come together to understand the east-west divide. While I watched a tiny projector show scenes of an Egyptian family's immigration to suburban America and subsequent return, the assistant curator burst in to introduce herself and offer guidance on the exhibition - and Cairo, for that matter. Exhibit after exhibit examined the misperceptions that lie on both sides. In another room was a screen painting of two heads in black and grey that progressively merged to become one, suggesting our common humanity.

An ivory-towerish, artists' worldview, perhaps, but by the time I left Cairo, I felt similarly. With so many westerners likely to get a first experience of the Middle East in Egypt, which attracts as many as 9m tourists a year, this teeming capital needs to be viewed as much more than just a chaotic thoroughfare to the pyramids and Luxor. More than any other city in the world perhaps, Cairo is best suited to diluting the ugly stereotypes we now have of each other.

Rahul Jacob is the FT's travel, food and drink editor

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Faint glimmer of hope but peace is still elusive

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Byline: Li Xueying, Correspondent

Body

THE petite security officer at Israel's Ben Guiron Airport shot me a sharp glance. She flipped through my red passport, peering at the curlicued chops of Arab countries.

'What were you doing in UAE?' she asked, referring to the United Arab Emirates. I was covering Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew's visit there last November.

'For work,' I replied.

'And for Morocco?'

Work too, I said.

'Why do you have a three-month visa for Egypt?'

'Well, for work too.'

'And for Malaysia? You went there for work too?'

'No,' I responded, with a touch of asperity.

'Malaysia is our neighbour. I go there for leisure.'

Thus questioned for some 10 minutes, it seemed that I, a Chinese Singaporean, had been caught in the crosshairs of the long-standing conflict between Israelis and the Palestinians and, by extension, the Arab world.

It was an apt introduction to the intricate politics that have bound this region in a tangle for much of the 20th and into the 21st centuries.

But in recent months, there have been some 'glimmers of hope', as Singapore Foreign Affairs Minister George Yeo, who visited Israel and the Palestinian Territories recently, put it after meeting leaders on both sides.

There are several factors contributing to this hope.

Mainly, there is a growing impetus - led by a Saudi Arabia fearful of Shi'ite Iran's growing influence in the Middle East - to put the derailed peace process back on track.

Faint glimmer of hope but peace is still elusive

The result: the Mecca Accord of February, which brought the warring Hamas and Fatah factions together to form a Palestinian coalition government.

But cracks soon appeared in the alliance and deadly factional fighting between both sides erupted last week, resulting in the deaths of more than 50 Palestinians and injuries to dozens of others.

A new ceasefire deal reached on Saturday, however, now appears to be holding.

Another development that gave cause for hope was an Arab peace plan that had been placed on the table in March. It offers Israel normal ties with all Arab countries in return for its withdrawal from land occupied in the 1967 war, the creation of a Palestinian state and a 'just solution' for Palestinian refugees who fled Israel in 1948.

But do these developments really herald a new phase in the peace process?

The devil is in the details. And in the deep mistrust that both sides harbour towards each other, 59 years after the 1948 war.

Whatever the rhetoric, the handshakes, the papers signed at the top level, how do the ordinary people feel?

It is here that truly, the phrase 'one country's terrorist is another country's freedom fighter' plays out in chilling detail.

Ms Orit Choen, 43, born and bred in Tel Aviv - Israel's commercial centre - sits in her shoe shop and shakes with vehement passion as she speaks of the 'cruelty' of Palestinian suicide bombers.

She is distrustful of Arabs and accuses them of various killings, saying: 'For 60 years, they have killed children in the war.'

Across the border, in Ramallah, Palestinian driver Nassar Nassar, 32, responds: 'We are sorry for that. But this is a war. Israeli soldiers come here and they kill too - old women, children.'

He says it is despair and helplessness that drive Palestinians to become suicide bombers. They have a sense of exile, dispossession, oppression, separation - and loss.

'Why does a person want to live? When your home is under siege, when it is attacked by the enemies, you feel that there is no point living and you fight back using your life as a weapon.'

He says two of his cousins were killed when Israeli soldiers stormed their village, Aljanah. A pregnant cousin died giving birth while stalled by Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint en route to a hospital in Ramallah, he adds.

And so, to Mr Nassar, Israeli soldiers are the terrorists.

Therein lies the tragedy of a conflict in which people on both sides - not just political leaders - believe so passionately in the righteousness and the rightness of their cause.

How does one even begin to reconcile two peoples whose interpretations of the same thing are so different?

Take for instance the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948.

In the Israeli lexicon, it is the War of Independence, giving Jews all around the world a country to call their own.

For the Palestinians it was a nakhba or catastrophe, in which 700,000 Palestinians were driven or fled from their homes in then-Palestine - what is Israel today - into exile as refugees.

Next was the Six-Day War in 1967, in which Israel captured the Old City in East Jerusalem from the Palestinians.

For the Israelis, it heralded the unification of Jerusalem, which they regard as their 'eternal capital'.

But for the Palestinians, it meant the closing of the doors to the Old City.

Faint glimmer of hope but peace is still elusive

In 1980, Israel passed its Basic Law declaring Jerusalem its capital. But this was followed by a United Nations Security Council resolution stating that it 'constitutes a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention'. This convention governs the treatment of civilians in wartime and bars an occupying power from resettling its own civilians on territory under its military control.

By 1996, 86.5 per cent of East Jerusalem had been taken away from Palestinian residents, according to The Independent newspaper's veteran Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk, in his book *The Great War For Civilisation*.

Madam Safa'ah Zahdh, 33, is one of those who have remained in the Old City.

She, her storekeeper husband and their three children - aged 12, 10 and two - live in a one-room space - about twice the size of an HDB flat's storeroom - in the Muslim quarter of the Old City.

She has not seen her parents and siblings in Hebron on the West Bank for years. They are separated by a barbed-wire security fence and checkpoints manned by armed soldiers on either side.

So while the Arab peace plan has been hailed as a 'revolutionary' step, even by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, it is no wonder the people remain pessimistic about peace in the near future.

The crux of the issue is Jerusalem, and, more specifically, the Old City within East Jerusalem.

The Arab plan calls for Israel's withdrawal from the border, back to the days before the Six-Day War. This will include returning East Jerusalem to the Palestinians.

Israeli driver Kobi, who served in his country's military during the 1968 war, snorts at the prospect of this.

'Look, if you love somebody, you'll mention her, won't you? The Quran does not even have the word Jerusalem in it,' he argues.

But there are explicit references to Jerusalem in the Old Testament, he adds.

But as Imam Syed Hassan Al-Attas of the Ba'alwi Mosque in Singapore explains, 'Jerusalem' as a word is not mentioned in the Quran because that is not how Muslims refer to the city.

'In the Quran and in hadith or traditions of the Prophet, it is mentioned as al-Masjid al-aqsa, Bait al-Maqdis, al-Quds, al-Ard al-Muqaddasa, Qubbah al-Sakhra, Iliya, Haikal Sulaiman and others,' he points out.

He adds that the Dome of the Rock adjacent to the Al Aqsa Mosque in east Jerusalem is Islam's third-holiest site, after Mecca and Medina. Muslims believe Prophet Muhammad began his ascension to heaven from this site.

Established narrative holds that King David captured Jerusalem from the original Jebusite inhabitants in 1004 BC, while the Muslim Period started in the year AD 639.

Yet some Arab historians argue that monuments left behind by the Jebusites - who once belonged to a Canaanite tribe of early Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula - bear witness to the Arab origins of this city 5,000 years ago.

History and a sense of divine right aside, what also drives the Israelis is the sense that a recurrence of anti-semitism could result in another Holocaust, if they do not have a land of their own.

Says Ms Choen: 'We have only a small piece of land, in a large world. They (Palestinians) have so many places to go. Syria. Jordan. Egypt. Where can we go? Ethiopia?'

Left-wing Israelis - even as they believe their country has done wrong in occupying Palestinian territories - are also fearful of losing Jerusalem.

Faint glimmer of hope but peace is still elusive

Bookshop owner Gaby Hamburg, 32, says she and her friends are disillusioned with the violence perpetuated by the Palestinians, but 'I'm not a masochist. I still want to live in Israel in peace'.

What about the next generation of Israelis?

Though he feels that current acts of the Israeli military are wrong, student Eytan Kaplan, 13, believes Jerusalem should remain under the control of Israel.

Recalling his lessons about Jews not being allowed to visit the Western Wall under Jordanian control, he says: 'It's for the best because you don't know what will happen if others control Jerusalem.'

What is clear is that the status quo cannot remain.

As the late Yeshayahu Leibowitz, a noted Jewish philosopher and former editor of the Encyclopaedia Hebraica - an encyclopaedia in Hebrew - put it in Mr Fisk's book: 'In relation to this country we call Eretz Israel and they call Palestine, two peoples are in existence, each of them deeply conscious in their mind - and feeling in their bones - that this country is their country.'

'From this terrible situation, there is one of only two possible solutions.'

First, that one party 'conquers and occupies the other country and deprives the other people of the right of national independence'. This, he warned, can be 'maintained only by violence'.

The alternative is partition.

'Both parties will have to renounce a claim to the entire country,' he said. 'It is an absolute necessity if we are to avoid a catastrophe.'

During Mr Yeo's trip, Mr Israel Kimchi, a senior fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, led the Singapore minister on a tour of the security fence that divides Israel from the West Bank.

Mr Kimchi joked: 'Have Jerusalem governed by a third party - such as Singapore!'

Mr Yeo quickly parried with a laugh: 'No, thank you, that is an unbearable honour!'

Last year, the Oscar winner for best live action short film was West Bank Story, a riff on West Side Story.

It is set in the world of competing falafel stands in the West Bank. Handsome Israeli soldier David falls in love with beautiful Palestinian cashier Fatima, despite the animosity between their families' duelling restaurants.

The film's tagline: Can the couple's love withstand the 2,000-year-old conflict and their families' desire to control the future of the chickpea in the Middle East?

It is a musical comedy, so the ending is a much happier one than that of real-life couple Muslim Palestinian Osama Zaatar, 27, and Jewish Israeli Jasmine Avissar, 26, who are moving to Europe after their marriage was not recognised by either of their societies.

In the film version, love prevails and both families call a truce, laying the foundation for future harmony.

This may seem like peddling peacenik sugar-cake idealism. Still, reel life is the only source of light left for many.

For as Ms Hamburg says: 'We all want peace, but I don't think I'll see it in my lifetime.'

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NO WAY OUT

Faint glimmer of hope but peace is still elusive

'Why does a person want to live? When your home is under siege, when it is attacked by the enemies, you feel that there is no point living and you fight back using your life as a weapon.' MR NASSAR NASSAR, a Palestinian driver

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Q&A / CHRIS HEDGES, Author and journalist: 'Theology of despair' a threat

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Staff

Body

Q. How is it that you turned from writing about war in other countries to writing about religion in America?

A. I grew up in the church. My father was a Presbyterian minister for 40-plus years. My mother also graduated from seminary, although she ended up being a college professor. And then I, after going to Colgate University, went to Harvard Divinity School to get a master of divinity, to be ordained and to be a Presbyterian minister like my dad. [He recounts how he instead chose a life as a foreign correspondent, even though he finished all his academic requirements for ordination.]

It's a kind of confluence. I covered movements that can be classified as totalitarian, whether that's Hamas in Gaza or Milosevic's Serb national movement. And of course I come out of a religious tradition. I mean, I'm biblically literate. I consider myself religious.

Q. I appreciated the quote that you passed along from Richard Niebuhr, that "religion is a good thing for good people and a bad thing for bad people."

A. I think anybody who has read the Bible knows there's plenty of horrific, vengeful, even racist stuff. There are passages in the Hebrew Bible in which God seems to bless genocide; the Gospel of John is filled with horribly anti-Semitic statements. For those of us who know the Bible, we have to recognize that [such material] is there. But to pick out the most hateful, bigoted and violent passages in the Bible and use them as the basis of this theology of despair that I think the Christian right is propagating is a tremendous distortion. And I think that theology --- especially if you look at the four Gospels --- is not at all representative of the fundamental message that Jesus Christ was trying to impart.

Q. What do you mean by "theology of despair?"

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A. It's a theology that has no hope in the life around us, that there is really nothing in this world that is worth saving other than committed Christians, and that all else has to be destroyed. That gives you a horrible kind of mind-set that spreads out in many ways. For instance, the callous disregard of global warming, for what we're doing to the environment, a belief that chaos, mayhem, violence and war in the Middle East is a good thing, because it is hastening Armageddon. These are the byproducts of this theology of despair, which for me is the best way to define this belief system.

Q. As early as page 9, you liken Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell and James Dobson to Mephistopheles --- a comparison that might surprise them. But the context of that comparison --- that there is a Christian elite that can receive and dispense the words and will of God for the rest of us--- is an important part of your thesis, isn't it?

A. Certainly in the tradition that I grew up in, we were always taught to be wary of anyone who claimed to speak for God or to understand the will of God or be able to carry out God's will. When people feel that they have been anointed by God to carry out God's work, these people are dangerous. They've also become exceedingly wealthy. They know how to manipulate the despair of the people who follow them. They have done so in ways that are not only immoral but often cruel.

Q. You spent a lot of time traveling among these folks, attending their meetings and conventions and so forth. What were some of your more memorable experiences?

A. I was prepared to dislike a lot of the people I would be interviewing; I really believe that the ideological system they espouse is dangerous. But that wasn't my response. They really ended up breaking my heart. Many of these people --- I'm not talking about the leadership, I'm talking about the followers --- had lives that were really train-wrecked. Just terrible economic and personal despair. There are tens of millions of people in this country who have been disenfranchised, essentially pushed aside. Pockets of this country are just crumbling away, and with all the problems that come with that economic disintegration: drug abuse, alcohol abuse, domestic violence. I walked away with a lot more empathy and compassion for people in the movement. I think they are being manipulated and used. I think they are being effectively mobilized to destroy American democracy, but they themselves are not evil in any way.

Q. You take pains to distinguish the "dominionists" from the mainstream of Christian evangelicals. Could you explain those differences?

A. Dominionists are really a new breed. Traditionally fundamentalists had nothing to do with politics. And there still is a great deal of tension between fundamentalists and charismatics. But these groups have come together over this dominionist theology, which espouses the belief that we can create a Christian society. The schisms and differences are still there. But we've formulated something that's really new. You can't really call Jerry Falwell a traditional fundamentalist, because these people are advocating essentially the Christian state --- the belief that they have a God-given right to dominion, to take power, not only in the United States but even beyond our own borders.

Q. You describe the conversion process employed by some of these folks as being deceptive and, frankly, kind of sleazy. Would you discuss that process and why it's important?

A. Well, it is sleazy, and it is manipulative and deceptive. They're quite consciously told to target people who are vulnerable and struggling. The tactics that they taught us to engage in --- this fake friendship, this feigning interest in everything that they say. Margaret Singer, a psychologist who studied cults, calls it "love bombing," when three or four people --- the Moonies were quite good at this --- would get in a room and all of them would intensely focus on one person and be fascinated by everything they said. This is also a technique that is used quite effectively by the Christian right. I found that on public display, that manipulation and that dishonesty. What they would do was hook you into their community and get you to sever ties with your old community.

Although the Christian right talks a lot about family, it is of course the great divider of families, between the saved and the unsaved. When you'd go to these events, there would often be very emotional prayers for children or spouses or other relatives who were unsaved. In order to become embraced by that community --- an essentially

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authoritarian community based around a male leader who speaks for God and cannot be questioned --- you have to be submissive to the ideology and to the people in power in the church. And if you're not, you're pushed aside.

Q. The promotion of masculinity by these groups --- and particularly the depiction of Christ as a sort of holy Hulk Hogan --- is emblematic of the warrior ethic that seems to pervade the movement. What is that about?

A. It's very much a celebration of male power, that cult of masculinity is something that is a traditional part of fascist movements. In the home, it replicates the power structure that is imposed on the church and that they want to see imposed on the community and eventually on the nation. And that is, an all-powerful male figure who cannot be questioned. It is part of the rigidity that they seek to implement in human relationships, even within their own families, toward women who must be submissive to the male, as well of course as children. And that's very much part of the relationships within the church. When you go to these churches, especially these megachurches, there is an often frightening personality cult built around these male pastors.

Q. The opening of Chapter 6 --- titled "The War on Truth" --- where you talk about your trip to [the Creation Museum in] Petersburg [Ky.] --- was interesting. Your book notes that all dinosaurs, according to the museum, were "peaceable plant eaters." What did you see there, and what is the war on science about?

A. The war on science is about creating a world where facts are interchangeable with opinions, which is of course the very definition of a totalitarian society, where facts are only facts when they conform to and support an ideological system. Otherwise they're discarded. It's not about creating an alternative. It's not about a debate. There is no debate in the scientific community about the validity of evolution. It is about the destruction of dispassionate intellectual inquiry. That is because this is a non-reality-based belief system. This is a belief system that embraces magic, that believes that Jesus intervenes, oftentimes on a daily basis, in your life, that God has a plan for you, that God will protect you, that God will not only take care of you but God will also make you successful, often in economic terms.

That removal from the reality-based world is appealing to many of these people because the reality-based world is one that large numbers of people in this country have great difficulty coping with. And understandably, because it has betrayed them. So this \$25 million Creation Museum in Kentucky is part of that assault, that attempt to destroy honest, factual-based intellectual inquiry and replace it with myth. And once that's done, it becomes very hard for an open society to function.

Q. Would you please relate the story of Benny Hinn and the remote-control resurrection?

A. Benny Hinn is a very prominent evangelical, I guess you'd call him, who believes that Christ will one day appear at one of his crusades or one of his services, and he once said there will come a time when people would actually bring the dead before the television screens and through the power of God, and the power that was vested in him, the dead would be able to rise and live again, in front of the TV. I think that's a pretty good example of how wacked out, how out of touch this movement is with the real world.

Q. When you hear a story like that about Benny Hinn, or when you hear about some of the stuff that Pat Robertson comes up with or that Jerry Falwell articulates, you think that these folks must be pretty well marginalized.

A. I think for those of us who find all this sort of laughable and buffoonish, it's hard for us to take it seriously, and I think that's our great failing. We have to understand that there are tens of millions of Americans who take this very seriously. Oftentimes in despotic movements, these figures are often laughable and buffoonish. But we shouldn't allow that to dissuade us from understanding that these people are extremely dangerous, and that there are many people in this country who aren't laughing. I certainly walked away from my two years working on this book with the belief that we no longer live in a society that embraces liberal democratic values.

Q. So you don't have any concern that you're overplaying the threat that you say these folks represent?

A. No. I don't think that the movement is going to be able to take power unless we enter a period of severe crisis. But there are lots of ways that could happen: another catastrophic terrorist attack, an economic meltdown, environmental disaster. Should we enter that period of instability, then I really fear for the country, yes.

Graphic

Photo: Courtesy of Creation MuseumAn animatronic sauropod dinosaur overlooks the lobby of the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Ky., scheduled to open in June. The \$25 million, 50,000-square-foot museum will tell visitors that the world was created in six 24-hour days and that God created the dinosaurs and Adam and Eve on the same day./ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: "The Christian right is propagating a tremendous distortion," says Chris Hedges./ImageData*

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Educated in the extreme

The Irish Times

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Body

It should be no surprise that doctors are lured to radical Islamism, author Ed Husain tells Mary Fitzgerald, Foreign Affairs Correspondent

The man who first led Ed Husain down the path of radical Islam was a medic at the Royal London Hospital. Sidling up to the east London teenager at the wedding of a distant relative, the man had a quick, silkily delivered answer for everything Husain put to him. He also had a few questions of his own. It was the early 1990s and Bosnia's horror was at its height. "White Muslims are being killed in Bosnia," the man pointed out. "What chance do we have as brown people in England?". Later there would be more questions, more appealingly simple answers and books for Husain to read. Among them were polemics by Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, the Palestinian judge who set up an Islamist organisation in the 1950s called Hizb ut-Tahrir, Arabic for "party of liberation".

It wasn't long before Husain - whose controversial, recently published memoir, *The Islamist: Why I Joined Radical Islam in Britain, What I Saw Inside and Why I Left*, has pitched him headfirst into Britain's shrill debate on radicalisation and extremism - signed up. He joined the London Hospital Medical College branch of Hizb ut-Tahrir and spent two years devoted to an ideology that calls for the establishment of a transnational Islamic state or caliphate and an end to Israel. Banned in many countries in the Middle East and Europe, Hizb ut-Tahrir has always insisted that it is non-violent and bristles at suggestions it may act as a "conveyor belt" to terrorism. While anti-Zionist and hostile to Western democracy, it denies it is anti-semitic and maintains it employs lawful means alone to disseminate its ideology.

During his time with Hizb ut-Tahrir, Husain became close to Sheikh Omar Bakri, the firebrand preacher now exiled to Lebanon, and had fleeting encounters with many who later graduated to terrorism, such as Omar Khan Sharif, the British-born radical who carried out a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv, and Dhiren Barot, jailed last year for planning several attacks, including one involving limousines packed with gas canisters, petrol and nails.

HUSAIN FRAMES HIS experience in a familiar way, echoing the testimony of others when he talks about how exciting it felt to be involved with a radical, fringe organisation committed to a big idea; the heady sense of being part of something greater than the humdrum of everyday life in the Tower Hamlets estate where he grew up. Although some of the more breathless media coverage of Husain's story casts him as an "ex-jihadi", he was never involved in violence. Rather, he says, he believed in and helped spread the ideology that allows it to happen. Though critics - and there are many - point out that Husain's time in Hizb ut-Tahrir was relatively brief and took place more than a decade ago, his own evolution from self-described "Muslim choirboy" to radical Islamist and now tweed-jacketed PhD student provides ample clues to the puzzle of what draws some young Muslims to embrace violent, extremist ideology.

Educated in the extreme

Sitting in a London cafe, he says the widespread shock and bewilderment that most of the suspects linked to the recent attempted car bombings in London and Glasgow were doctors shows how little the issue of radicalisation is understood.

"I was recruited on the campus of a medical college," he says. "At that time Hizb ut-Tahrir and other organisations were most active on the campuses of medical universities and engineering colleges." Islamist organisations and political parties have long been dominated by doctors, lawyers, engineers and architects - from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt to Hamas and Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami. Several members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain are medical practitioners; its spokesman, Dr Imran Waheed, is a psychiatrist. At the more radical, violent end of the spectrum, Osama bin Laden studied engineering, while his Egyptian deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, once worked as a paediatrician. And Mohammed Atta, ringleader of the 9/11 attacks, was a gifted architect.

MOST OF THOSE arrested last week were born outside Britain and were working for the NHS, triggering speculation over whether they were radicalised before they arrived in Britain or after. For some Arab and Asian Muslims, Husain says, the sense of cultural dislocation they experience on arrival in the West makes them susceptible to more radical interpretations of their faith.

"I lived in Syria for a while and taught doctors who were coming to work in English, Scottish and Irish hospitals. Many had really high expectations of life in the West and deep frustrations about their lives in the Middle East. It often made the transition from one to the other quite difficult.

"One thing that happens to some young Muslims that come over here, whether Arab or Asian, is they suddenly become ultra-religious. You start to see things like very lengthy beards, very short trousers, certain attitudes to women, music and fellow Muslims that don't - quote, unquote - 'practise'. Some start reading books written by radical preachers.

"There was no need to constantly emphasise their Muslimness when they were in the Muslim world, but when they arrive in the West many feel like a fish out of water and it becomes a real need for them to reinforce not just being Arab or Asian but being Muslim and distinctly politically, socially and religiously different from mainstream society.

"All that religiosity comes against a background of feeling out of place in British social life. It's not easy to make friends in Britain and besides you've got an accent, you're always being made fun of, you've got all that baggage of being Arab or Asian."

It's a point echoed by one Jordanian blogger named Firas in a post discussing the arrest of Mohammed Asha, a junior doctor from Jordan, in connection with last week's car bomb plot. Referring to his own experience of seeing a close Muslim friend transformed in five months to the point of not talking to him because he was Christian, Firas writes: "What happens is that Arab students go to study abroad in countries where political and religious freedoms are granted for all, say countries like US, UK, Canada and Australia. Now these students get to know other Muslim students, usually Pakistanis who've got some extremists among them, and that's when they are fed with all this crap . . . for an Arab student who finds him/herself in an alien culture and lately a hostile culture to Islam (think of post 9/11, the Danish cartoons, the Pope's lecture etc) these guys would have some effect . . . The question is, if this Asha guy didn't leave Jordan, would he ever get involved in such things? It's a very tricky question."

Added to that is a tendency among radicals to engage in a selective reading of Islam's sacred texts, Husain says. "One of the things Omar Bakri used to do was throw Koranic verses or Hadiths [stories recounting the sayings and conduct of the prophet Muhammad] at us but always in snippets. He would never quote an entire verse or hadith or explain the context and nuance. It was all a case of this is what it says, so do it.

"Some of these medics and engineering students see the Koran as a manual of black and white. It's a techie DIY approach and involves a kind of intelligent ignorance. Their attitude is that they are highly-educated, intelligent graduates so they can go straight to scripture without any scholarly guidance. They will pick one line and ignore the one that comes after it. Fundamentally, I believe, they have failed to understand the message of the Koran.

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"When it comes to radicals, most are very normal people. In the case of the doctors arrested this week, their patients would probably remember them as kind individuals. They're not monsters but ordinary human beings who carry ideas of rejectionism, separatism and violence, all of which are rooted in a warped understanding of scripture that promises them a heaven and everything else that comes with it."

All this provides easy prey for extremist networks looking for new recruits. It is in identifying ways of combating such networks that Husain makes his most controversial assertions.

He wants Hizb ut-Tahrir and similar organisations banned, a move considered by the British government after 7/7, but later dropped. He wants mosques and bookshops to stop stocking the works of seminal Islamist ideologues, and says British Muslims should distance themselves from extremist movements in south Asia and the Middle East. He wants the government to get tough on radical groups and says a culture of political correctness has blinded many to a growing menace.

"The fact is there is an active network out there looking to recruit and we are not prepared to identify, speak about or challenge those networks," Husain says.

He is equally scathing when it comes to those who excuse violent extremism as being simply the by-product of anger stoked by western foreign policy, particularly the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Many of the thinkers radicals look up to were declaring a war against the West in the 1940s and 1950s, well before the invasion of Iraq. Let's not lose our sense of historical perspective here. The World Trade Center was first attacked in 1993, bin Laden declared a jihad against the West in 1997 and we just ignored it," he says.

"Things like Iraq and Palestine give fuel to it, I don't deny that. After all, Palestine and Bosnia radicalised me. But it's what you do with that anger, how you channel it. The left is wrong to say that anger in some way justifies the killing of innocent people. To ignore the ideological fuelling behind it is a huge mistake.

"If we entertain for a moment the idea that a withdrawal of US troops from Iraq or the creation of a Palestinian state side by side with Israel would somehow appease this kind of terrorism and bring about an end to suicide bombings, then we're being very naive. There's no appeasing these people. You just need to read their literature to see what these people are about. Once the political grievances have been dealt with, they will turn to their social grievances, cultural grievances, economic grievances. There is a bigger picture to all this and that should not be ignored."

LIKEWISE, HUSAIN IS critical of those who say extremism is linked to poverty and economic disadvantage. "Look at white working-class or Afro-Caribbean youth in Britain. They feel neglected and ignored, they suffer from disadvantage and low educational achievement, and yet they are not becoming suicide bombers, because there is no ideology telling them 'you're going to heaven if you become a martyr'," he says.

Such opinions have put Husain in a somewhat awkward position, he admits. A devout Muslim, the 32-year-old now finds himself the darling of right-wing commentators and a hero to those many consider hostile to Islam. Some of his fellow Muslims have denounced him as a traitor or government stooge, while a number of non-Muslims on the left say he is misguided and naive about the way his ideas could be used against his own community. But Husain is unapologetic, insisting it is vital people such as him make their voices heard.

"At the heart of it all is a political correctness and liberalism that fears speaking out. I say that as someone who is a member of the Labour Party and a left-winger but who has also been through extremism and knows that people like that abuse and exploit that idea of multiculturalist Britain. That is a real problem. This idea of 'don't rock the boat, don't offend the minorities, all will be well in the end' - all of that allowed these people to get stronger and stronger and stronger.

"And even to this day - despite bombings in London, despite a constant threat, despite more than 1,500 people being monitored and 30 plots ongoing - we still don't have the audacity to speak up."

The Islamist is published by Penguin

Educated in the extreme

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Jimmy Carter, the popular maverick

The New Zealand Herald

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Body

On Friday, May 18, I meet Jimmy Carter in his office at the Carter Centre in Atlanta. With its sleek wood panelling and view on to a careful garden of apparently impenetrable calm, the place seemed sealed off from time. There were three Warhol screenprints of Carter from 1975, when he ran for office, and the ex-President himself, though now a white-haired 82-year-old, spoke with the famously lilting voice that threw one back more than a quarter of a century.

I was there to talk about his controversial book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* (the 21st he has written since he left office in 1981), and he was firm in his view that - thanks to the current Administration - the situation in "the most volatile region of the world" is the worst it has ever been. The war in Iraq, he said, had cemented Arab animosity towards the US and Israel, strengthened Iran, and given Hamas and Hizbollah new life.

"This is the first Administration since Israel became a nation that hasn't made any real effort to have peace talks," he told me. "We haven't had a single day of peace talks now in six years and five months. It's left a vacuum there, and vacuums are always filled with increased violence."

I asked whether there had been any response from the White House to his book or his views, and his blue eyes took on an unreadable twinkle - was it triumph or ruefulness at the predictability of it all? "No," he said, "not a word."

The next day in a phone interview with an Arkansas newspaper, Carter was asked to compare Bush's foreign policy with that of Richard Nixon's. He replied that "as far as the adverse impact on the nation around the world, this Administration has been the worst in history". The same day, the BBC's James Naughtie asked what he thought of Tony Blair's relationship with Bush. He said he thought it was "abominable; loyal, blind, apparently subservient".

Bush shrugged off the comments saying this was "just what happens when you are President". But two days after Carter had told me the Administration had said not a word about his criticisms, Deputy White House Press Secretary Tony Fratto said: "I think it's sad that President Carter's reckless and personal criticism is out there." He added for good measure: "I think he is proving to be increasingly irrelevant with these kinds of comments."

Is Carter a valiant truth-teller, or a dangerous loose cannon? The New Republic's editor-in-chief, Marty Peretz, said when Carter's *Palestine* book was published in the US late last year, the former President, who famously brokered a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in the 1970s, would "go down in history as a Jew-hater". Last week he added that "besides his other sins Carter is a downright liar".

Christopher Hitchens, writing in the online news and culture magazine *Slate*, said that "worst in history" was "a title for which [Carter] has himself been actively contending since 1976".

Jimmy Carter, the popular maverick

When I met Carter, he did not seem like a man who was losing his marbles. He was wry, precise, quick to smile, candid and easy. At times he can come across as perhaps intentionally innocent. There are echoes of the method used by the TV detective Columbo in Carter's account of his first meeting with Yasser Arafat in 1990, when he asked Arafat what are the "purposes" of the PLO, and Arafat, dumbfounded, handed Carter a pamphlet.

His former speech-writer Hendrik Hertzberg describes this effect as "creatively naive", and recalls that Carter often asked "back-to-first-principles" questions.

"Early in his administration he asked why we had so many nuclear weapons. You know: 'Why do we need more than a couple of hundred? Isn't that enough to totally destroy the Soviet Union and everyone else?' It was a very good question."

Carter has always been an outsider - a maverick, even. That was why people voted for him. He was a born-again peanut farmer from Plains, Georgia, who had been governor of his home state and won the presidency with a huge southern and black vote.

Everyone knew about his close-knit relatives, his moral values, his rural childhood. His strong marriage to his childhood sweetheart Rosalynn and their three boys, Jack, Chip and Jeff, and daughter, Amy - was upheld as a model nuclear family. He stayed in supporters' homes during the campaign; he carried his own luggage.

He understood the military establishment, having graduated from the US Naval Academy at Annapolis, yet he was not part of the Washington old boys' club to which Nixon had given such a bad name.

"Carter seems a mystery," the historian Garry Wills wrote in the New York Review of Books in August 1976. "His rise is unprecedented in our modern politics. Yet he is both mysterious and necessary."

That Carter left the White House under a cloud is not disputed, even by his fans. Whether he deserved it, however, is still a subject of debate. Even Henry Kissinger later said he thought Carter had got a bad rap. But in 1980 the economy was a disaster, and - most damningly - the Iran hostage crisis, which had been going on for a year, had suffered from his failed rescue mission.

Carter bade farewell to his people on January 14, 1981, saying, "As I return home to the South where I was born and raised, I am looking forward to the opportunity to reflect and further to assess - I hope with accuracy - the circumstances of our times." And that is exactly what he has done.

Whatever anyone thinks of his time in office, it is widely accepted that Carter has had the most successful post-presidency in the nation's history. The man who lost in 1980 had become, at least by 1994, when he prevented an all-out war in Haiti, an international man of mystery.

In his work at the Carter Centre, now celebrating its 25th year, he has monitored elections all over the world to ensure that democracy is upheld, fought for human rights, for peace, for food, housing, health.

In his memoir, *Keeping Faith*, Carter wrote that he had spent more of his time in office working towards peace in the Middle East than on any other international problem. I ask whether that has been true of the period since. "Well," he says, "since I left the White House, I've probably spent more time in Sudan than in the Middle East, because we can only go to the Middle East when I'm able to get permission from the White House. And, uh, that permission has been spasmodic." He flashes a faint, wry smile. "To say the least."

He is "immersed in the Mid-East situation constantly and has monitored all three Palestinian elections.

When Carter's book was published, it was both incendiary and a bestseller. The Anti-Defamation League, led by the pro-Israeli Abraham Foxman, ran large ads in all the major US newspapers attacking the book for engaging in anti-Semitism.

Carter says he was not surprised that his use of the word "apartheid" in the title caused such a furore, and defends it: "The word is the most accurate available to describe Palestine. Apartheid is when two different people live in the

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same land, and they are forcibly segregated, and one dominates or persecutes the other. That's what's happening in Palestine, so the word is very, very accurate."

If the focus on the word itself detracted from some of the issues "it was more than compensated for by the fact that it precipitated national - and even an international - discussion or debate".

But the "ad-hominem attacks on me - people accusing me of being anti-Semitic and anti-Israel", he says, were more of a surprise. Carter says it hurt, but brushes off the criticism, saying: "It's a small group."

"You know," he adds, "there's no possibility in our country of a member of Congress or a candidate for President saying that they're going to take a balanced position between Israel and the Palestinians - or to speak out with concern about Palestinian human rights: that's impossible in this country."

Carter first travelled to Israel in 1973 as Governor of Georgia. He left Israel feeling optimistic, and that the "plight" of the Arabs "seemed of relative insignificance to me". I ask if, in retrospect, that was naive.

"The Arabs were not being persecuted then. There were a total of 1500 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, and they had been on kibbutzim - individual farms that they had acquired - for decades. And that was before there was any massive effort by the Israeli Government to colonise the West Bank in order to confiscate it. I met with the top leaders in Israel, and all of them presumed that that land belonged to the Palestinians, and there was no concept at that point, at least by the ones with whom I met, that they would simply take over that land and keep it permanently, as it seems to be now."

In 1977, two months after he took office, Carter made a speech declaring that a homeland needed to be found for Palestinian refugees. From the insignificance they held for him in 1973 to making such a controversial statement four years later was quite a journey, one to which Carter added in 1978, when he negotiated at Camp David for "full autonomy" for the Palestinians.

Professor Rashid Khalidi, director of the Middle East Institute at Columbia University, said Carter "was completely right: he had the right instincts, he had the right advice, he had the courage needed. But Camp David was a terrible step in the wrong direction, in my view. I think it's to his discredit that he then failed to get Begin to do what we all know Begin wasn't intending to do."

There was nothing in the Camp David Accords about the Israeli settlements, and while Carter had Menachem Begin's word that there would be a freeze on any further settlements, it was an "omission", Carter admits with some understatement, not to have got that part of the deal in writing. Five years after they met at Camp David - 10 years after his first trip to Israel - Carter visited Begin, and asked how he could have reneged on what they agreed. Begin did not look at him, and made it clear that the meeting was over.

Carter says now that if he had been in power when that meeting occurred, he would have withheld aid to Israel - something he had threatened to do - in the past, and which Reagan was unwilling to do. He acknowledges that his accords weakened the Palestinians "in a way", but only because they themselves "didn't have a clear voice. Later, when I met Arafat, he said it was a bad mistake for the PLO not to have been fully supportive of the Camp David Accords".

I suggest to Carter that Bill Clinton doesn't come off terribly well in the book. "Well," he sighs, "I've had somewhat of an altercation with Clinton's representatives, who say I don't give Clinton adequate credit in the book."

"You know, I give Clinton credit for making his best effort, but the proposals that Clinton made were never clear. And both the Israelis and the Palestinians accepted the principles that Clinton put forward with enormous caveats. Later, it was politically acceptable for the Israelis and for Washington to say: 'We agreed', but Arafat didn't agree. In fact, neither one of them agreed."

Film-maker Jonathan Demme is making a documentary about Carter and says it is reminiscent of the classic western High Noon. "Carter put his badge on to come forth into the community to talk about justice as it pertains to

Jimmy Carter, the popular maverick

Palestine, and, as in High Noon, almost everybody fell all over each other in their desire to distance themselves from his message of peace. He soldiered on, without allies, with mounting foes."

"Carter," Demme says, is "a tough son of a bitch. He's got a gorgeous smile, and he'll cry at the drop of a hat if something touches him, but he is one tough dude."

- Observer

Jimmy Carter fact file

Early life: Born James Earl Carter jnr on October 1, 1924, in Plains, Georgia, to peanut warehouser Earl Carter and nurse Lillian Gordy Carter. Graduated from US Naval Academy and married Rosalynn Smith in 1946. They have three sons and one daughter.

Presidential highs: Carter, a Democrat, began his four-year term as the 39th US President in 1977. His successful treaties with Panama gave it control of the Panama Canal by 1999. In 1978 Carter's Camp David Accords ended the 30-year state of war between Egypt and Israel. He included women and ethnic minorities in his cabinet.

Presidential lows: Ronald Reagan succeeded Carter, having campaigned on the "misery index" of Carter's failures. Inflation rose more than 6 per cent during his term in office.

Interest rates twice exceeded 20 per cent in 1980. On November 4, 1979, Iranian students stormed the Tehran US embassy and took diplomatic staff hostage. The situation was not resolved during Carter's presidency.

After the White House: Rosalynn and Jimmy established the Carter Presidential Centre in 1982 to "advance human rights and alleviate unnecessary suffering". He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2002.

Carter has written books on topics including his presidency, the Middle East and his Christianity.

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Sheep in Wolfowitz's clothing; DOWNFALL

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

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First Edition

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Byline: Michael Gawenda, Washington

Body

Paul Wolfowitz's exit from the World Bank ends a two-year run marked by controversy from the start. Some regard him as evil, but he has passionate support in surprising quarters.

A WEEK ago, when it was clear that Paul Wolfowitz's tenure as president of the World Bank was all but over, support for the embattled former US deputy defence secretary and key architect of the Iraq war came from what seemed at first to be two unlikely sources.

The bank's European directors had made it clear to journalists that Wolfowitz had to go - most of them had been bitterly opposed to his appointment in March 2005. They had more or less decided that he was guilty even before the executive committee of the bank's board of directors delivered the scathing report this week that found Wolfowitz had violated bank rules when he gave a big pay rise and a promotion to his partner, Shaha Riza, a longtime World Bank official.

First Andrew Young, a leader of the civil rights movement in the '60s and US ambassador to the United Nations during the Carter administration, came out strongly in support of Wolfowitz, saying he was a man committed to fighting poverty in the developing world.

"He understands that in order to do that, you have to fight corruption," Young said. "Paul Wolfowitz has a long history of supporting the poor and underprivileged of the world. As for Shaha Riza, she is an outstanding advocate for the rights of women and for democracy in the Islamic world."

A couple of days later, Bambang Harymuriti, the editor of Indonesia's Tempo magazine, wrote in The Wall Street Journal that Wolfowitz, whom he had known for more than two decades, was "a man of integrity" and that his anti-corruption drive and concentration on proper supervision of World Bank projects was just what the bank needed.

"I have also known Ms Riza for more than a decade," he said. "We share a passion - advocating for a more liberal and democratic interpretation of Islam than what is now prevalent in the Middle East."

It is indicative of Wolfowitz's controversial - and in many ways paradoxical - career, which has spanned three Republican administrations over more than 20 years, that he elicits such great passion from opponents and supporters alike.

Sheep in Wolfowitz's clothing DOWNFALL

Many of his opponents consider him to have been not just plain wrong in his advocacy of the Iraq venture, but evil to boot, serving an agenda that is closer to the interests of Jerusalem than Washington.

Perhaps the hatred of Wolfowitz is best illustrated by the most memorable scene in Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11*, in which Wolfowitz is captured, about to go on television to defend the Administration's decision to invade Iraq, applying a huge dollop of spit to his comb and then proceeding to smooth down his thick, greying hair. If nothing else, Moore has always been a brilliant propagandist.

But Wolfowitz's supporters - and they are not only the much-maligned neo-conservatives - reckon he is a passionate and brilliant advocate for democratic reform and for the liberation of people afflicted by authoritarian governments or brutal dictators.

Indeed, of all the leading neo-conservatives who have worked for the Administration - and those outside it who formed a sort of cheer squad for American unilateralism - Wolfowitz is the most complex.

Despite the fact that he has been accused of being more concerned with supporting Israel than with the national security challenges facing America, a charge Wolfowitz has never addressed but has told friends has deeply upset him, the evidence suggests that he has long been a supporter of a two-state solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

It was Wolfowitz who in 2002 - at the height of the intifada, the suicide bombing campaign by Hamas and the invasion of the West Bank by Israeli forces - told a rally of thousands of supporters of Israel in Washington that Palestinian suffering had to be recognised and that only a Palestinian state would deliver them justice. He was loudly booed.

Wolfowitz grew up in New York, his parents Polish Jewish immigrants who escaped Poland before the war, leaving behind family members who subsequently perished in the Holocaust. His father was a maths professor at Cornell University who wanted his son to follow in his footsteps, but Paul Wolfowitz ended up at the University of Chicago studying philosophy and political science. He was, by all accounts, a brilliant student.

Wolfowitz arrived in Washington in 1973 and, apart from a stint as head of the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University during the Clinton presidency, he worked in government in Washington, in the State Department and the Defence Department, thereafter.

It was during the Reagan presidency that Wolfowitz's career really took off, first when he became assistant secretary of state for East Asia and later, in 1986, when he was appointed ambassador to Indonesia.

There is still dispute about how successful Wolfowitz was in these roles, but there is no doubt he urged Ronald Reagan to stop supporting the authoritarian government of Ferdinand Marcos, which was being challenged by a coalition of groups, including the Catholic Church, demanding democratic reform.

And later, in Indonesia, Wolfowitz immersed himself in Indonesian culture, learning the language and developing contacts with local intellectuals and political dissidents, including Abdurrahman Wahid, the moderate Islamic scholar and politician who was to eventually become Indonesia's president.

The Reagan administration considered the increasingly authoritarian Soeharto regime an ally in the Cold War, but Wolfowitz, according to Wahid and other Indonesian dissidents and democracy advocates, quietly went about supporting democratic reform.

And in his farewell speech in May 1989, Wolfowitz stunned the Soeharto regime when he said that economic reform in Indonesia was not enough and there was "a need for openness in the political sphere as well".

Wahid has told journalists that after this speech he became friends with Wolfowitz and has remained his friend despite being opposed to the war in Iraq. Wolfowitz's longtime supporters in Indonesia have not deserted him - evidenced by the firm support he has received in his battle at the World Bank from people such as Bambang Harymurti.

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Into the early '90s, when Wolfowitz was a senior official in the Defence Department and Dick Cheney was defence secretary in George Bush snr's administration, Wolfowitz remained an advocate for democracy promotion, a firm believer that the US was an overwhelming force for good in the world and that its "goodness" meant it had to use its military superiority to overthrow authoritarian regimes that oppressed their citizens and, more importantly, represented a threat to America's strategic interests.

According to James Mann in his book *The Rise of the Vulcans*, which examined the younger George Bush's foreign policy team, one reason Wolfowitz was so keen on removing Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq even before September 11 was that he felt the US had betrayed Iraq's Shiites and Kurds after the first Gulf war.

The elder Bush had decided not to remove Saddam from power and instead had encouraged uprisings by the Kurds and Shiites that ended in the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis by Saddam's security forces.

But it was September 11 that, according to Wolfowitz, "changed the world forever" and that, in the days of confusion and panic in the Bush Administration immediately after the attack, gave Wolfowitz the chance to push for removal of Saddam's regime.

It was Wolfowitz who was the war's biggest spruiker in the lead-up to the invasion in March 2003, insisting in numerous appearances before congressional committees that the US forces would be greeted as liberators and that Iraq's oil revenue would more than pay for the cost of the war.

And it was Wolfowitz who famously contradicted the then chief of the army, General Eric Shinseki, who told Congress that "several hundred thousand troops" would be needed in Iraq to secure the country, Wolfowitz labelling Shinseki's testimony as "wildly off the mark".

Later, according to Washington Post investigative reporter Bob Woodward, in his book *State of Denial*, after it became clear that the 140,000 US troops could not secure the country, Wolfowitz had pleaded with then defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld for a speeding-up of the training of Iraqi security forces, but by then Rumsfeld was no longer listening.

By the time President Bush nominated him for the World Bank job, Wolfowitz had been frozen out of any decision-making on Iraq by Rumsfeld and, according to Woodward, Rumsfeld had vetoed several proposed trips by Wolfowitz to Iraq.

His nomination for the World Bank presidency was greeted with dismay in Europe and anger from his fierce critics in the US. Typical of the reaction was the warning from Nobel Prize winner, economist and former World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz that the Wolfowitz appointment could bring "violence and street protests across the developing world".

"The World Bank will once again become a hate figure," he said. "This appointment is either an act of provocation by President Bush or an act so insensitive as to look like a provocation."

It is ironic that in his losing his battle to stay in the job, the main support for Wolfowitz has come from African countries such as Nigeria, whose officials, such as Nuhu Ribadu, the chairman of the country's Economic and Financial Crime Commission, urged Wolfowitz to stay and fight for his job.

That fight is now over. Most non-partisan observers - if there are indeed non-partisan observers when it comes to Wolfowitz - would probably agree that this way of ending his long career is not without both tragedy and farce.

In all the back and forth in recent weeks on Wolfowitz's dealings over the pay and conditions of his "girlfriend" (the almost universal and some would say sexist description in the media of Shaha Riza) there is no denying that the fact of Wolfowitz's supposed role in advocating for war in Iraq was a major motivation in the campaign waged against him.

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There is little doubt Wolfowitz seriously mishandled the conflict-of-interest issue that arose when he was appointed bank president and was confronted with the fact that Riza, his partner of seven years, would now at least in theory, be reporting to him.

After the bank's ethics committee told him that he could not remove himself and had to "deal" with the issue, Wolfowitz decided to give Riza a \$US50,000 (\$A60,000) pay rise taking her tax-free salary to \$US180,000, and a contract that guaranteed regular pay rises in the future. Riza was then transferred to the State Department, though she remained on the bank payroll.

Everyone, even Wolfowitz, who has apologised for his "mistakes", agrees that he should never have involved himself in the details of Riza's pay and conditions.

But there's no doubt that his opponents in the bank and in Europe used the issue to mount what can only be described as an extraordinary campaign of leaks and innuendo that smeared him and Riza.

So Paul Wolfowitz, at 63, will end his long and tumultuous career in disgrace, the first World Bank president to be forced to resign - and not for major differences on policy with the bank's major donors, but because he allegedly acted unethically in looking after his "girlfriend".

Perhaps Wolfowitz's demise is a sort of metaphor for the Bush Administration: in many ways, both a farce and a tragedy.

Michael Gawenda is The Age's United States correspondent.

Rise before the fall

BORN December 22, 1943, Brooklyn, New York.

1965 Bachelor of mathematics and chemistry, Cornell University; doctorate in political science, University of Chicago.

1981-82 Head of State Department policy planning staff.

1983-86 Assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

1986-89 US ambassador to Indonesia.

1989-93 Under-secretary for defence policy.

1995-2001 Dean and professor of international relations, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

2001-05 Deputy secretary of defence.

2005 Head of World Bank.

2007 Under attack for violating bank rules by promoting his partner Shaha Riza.

SOURCES: THE INTERNATIONAL WHO'S WHO, WORLD BANK, WEBSITE, OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT.

Graphic

TWO PHOTOS: A key spruiker of the Iraq invasion, Paul Wolfowitz is among the most complex of the neo-cons who have worked for the US Administration. PICTURE: AFP; Riza: "Outstanding" advocate for women.

Sheep in Wolfowitz's clothing DOWNFALL

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INSIDE THE REAL IRAN Iran's leaders seem intent on picking fights with the West. But, say David Blair and Damien McElroy, behind the poverty and paranoia of this fundamentalist regime is a young, educated and quietly rebellious population that is desperate to join the rest of the world

The Daily Telegraph (LONDON)

April 7, 2007 Saturday

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Body

Teheran is a city antiquated, shabby and unloved. Gloomy buildings loom over fume-filled streets where Iranians give every impression of being the worst drivers on earth. The city's thoroughfares are either used as racing tracks by speeding, weaving cars or gridlocked into endless traffic jams.

The capital's air of stagnation sits oddly alongside Iran's status as a nation fabulously endowed with natural resources. The Islamic Republic has the second largest oil and gas reserves in the world. Teheran should be a Middle Eastern version of Singapore. Instead, it is scarred by the brutalist, decaying architecture of a poverty-stricken state. Why a nation so naturally wealthy remains an isolated backwater is the one of the perennial questions of Iranian politics - and one that was brought to the fore again this week after the release of the 15 British sailors and Marines from captivity.

Is Iran poor because foreigners - notably the British and the Americans - have deliberately made it so? Do its problems arise from a Western plot to keep it subservient? This is what President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's regime would like its people to believe and, on the surface at least, many Iranians toe the official line. A retired man strolling in Teheran's Laleh Park on the day the Britons were released mourned the dashed hopes of his youth.

"There was hope when I was young that this country would join the great nations of the world," said Hossein Ahangar, 67, who used to be a banker. "It was taken away - by your country, by us, by America. Now the consequences are being visited on the whole world."

The global consequences of Iran's isolation are severe. A significant number of its people have taken refuge in the comforting simplicities of nationalism and Muslim extremism. This is the tradition personified by Mr Ahmadinejad, a former student radical and Revolutionary Guard turned national leader. Even his friends would not claim that the erratic, populist president is an intellectual.

His doctorate was in traffic management, although he failed to ease Teheran's congested streets when he was mayor of the city. Known as a man of modest tastes, he is also given credit for being incorruptible and down-to-earth. The outside world may be something of a mystery to Mr Ahmadinejad, but his analysis of Iran's crisis has a beguiling clarity. Outside forces, vast and opaque in their power and encapsulated by the phrase "the West" have,

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in his eyes, inflicted all of Iran's problems. The only response, he believes, is to revive the austere values of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and confront the hegemony of America and its chief sidekick, Britain.

Hence Mr Ahmadinejad has pressed ahead with Iran's bitterly controversial nuclear programme. Officially, this is nothing more than a grand scheme to generate electricity for a rapidly growing population already around 70 million. The regime denies any ambition to produce a bomb and points to an old declaration by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, stating that possessing nuclear weapons is contrary to the values of Islam.

But almost every outside observer believes that Iran is - at the very least - seeking the option of building a bomb some day. Small traces of weapons-grade uranium, which has no civilian purpose, have been found at its nuclear installations. If a country has vast reserves of oil and gas, it does not need to build nuclear power stations; especially when, as in Iran, earthquakes strike with devastating frequency.

The nuclear programme is, without question, a central part of Mr Ahmadinejad's drive to resist Western hegemony. So is Iran's support for Hizbollah, the Shia extremist group in Lebanon, and its less noticed but equally important backing for Hamas, now the dominant partner in the Palestinian government.

Most importantly of all, Iran has seized the opportunity created by the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq to stir up trouble in its neighbour, and make life as difficult as possible for the Western powers that serve as its bogeymen-in-chief.

"Moulting lions" is how the president describes America and Britain as he urges Iranians not to shirk the task of resisting their designs. There is no doubt that Mr Ahmadinejad's message of nationalism, Islamic purity and austerity commands significant popular support, especially among Iranians old enough to remember the Revolution that ousted the Shah in 1979.

But there is another side to Iran. The young are a vital constituency in a country where more than half the population is aged under 25 and 16-year-olds are allowed to vote. Most Iranians have no memory of the revolution and want nothing more than to join the rest of the world. Students in Teheran listen to Western music and watch pirated DVDs of Hollywood films. Street vendors sell revealing posters of pop stars such as Britney Spears. Boys dress in jeans, while girls do their utmost to get around the strict dress codes of the Islamic Republic.

In Saudi Arabia and increasingly in Iraq, women must shield their faces completely. This does not apply in Iran. Instead, women must cover their hair with a scarf and wear long, dark, shapeless overcoats.

Young women in the streets of Teheran push against these boundaries as much as they can. They don headscarfs - but these colourful garments are pushed backwards as far as possible, revealing an abundance of flowing brown hair. Their overcoats are stylishly nipped in at the waist and they favour sandals over shoes, allowing the display of brightly painted toenails. Make-up is frowned upon, but women apply foundation, lipstick and eye-shadow. These petty acts of defiance have become increasingly risky under Mr Ahmadinejad. Once, the authorities turned a blind eye, but the president has clearly ordered them to get tough. Last year, tens of thousands of illegally attired women were arrested in Teheran and ordered to abide by the dress code or face imprisonment.

In middle-class neighbourhoods, families get around the dreary fare offered by state television by using illicit satellite dishes. These conduits of Western culture are officially banned, but countless dishes can be seen on Teheran's smarter apartment blocks. Almost everyone in the city either has satellite television or knows someone who does. The authorities once ignored the fact that millions of Iranians watch the scantily clad models of Fashion TV and the Hollywood pulp served up by the movie channels. But, again, under Mr Ahmadinejad, the rules are being enforced. There have even been reports of satellite dishes being torn from the walls of the more upmarket residences.

All this highlights a yawning gap between government and people that the president does his utmost to hide. Politics in Iran moves along a spectrum beginning with liberal reformists and ending with hardline conservatives.

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The reformists want to liberalise Iran's social codes, break down barriers with the outside world and improve relations with the West. They want to stop what they see as the pointless posturing and belligerence symbolised by the regime's carefully regimented demonstrations against the "Great Satan", America, and the "Little Satan", Britain. They ask why torture is rife inside Iranian jails, why women are stoned to death for adultery and why the security forces routinely break up any gathering not sanctioned by the authorities.

While fiercely proud of Iran's independence, the reformers would probably give up the nuclear programme in return for Western aid and investment. They are embarrassed by events such as the siege of America's embassy between 1979 and 1981, in which 52 hostages were held for 444 days. Over time, they would even restore normal ties with Washington and allow the old US embassy to re-open.

The uncomfortable truth for Mr Ahmadinejad is that whenever Iranians are given the chance, they vote for reformers. His predecessor as president, the moderate cleric Mohammed Khatami, won two huge majorities. Iran's last parliament was dominated by reformers. Sensing a challenge from within that was far more dangerous than any of the outside conspiracies it frequently claimed to detect, the clerical establishment of the Islamic Republic reasserted itself.

Every candidate for election in Iran must be vetted by the Council of Guardians, a committee of hardline clerics. The clerics used this power to wreck the chances of the reformist parties in the last parliamentary elections in 2004. All but a handful of reformist candidates were simply banned from standing. Scores of sitting MPs were prevented from seeking re-election. The entire leadership of the reforming parties was effectively cast into the wilderness. Other authoritarian regimes lock up their opponents. In Iran, they are simply kept from any real participation in politics.

With their choice restricted to an unappealing array of hardliners, most Iranians have stopped bothering to vote. Turnout in every election has plummeted since the Council of Guardians effectively crushed the reformist challenge in 2004. When Mr Ahmadinejad won the presidential election of 2005 he did so because his six opponents - all conservatives to varying degrees - were ageing or corrupt or both. All the reformers had been duly barred.

The president knows that he lacks any real popular mandate. More than anything else, he needs foreign enemies in order to rally his people. Hence the constant talk of plots and threats. When it comes to the regime's conspiracy theories, Britain still has the starring role. Iranians vastly inflate our post-imperial significance and have an almost touching belief in British omnipotence.

Some believe that the British are behind everything. When a Danish newspaper outraged the Muslim world by printing cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed in 2005, it was natural that a crowd of angry demonstrators should gather outside the British Embassy in Teheran. The crowd was in full voice when a visitor from London delicately pointed out that, well, no British newspaper had actually printed the cartoons.

"Oh," replied the rally's organiser. "Hang on." After a minute spent conferring with his colleagues, he instantly changed the protest's theme. It suddenly became a demonstration against Britain's efforts to stop Iran's nuclear programme.

Taxi drivers in Teheran have been known to opine that Ayatollah Khomeini, who inspired the revolution, was actually an MI6 agent and that Britain orchestrated the downfall of the Shah. Whenever riots take place among Iran's non-Persian minorities, the authorities darkly claim that Britain has been stirring trouble among the Baluchis, the Azeris or the Kurds; at the very press conference where he announced the freedom of the British captives, Mr Ahmadinejad also stated that Iran's Baluchi separatists had been "talking to London".

Elsewhere in the Middle East, popular conspiracy theories identify the Jews as the hidden manipulators of every event. In Iran, the British are usually the culprits. Where does this come from?

Britain first became interested in Persia (as Iran was formerly known) in the 19th century, when London sought to protect the approaches to India from Russian encroachment. Britain and Russia informally divided Persia into spheres of influence. The 20th century saw events that are long forgotten in Britain but still have great significance

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in Iran. In 1911, Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, decided to convert the Royal Navy's warships from coal to oil. At that time Persia held the largest known oil reserves in the world. So London acquired a vital strategic interest in the country almost overnight. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company - later to become BP - was established to exploit these reserves. Churchill acquired a controlling stake in the company for the British Government in 1914.

For decades, Anglo-Persian Oil was the dominant factor in Iranian politics. Populist politicians wanted Iran to control its own resources, instead of allowing a foreign company to pocket a large share of the revenues. Eventually, Anglo-Persian's assets were nationalised in 1951 by the radical prime minister Mohammed Mossadeq. He lasted only two years before being overthrown.

Mossadeq's downfall has totemic significance in Iran. The popular narrative is that he was an elected premier toppled by MI6 and the CIA so that Britain and America could keep their grip on Iran's oil. While the two Western powers undoubtedly helped to get rid of Mossadeq, the endlessly repeated story is more myth than reality.

First of all, Mossadeq was not an elected leader. He was installed by Iran's parliament in 1951 and never won a general election in his own right. His country, at that stage, was scarcely a functioning democracy. In early 1953, Mossadeq imposed martial law, began ruling by decree and held a bogus referendum in which he claimed a 99 per cent mandate. Through these events, Mossadeq was largely the author of his own demise.

When huge crowds restored the Shah to power and forced Mossadeq to flee over his garden wall in August 1953, it is stretching the imagination to believe that hundreds of thousands of Iranians were all summoned by MI6 and the CIA. America and Britain merely helped an incompetent leader to destroy himself.

But facts count for little in Iran. In this country of shadows, divining the underlying trends beneath the surface is what really matters. As history suggests, the problems that face the people of Iran will persist as long as the seemingly unbridgeable gap between them and their government remains.

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