

Date and Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 3:50:00PM EEST

Job Number: 223444041

Documents (100)

1. [Forces of darkness are only victors in Lebanon](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to Sep 30, 2006

2. [RECONCILING DIFFERENCES](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to Sep 30, 2006

3. [Anger at U.S. hurts Arab moderates Its support of Israel is lifting Islamists](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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4. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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5. [NEWSDESK](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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7. [LETTERS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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8. [Arabs' anger at America is hurting moderates Islamists lifted by U.S. support of Israel](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to Sep 30, 2006

9. [It is time for a new approach](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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10. [Why Israel can no longer win this war Whatever the terms on which the Middle East conflict is concluded, a leading expert on the region says Tel Aviv will not emerge victorious](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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11. [20,000 from Canada await rescue by boat: Chartered cruise ships to start evacuation on Wednesday](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

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12. [Harper to fly evacuees home](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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13. [Israelis turn Gaza into camp of despair](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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14. [Democracy is more than just voting](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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15. [Comment & Debate: Only Hizbullah can defend against an Israeli invasion: Attempts to impose an international force would risk destroying Lebanon 's government and revive the danger of civil war](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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16. [For now, at least, the west should play Iran at its game](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Sep 30, 2006

17. [A light in the darkness A college in Israel is using film to promote understanding between warring factions in the Middle East. By ROGER CLARKE](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Sep 30, 2006

18. [Batten Down the Hatches](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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19. [NO TEARS FOR A KILLER](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Sep 30, 2006

20. [Comment & Debate: Success is not the transition to death by electric drill: The Iraqi occupation has made a bad situation worse, with real political power passing to violent militias on the streets](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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21. [Civilians in cross-hairs: What to do?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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22. [Export This?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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23. [Why Iran wants bomb: The Shia regime in Tehran believes its nukes will speed the second coming of the Mahdi](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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24. [The frightening truth of why Iran wants a bomb The Shia regime in Teheran believes that its nuclear weapons will speed the second coming of the Mahdi, writes Amir Taheri](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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25. [In Afghan Christian, story of larger conflict Globalist](#)

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: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

26. [Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Part 7 * False hopes](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

27. [Vote To Divest Seen Having Little Effect](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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28. [A clash of values](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Sep 30, 2006

29. [Rasmussen says Danes are bitter over crisis He points to attempts to gain commercial advantage in Mideast](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Sep 30, 2006

30. [This is the devastation rained on Beirut. But as this dispatch reveals, Israel remains utterly defiant in the face of global censure](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Sep 30, 2006

31. ['We don't do God, we do Palestine and Iraq '](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

32. [1953 Sharon raid burns in psyche](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Sep 30, 2006

33. [Shabina's right to choose A Muslim schoolgirl is stepping up her fight to wear the jilbab in class. Here a liberal columnist defends her controversial stance](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Sep 30, 2006

34. [Listen to Colonel Tim ...we'll all sleep safer](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Sep 30, 2006

35. [Democracy not an export item](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

37. [*Demilitarization not in sight for Israel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
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Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

40. [*9/11 and five years of folly*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
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Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

46. [*News Summary*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to Sep 30, 2006

50. [*A Perverse Habit*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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51. [*TheirSpace*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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52. [Economic victory](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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53. [The man with an answer for everything](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
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56. [Freed Reporter in Recovery In U.S. Zone in Baghdad](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
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Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Sep 30, 2006

59. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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64. [*9/11 the fifth*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
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74. [*Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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81. [The conqueror](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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83. [Chill Karo, Masti Karo](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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87. [Nadia's wedding](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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91. [*Undefeated despair*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

98. [*THE BOMBING*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Dec 02, 2005 to
Sep 30, 2006

Forces of darkness are only victors in Lebanon

Yorkshire Post

August 2, 2006

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Length: 1095 words

Body

David Howell

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

QANA in southern Lebanon, where Israeli bombs have just killed 60 more people, 37 of them children, is said to be the Cana of the Bible where Jesus turned water into wine (St John, Chapter Two).

It is a small hilltop town where the visitor is led down a series of zigzag paths to a grove and a large open cave where Jesus is supposed to have performed the miracle at the wedding gathering.

Elsewhere in the town, a narrow side street leads to an open square and a large fenced off pit containing a pile of broken amphora in which, rather improbably, the transformation is supposed to have taken place. Children gather round trying to sell sketches of the scene.

But that was yesterday. Today the children are dead. Today the Hezbollah gunmen have infested the little town, spraying missiles southwards in the direction of Israel and the bombs have duly come pounding back at them with dreadful ferocity.

There seems to be a tragic and ghastly inevitability about it all. Israel carefully withdrew from Lebanon in the hope of peace, but Israel has now suffered a vicious and unprovoked attack, slaughtering its citizens and kidnapping its soldiers. And those who attack Israel pay the price.

So, even if there was a brief pause, the campaign continues, although so far unsuccessfully, towards the Israeli military's "central goal", backed, or at least unchallenged, by Washington and by London and refreshed with bombs and shells duly shipped by American cargo planes, some of them via Prestwick.

Voices call for an immediate ceasefire. But a genuine ceasefire, as opposed to a brief unilateral pause by Israel, even if it could be agreed and sustained, would leave Hezbollah triumphant, ready to devour what is left of Lebanon and turn it into a fanatical Islamic satrapy of Iran and Syria.

That is why many Lebanese fear the Hezbollah organisation as much as the Israelis do. That is why many Lebanese, even as they shelter from Israeli bombs and struggle to find food and basic services amidst the smashed infrastructure of their country, want to see the Hezbollah finally destroyed and reject the idea of any kind ceasefire which would leave the Hezbollah leaders in place.

Like a badly wounded individual with a smashed limb, they are reluctantly ready to allow amputation to prevent the gangrene of Hezbollah killing them.

Forces of darkness are only victors in Lebanon

Yet it is these brave people who have been reduced to collateral damage by the Israeli agenda, cut to pieces as a by-product of the war against Hezbollah. One fifth of the entire population of Lebanon (that would be 11 million people if applied to the UK) are now said to be fleeing and homeless, crowding into northern Lebanon and paralysing everything. No administrative structure can survive under this kind of calamity.

In their fury, the Israelis seem to have become blinded to the prospect of collapse of the Lebanese state - the only other democracy in the region - and to the opening up of a lethal vacuum on their northern border. Into that vacuum will flow first civil war, of the kind which paralysed Lebanon back in the 1980s, and then Iranian and Syrian influence, with military personnel, missiles, tanks and all the other instruments of renewed aggression following on behind. A new extreme Islamic state will emerge from the corpse of gentle Lebanon - right there on the shores of the Mediterranean.

Israel will then have succeeded in destroying, almost by accident, a good neighbour and recreating on its border an even deadlier force than the existing Hezbollah. And it will have done so unnecessarily.

Another huge step will have been taken in achieving the declared and combined objectives of al-Qaida, of the Iranian leaders, of the **Hamas** government in Palestine, and of countless other Arab fanatical groups, whatever their other differences may be - which is to drive the West, in which they include Israel, out of the Middle East and away from the sacred soil of Islam for ever.

What the Israelis ought to have done, when their soldiers were first kidnapped and the missiles first fell on their towns, was to befriend the Lebanese leader, Mr Siniora, and his unifying team - the men of the 14th March coalition - and to work with them in every possible way, open and covert, to isolate and target the Hezbollah leaders in their hide-outs. Wise, hard-thinking Israelis, who could see the Hezbollah attack coming for months back, should have stretched out a hand to leaders within Lebanon against militant Hezbollah, men like Samir Geagea, the leader of the Maronite forces (once trained by Israel), men like Walid Jumblatt, the Druze leader, men like Saaed Hariri, the leader of the Sunnis. These should have been their allies, if only on the principle that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

What the international community should have done is to have stopped wringing its hands and uttering platitudes about the slaughter of Lebanese **women** and children, while leaving the Israeli anti-Lebanon strategy unchallenged.

Instead it should have backed Lebanese efforts to the full and insisted on the closest co-operation between Israel and Lebanon - and in due course with international forces as well if they can be found and are willing to take on the task (which looks unlikely) - in rooting out Hezbollah and establishing a thriving Lebanese state as a bulwark against Islamic fanaticism and a protective neighbour for Israel. The American decision, while naturally deploring all the killing, to condone Israel's over-the-top strategy is surely the final crashing misjudgment of George W Bush's foreign policy.

Tony Blair's endorsement of this stance, and his black-and-white simplism that Israel must defend itself, whatever the cost and however flawed and counter-productive its methods may prove, will surely hasten his own departure. But, for the rest of us, who certainly want Israel to survive and be secure, who want Lebanon to hold together and rebuild itself yet again, who want Palestine to emerge and prosper and all the unrestrainedly violent anti-Western factions to be contained (and no doubt in due course to turn on each other), the bloody Middle-Eastern tragedy will continue to unfold, maybe slowly but now with renewed inevitability.

Irrespective of who appears to win out of the immediate horrors, extremism will have won and darker forces will now come out

on top. And for that we will all pay an even greater price than anything so far.

Load-Date: August 2, 2006

Forces of darkness are only victors in Lebanon

End of Document

RECONCILING DIFFERENCES

The Nation (AsiaNet)

September 10, 2006 Sunday

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Length: 1158 words

Byline: By Hameed Akhtar Niazi

Body

Every foreign army - including the Israelis - comes to grief in Lebanon. So, how come George Bush and Blair, after their inevitable disasters in Afghanistan and Iraq believe that a NA To-led force is going to survive on the south Lebanese border? The Israelis would obviously enjoy watching its deployment - it will be time for the West to take the casualties - but Hizbullah is likely to view its arrival as a proxy Israeli army. It is, after all, supposed to be a "buffer" force to protect Israel - not, as the Lebanese have quickly noted, to protect Lebanon - and the last NATO army that came to this country was literally blasted out of its mission by suicide bombers. -Robert Fisk

Independence Day in Pakistan coincided with ceasefire (of sorts) in Lebanon. Both occasions called for celebrations. Hizbullah deserves accolades for giving haughty Israel a bloody nose. However, this piece seeks to address the grave dangers that the entire Ummah is currently facing. The sole super-power of the world, the US, blindly supported by UK, has gone berserk.

Justifying its wildly aggressive ventures into the Muslim world on the ground of fighting terrorism, it has invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, in defiance of the world opinion in case of Iraq. Its foray into Lebanon through its armed-to-teeth-with-the-latest-US-weaponry Israel has turned out to be as brutal as can be. Israel's invasion of Lebanon is widely believed to be premeditated and is assumed to be aimed at Iran.

American stance that Israel had a right to defend itself is so preposterous that it deserves no comment. Israel has destroyed Lebanon's entire infrastructure, killed about a thousand Lebanese, mostly civilians including women and children, wounded another 3800, and displaced about 900,000 people. That Israel could not succeed in destroying Hizbullah in 33 days speaks volumes about the tenacity of its leadership and limited manpower.

Israeli invasion of Lebanon was highly traumatic for its population. However, it has produced two very positive results. First, it has succeeded in exploding the myth of Israeli army's invincibility. Second, Hezbollah's valiant defence against the armed might of Israel has united Shias and Sunnis (even Christians) as one people. In addition, Sayed Hassan Nasrullah, its leader, is now hero not only of Lebanon but also arguably of the entire Arab world, perhaps of the entire Muslim world.

What is termed terrorism by the Americans is actually the desperate act of the angry but weak and helpless people who otherwise cannot avenge the American atrocities committed against their brothers in faith. Though perfectly understandable this is utterly deplorable, and it certainly is not sanctified by Islam.

Alleged recent planning by some Muslim British youngsters to blow up US aircraft must be viewed in this light. The fact that Bush has termed these poor youngsters "Islamic fascists" is simply laughable. Coming, as it does, from the mouth of the most brutal fascist on this planet, it surely sounds highly strange. Jonathan Cook, a Briton living in

RECONCILING DIFFERENCES

Nazareth, has, in his objective article, titled "Standing with Islamic Fascists" (the News: August 14, 2006) aptly dealt with this issue. He asked as to what would be the reaction of officials at a US airport if he told them "...that I am appalled by the humanitarian crisis in Lebanon and Gaza... (and) ... if I described as nonsense the idea that Hezbollah or the political leaders of Hamas are terrorists".

He went on to explain that "... Hezbollah has acted with restraint for those six years, stockpiling its weapons for the day it knew was coming..." when Israel's "... appetite for conquest and subjugation will return." He wondered how would these officials respond if he told them that Hezbollah's rockets were "...fired in return for Israel's devastating and indiscriminate bombardment of Lebanon," and "... that this war... (was) not really about Lebanon or even about Hezbollah but part of a wider US and Israeli campaign to isolate and pre-emptively attack Iran."

With this perspective in mind, it is for Muslims to ponder as to how to meet the challenge from the West and Israel. Mention may be made here of the violent differences that have emerged between Shias and Sunnis after the Iranian revolution. Adherents of these two sects have been living side by side everywhere through the ages in relative harmony disturbed if at all through occasional manageable incidents. Iranian revolution seems to have somehow upset that harmony. Saddam Hussain was reported to have told the conciliatory committee of Muslim leaders including General Zia during the Iran-Iraq war that Iran was trying to export its revolution to Iraq.

The heightened animosity between Shias and Sunnis in Pakistan during recent years has also been partly attributed to Iran. It can be safely assumed that the present Iranian president, Mr. Mehmoood Ahmedi Nijad, a leader appearing in true Islamic mould, would like to correct this situation. In addition, corrected it must be to forge unity amongst the Muslim nations around the globe.

It is this scribe's firm opinion that the most important task for the Muslims today is to reconcile the differences between Shias and Sunnis wherever it exists. Pakistan and Iraq particularly come to mind in this context. In both these countries, Shias and Sunnis are badly but senselessly bleeding each other. It is for leaders with vision to address the problem.

In case of Iraq, a committee possibly composed of President Mehmoood Ahmedi Nejad of Iran, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, former Turkish Prime Minister Erbakan and former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahatir Mohammad, aided by local leaders of the two sects, should bring about reconciliation between Shias and Sunnis. Mention here may be made of the comments of the retiring British ambassador in Iraq and the top US general in the Middle East, Abizaid that Iraq is degenerating into civil war.

In Pakistan, leaders like Asghar Khan, Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan and Syed Fakhar Imam, assisted by effective leaders of both the sects, should accomplish this task. Additionally and most importantly, outstanding Shia and Sunni scholars from various Muslim countries should be required by the aforesaid international committee to congregate in Haram Sharif, Makkah, during the coming Ramadan or Haj to iron out the mostly unfounded differences between Shias and Sunnis and authoritatively pronounce that there is no significant difference between the two sects and no real cause for their adherents to cut each others throats.

Approached sincerely and diligently, this is not an insurmountable task. The other two important issues requiring urgent attention of the Muslims are the promotion of science and technology and democracy in Muslim lands. Concerted effort must be made to achieve these two goals if we have to combat the onslaught of the West. The writer is the President Society of International Development Islamabad.

Load-Date: December 6, 2006

Anger at U.S. hurts Arab moderates; Its support of Israel is lifting Islamists

The International Herald Tribune

August 10, 2006 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 8

Length: 1084 words

Byline: Neil MacFarquhar

Dateline: DAMASCUS

Body

Mona el-Naggar contributing reporting from Cairo.

*

Moderates who seek changes across the Arab world say American support for Israel's battle with Hezbollah has put them on the defensive, tarring them by association and helping Islamist parties.

The very people that the United States wanted to encourage to promote democracy from Bahrain to Casablanca instead feel trapped by a policy that they now ridicule more or less as "destroying the region in order to save it."

Indeed, many of those who have been working for change in their own societies often isolated, harassed by state security or marginalized to begin with say American policy either strangles nascent reform movements or props up repressive governments that remain Washington's best allies in the region.

"We are really afraid of this 'new Middle East,'" said Ali Abdulemam, a 28-year-old computer engineer who founded the most popular political Web site in Bahrain. "They talk about how they will reorganize the region in a different way, but they never talk about the people, they never mention what the people want. They are just giving more power to the systems that exist already."

His opinion is shared by advocates of change across the Arab world.

Fawaziah al-Bakr, who works to promote educational change and women's rights in Saudi Arabia, helped organize women to protest the Israeli attacks. "Nobody is talking about reform in Saudi Arabia," she said. "All we talk about is the war, what to do about the war. There is no question that the U.S. has lost morally because of the war. Even if you like the people and the culture of the United States, you can't defend it."

The statement by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during a fleeting stopover in Beirut last month that the situation in Lebanon represented the birth pangs of a "new Middle East" is being juxtaposed with the mounting carnage to rally popular opposition against all things American.

In Lebanon, Israel continues bombing, even though the violence could destabilize the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, elected last year in a vote that the United States hailed as a democratic example for the Middle East. Iraq was the previous such example, moderates note bitterly.

Anger at U.S. hurts Arab moderates Its support of Israel is lifting Islamists

Members of Islamist political organizations, in particular, consider American actions a godsend, putting their own repressive governments under pressure and distancing their capitals from Washington, moderates say.

The Americans "wanted to tarnish the Islamic resistance and opposition movements, but in reality they only served them," said Sobhe Salih, a 53-year-old lawyer in the Muslim Brotherhood, which was swept into the Egyptian Parliament in last autumn's election after capturing an unprecedented 20 percent of the seats.

Glance at any television screen and chances are it will be showing mayhem in Lebanon, Baghdad or Gaza. It usually takes a minute or so to decipher which Arab city is burning. Popular satellite channels like Al Jazeera say repeatedly that the carnage arrives via American policy and American weapons.

Before 2003, the hardest step for any Islamic movement was recruitment, noted Mohamed Salah, an expert on Islamist extremist movements who writes for the pan-Arab daily Al Hayat from Cairo. Moving someone from being merely devout to being an extremist took a long time. No longer, he said. Moderate Arab governments, which have pursued peace with Israel for nearly 30 years, have seen that policy undermined among their publics by Hezbollah's ability to strike at Israel.

"Recruitment has become the easiest stage because the people have already been psychologically predisposed against the Americans, the West and against Israel," Salah said.

Moderates say they are driven to despair by what they see as inconsistencies in Washington's Middle East policy. For example, in Lebanon lives a black-turbaned Shiite cleric who runs a secretive militia close to Iran. His name is Hassan Nasrallah and Washington approves of Israel's campaign to stamp out his group, Hezbollah.

There is another black-turbaned Shiite cleric who runs a different secretive militia close to Iran. His name is Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, and he lives in Iraq. He is an American friend.

"In Iraq the same kind of group is an ally of the United States, while in Lebanon they are an enemy whom they are fighting," said Samir al-Qudah, a Jordanian civil engineer. "It has nothing to do with reform, but where America's interests lie."

The overwhelming conclusion drawn by Arabs is that Washington's interests lie with Israel, no matter what the cost.

"Those calling for democratic reform in Egypt have discovered that once Israeli interests are in conflict with political reform in the Middle East, then the United States will immediately favor Israel's interests," said Ibrahim Issa, the editor of the weekly Al Dustour, who faces a jail sentence on charges of insulting President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

Advocates of change invariably add that a credible effort to solve the issue of Arab land occupied by Israel, which they believe is the taproot of extremism, does not even seem to be on Washington's radar.

Nasrallah is particularly adept at exploiting public anger at civilian deaths in Lebanon by talking about how fickle the United States can be as a friend.

"I want you never to forget that this is the U.S. administration, Lebanon's friend, ally and lover," he mocked in a speech last Thursday. He also issued a pointed warning to other Arab leaders, that if they spent more time defending their thrones than the people of Lebanon, they might find themselves pushed off those thrones.

There is a general sense in the region that the Bush administration soured on pushing democracy because of the successes of Islamist parties in the most recent Egyptian and Palestinian elections the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and **Hamas**, an offshoot of the Brotherhood, in the Palestinian territories.

Political analysts are again comparing governments like that of Mubarak to that of the late shah of Iran an isolated despot who ignored the broad wishes of the population while currying favor with an American administration.

Some rulers are clearly nervous.

Anger at U.S. hurts Arab moderates Its support of Israel is lifting Islamists

King Abdullah II of Jordan criticized Hezbollah when the fighting erupted nearly a month ago, but in an interview with the BBC on Tuesday he was dismissive of American plans for a "new Middle East." The monarch said he could "no longer read the political map" of the region because of black clouds gathering from Somalia to Lebanon.

Load-Date: August 24, 2006

End of Document

Letters

The Pantagraph (Bloomington, Illinois)

August 09, 2006 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. A6

Length: 1145 words

Body

U.S. must show more faith in democracy

Prior to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq - remember: we didn't go it alone; we had a "coalition of the willing" behind us - there were those who declared that "fully developed, professional and well-executed military plans" would prevent the spread of violence once the war began.

Three years after "mission accomplished," Israel is again putting this theory to the test.

Where has our faith in democracy and democratic institutions gone?

The president now says - forget all of that "mushroom cloud" rhetoric - that we are in Iraq to make it a shining example of democracy for the Muslim world.

He leads the applause as one election after another, no matter how imperfect, puts a permanent Iraqi government in power.

Then the wheels fall off.

We're unwilling to deal with Hamas because they don't purse their lips together the way we'd like.

We applaud the Lebanese government with one hand and slap them in the face for being "ineffective" with the other.

Throw this on top of our support of a failed military coup in Venezuela and our constant meddling in Latin American elections and what you have is a failed foreign policy. And the reason it fails is because we do not have faith in democracy.

To have faith in democracy you have to be willing to work with and through the duly elected representatives of a people, no matter how unsavory those characters might be.

You have to realize that democracy itself is more powerful than the positions put on the negotiating table by either side.

You have to understand that while negotiations today may not lead to everlasting peace, continuing to negotiate tells the world that democracy is better than the repeated violence that has killed tens of thousands of civilians in just the past three years.

Letters

Jorge Ovalle

Bloomington

Community helps Camp Limberlost

The Kiwanis Club of Bloomington would like to thank the community for their support of our annual Camp Limberlost program. Founded by the Pantagraph in 1931 and operated by the Kiwanis Club of Bloomington since 1940, your generous support has allowed us to send over 6,000 children ages 8-11 to camp over the years, including 124 this year alone.

We know from many former campers who come back to talk to the club that their experience at Camp Limberlost had a significant influence on them and made our community a better place to live.

The support of the community, and the many sponsors who make in-kind donations of food, financial aid and other types of support are critical to our success.

Three sponsors, CJ's, Unit 5 and the IWU women's volleyball team were inadvertently omitted from a previous thank you and we wish to ensure that their contributions are acknowledged. We could not do what we do without all of you. Our sincere appreciation for helping make Camp Limberlost a success for 75 years.

Bruce Helling

Normal

The writer is vice president, Kiwanis Club of Bloomington

Israelis are good guys in Mideast conflict

I must respectfully disagree with Scott Callan's comments ("U.S. must do more for Mideast peace," YourViews, Aug. 2), taking particular note of this moral-equivalency falsehood: "There are no good guys and bad guys in this war" Yes, there are good guys and bad guys, and the good guys are the Israelis.

First, Hezbollah instigated this conflict by entering Israel and kidnapping and killing Israeli soldiers. This was acknowledged by many Arab leaders.

Second, Hezbollah rockets target Israeli civilians - with nary an objection from the West.

Third, Hezbollah fights from among the general populace, counting on civilian casualties. In contrast, the Israelis warn the Lebanese to leave, attempting to lessen the potential for civilian casualties, while the Katyusha rockets fired by Hezbollah are packed with ball bearings to maximize death, pain and suffering of the civilian Israelis they target.

And fourth, let us not forget that Hezbollah has attacked U.S. military installations and an embassy, as well as kidnapping and murdering international civilians - among them Americans - since the 1980s.

As for the specific incident in Cana/Qana, we must mourn for the civilian casualties. But we must also place the blame squarely on the shoulders of Hezbollah who purposefully puts women and children at risk, and to a certain extent, a Lebanese government that allowed this group to operate with impunity and a United Nations that dragged its feet regarding the enforcement of Resolution 1559.

We must also blame Iran and Syria for their roles in funding, arming, and supporting a terrorist organization.

The current administration is correct in not calling for an immediate cease-fire at this time. Hezbollah must be thoroughly, no, permanently routed before any cease-fire begins. Because any "cease-fire" before that is merely an opportunity for Hezbollah and her backers to re-arm and plan yet another attack.

Letters

Mira Mihajlovich

Normal

Good job covering McLean County Fair

Thanks to all the Pantagraph reporters, photographers and editors for the excellent coverage of the McLean County Fair and the 4-H program. Thanks also for making sure hundreds of 4-H'ers' names get into the paper for winning blue ribbons. Hats off for a job well done.

Kay Shipman-Swiech

Bloomington

Are U.S., Israel really any safer?

I was surprised by Mike Lynch's "Three options left in the war on terror" (YourViews, Aug. 2) letter.

With the Republican polls in the basement, I didn't believe there was anybody left who believed their spin anymore. The recent Israeli situation is a prime example of the fallacy of his arguments.

The Israelis have been fighting the Arabs for years, occupying their land and beating up on them regularly. Even though the fighting ability of the Israeli army is many times that of the Arabs with planes, bombs, warships, tanks, artillery, electronic systems and nuclear weapons - none of which the Arabs have - the Arabs still don't obey the "rules" and give up after they are beaten.

Does all of this foolishness really make the average Israeli or us for that matter any safer?

Will the Iraqis ever obey the "rules" and surrender like gentlemen so the Republicans can be reelected. I doubt it very much.

I do believe that as long as we have a Republican left or a Muslim left there will continue to be war.

What I do know is that the few "dead-enders" as described by Rumsfeld are sure embarrassing George Bush.

Maybe when Iraqis become a democratic society they can ban stem cell research and cut estate taxes for people worth more than \$5 million over there, too.

Depend on George Bush for your safety and freedom - what a joke.

Bob Vercler

Farmer City

Load-Date: October 26, 2006

NEWSDESK

The Forward

August 18, 2006

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Section: News; Pg. 7

Length: 1801 words

Body

Church Campaign Slammed

Church-state activists are blasting Christian conservative leader James Dobson for a new campaign to register evangelical voters before the November elections.

The program, to be coordinated by Dobson's Colorado-based group, Focus on the Family, will conduct voter registration drives at evangelical churches in such battleground electoral states as Maryland, Tennessee, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Earlier this week, in response to the announcement of the voter drive, Americans United for Separation of Church and State issued a statement claiming that the tax-exempt status of participating congregations could be at risk.

While religious organizations' tax-exempt status prohibits them from engaging in partisan activity, registration drives that are done without the endorsement of a specific candidate or party are permissible under the Internal Revenue Service's guidelines.

Judge Permits Aipac Trial

The judge trying the case against two former pro-Israel lobbyists has given the trial a green light, setting the stage for a battle over free-speech rights and Israel's role as an ally of the United States.

On August 10, Judge T.S. Ellis III denied what had been the defense's only possible bid for a dismissal of the case. He rejected the argument that a never-used 1917 statute under which they have been charged violated the constitutional rights of Steve Rosen, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's former foreign policy director, and Keith Weissman, Aipac's former Iran analyst.

The statute criminalizes the receipt - as well as the leaking - of "information relating to the national defense" that the possessor has "reason to believe could be used to the injury of the United States or to the advantage of any foreign nation." But Ellis, a federal judge based in Alexandria, Va., made clear that he would set the bar high for the prosecution because the case could have far-reaching implications.

Ellis's most important conclusion was that invoking the statute did not necessarily violate the defendants' First Amendment right to free speech. Lawyers for the defense had argued that the 1917 statute never had been used before because it was impossible to enforce.

NEWSDESK

Such a sweeping statute places not just lobbyists but also journalists, researchers and average citizens at risk, the lawyers had argued. Ellis's decision set off alarms among free-speech activists.

"This is a momentous expansion of the government's ability to penalize unauthorized disclosures," said Steven Aftergood, who runs the Project on Government Secrecy at the Federation of American Scientists, a nuclear watchdog. "Never before has a court said that a private citizen could be prosecuted for unauthorized receipt of classified information. It's a whole new ball game."

Australian Shul Hit Again

A synagogue on the outskirts of Sydney, Australia, was attacked for the second time in two weeks. On Monday night, vandals hurled concrete blocks at the doors of the synagogue in the suburb of Parramatta. Two weeks ago, a group of men described by witnesses as being of Middle Eastern appearance threw blocks at the compound, damaging Rabbi Yossi Wernick's two cars and his residence. Wernick's house is situated next to the synagogue, which is isolated from the major part of the community in Sydney and is close to areas with a high Muslim population.

JAP Defense Used

The father of a man standing trial in Tennessee for allegedly murdering his wife said that he helped his son conceal the body because "she was a typical JAP." The videotaped deposition by Arthur March was played August 12 in a Tennessee court. March's son, Perry, is accused of killing Janet March in 1996 after she said she wanted a divorce. Court TV reported that Arthur March, who received a reduced sentence in exchange for testifying, called his former daughter-in-law a "Jewish American Princess," adding, "Anything she wanted, she went to her father."

Youth: Protest Killings

Close to 50 Reform youth leaders urged the Union for Reform Judaism to address the deaths of civilians on both sides in the Israel-Hezbollah war. "We applaud the Union for condemning Hezbollah's and Hamas's violent and terrifying rocket attacks on Israeli civilians, who have been put in grave danger by the ongoing conflict," said the letter, which was delivered Tuesday to URJ leaders. But it adds, "We urge the Union to likewise condemn the Israeli Defense Force's killing of unarmed Lebanese and Palestinian civilians, as well as its premeditated targeting of civilian infrastructure, which has put additional lives at risk and hampered relief efforts." The 48 student leaders, who represent the movement's college-age and high-school-age programs, think that their concerns have been shunted aside. "As is appropriate for our Reform tradition, we embrace a diversity of viewpoints," they write. "Unfortunately, we feel that our voice has been excluded from Union statements and materials, and we ask for inclusion."

Prostitution Ring Busted

Two Israelis were arrested on suspicion of running a prostitution ring based in the United States. Boaz Benmoshe and Ofer Moses Lupovitz, both 44, are being described as leaders of a California-based ring that employed more than 240 women in the western United States. The men reportedly ran an escort service called Elite Entertainment that actually was a prostitution service, law enforcement officials said.

Yeshiva Denies Claims

Along with a local Maryland official, board members of a yeshiva are denying allegations that campaign contributions encouraged the county to spend millions on renovating two religious schools. In 1999, the Yeshiva of Greater Washington leased a decrepit building in Montgomery County, Md., with the understanding that the yeshiva would pay renovation costs. But the county bought the school back and leased a new one for the yeshiva.

Allegations have been raised that the \$9.9 million package, which provided nearly enough money to cover the renovations at both schools, was influenced by \$92,000 in contributions that County Executive Doug Duncan received from yeshiva supporters since 1998. The second religious institution is a girls' school run by the yeshiva.

NEWSDESK

Suspect Pleads Not Guilty

The alleged shooter in the Seattle Jewish federation shooting pleaded not guilty. Naveed Haq, who entered his plea Tuesday, is being held on nine counts, including aggravated homicide and malicious harassment, in connection to the July 28 attack that left one woman dead and five injured. At an August 10 arraignment, Haq surprised the court and his attorney, public defender C. Wesley Richards, when he attempted to enter a guilty plea but apparently changed his mind in the interim. The Kings County prosecuting attorney, Norm Maleng, has 30 days to decide whether Haq will face the death penalty.

A fund was established to assist victims and families of the July 28 shooting at the Seattle Jewish federation.

Load-Date: August 21, 2006

End of Document

Crisis in the Middle East

The Irish Times

August 17, 2006 Thursday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 17

Length: 1113 words

Body

Madam, - The lengthy polemic by Rory Miller and Alan Shatter defending Israel's appalling bombardment of Lebanon (Opinion & Analysis, August 15th) can essentially be summed up in the childish refrain that "we're not the only ones".

Of course Israel is not the only rogue state. Of course other states, and organisations like Hizbullah, are also guilty of committing atrocities. But this fact does not excuse or justify the war crimes committed by Israel against the civilian population of Lebanon, so eloquently reported by Lara Marlowe and others in this paper.

Contrary to the Miller/Shatter assertion, while thousands of Irish people have been moved to protest against Israel, many thousands have also protested against atrocities committed by other states - including Arab states - at different times. However, there are important reasons why the Israeli bombing of Lebanon is such a focus of protest. Western governments have been particularly complicit for many years in arming Israel, in ignoring the plight of the Palestinians, and over recent weeks in delaying the welcome onset of a ceasefire. Irish people may also feel particularly strongly about the destruction of Lebanon, given the long record of our UN peacekeepers there.

In short, Israel may not be the only one, but that is no reason not to protest against Israeli aggression now. - Yours, etc,

IVANA BACIK, Law School, Trinity College, Dublin 2.

Madam, - The point made by Alan Shatter and Rory Miller - that some of the other atrocities they list were not condemned in the Dáil or on the streets - is a valid one. I have always called for denunciation of all such outrages, especially on the streets, where the focus has been mainly on the war crimes of the US and Israel. But is this because both countries pretend to be democratic, free, just, and observant of international law? I hope he condemned every one of those terrible crimes when he was head of the Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee.

The fact that other Arab states have also behaved abominably towards Palestinians does not excuse Israel. In fact this merely underlines the folly of Israel allying itself with the US, which has armed, bribed and colluded with many of the evil regimes which Alan Shatter condemns, including Kuwait, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Congo under Mobutu, etc. He could have added Iraq under Saddam Hussein, Kazakstan, Afghanistan under the Taliban and under the warlords, Bin Laden, etc.

The simplistic point that "Israel has a right to defend itself" must always be answered. Of course all nations (and many peoples denied nationhood) have a right to defend themselves. The point is how they may defend themselves.

Crisis in the Middle East

They may not defend themselves by bombing towns and villages full of innocent people, even if terrorists hide there or even if some of their people are sympathetic to those terrorists (called freedom fighters by some). The Geneva Conventions forbid this. Israel, like its ally the US, whose rhetoric and indiscriminate bombings it now imitates, must obey international law and the Geneva Conventions.

They may not defend themselves by responding to a border incident with the illegal invasion of a sovereign state and an all-out war, knowingly killing thousands of innocent people, ruining the infrastructure, and destroying for decades (perhaps forever) beaches, marine life, fishing and livelihoods.

They may not bomb fleeing civilians, after telling them to flee. They may not bomb ambulances and hospitals. They may not prohibit ambulances, first aid, the Red Cross and other aid or relief agencies from attending to victims.

They may not deny food and water to innocent people trapped by their military. They may not use cluster bombs, which though not yet outlawed, are regarded by most decent militaries as obscene and not to be used.

Alan Shatter cannot deny any of this. - Yours, etc,

GERALDINE McDERMOTT, Moycullen, Co Galway.

Madam, - The article by Rory Miller and Alan Shatter should be compulsory reading for all appeasers of dictators and of fascists (including Islamic ones), for masters of the half-truth, for populist politicians, for the enemies of Israel and the United States and of democracy and the rule of law. And indeed for the enemies of truth itself.

Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. And it looks like it will be the only one for a very long time to come. - Is mise,

BEAIRTLE Ó CONGHAILE, Cúirt an Choláiste, Dún Dealgan, Co Lú.

Madam, - The Shatter/Miller collaborative piece was strange indeed. Let's play along and assume that all those who have written to you conveying their anger and disgust at the slaughter of innocent women and children by the Israeli army are anti-American, anti-Jewish, anti-Israeli or whatever.

Does that make the outrageous and murderous behaviour of the Israeli army and their leaders somehow acceptable? - Yours, etc,

JIM O'SULLIVAN, Rathedmond, Sligo.

Madam, - I can understand that Lara Marlowe the person is upset about the deaths and destruction in Lebanon. She has lived there for many years and is understandably sympathetic to the plight of the hapless Lebanese citizens.

However, Lara Marlowe the journalist is grossly irresponsible to launch epithets such as "mass murder", and "terrorist state" at Israel and is being simplistic in suggesting that political leaders support Israel for fear of being called "anti-Semitic." Heaven help me, I am already depressed enough at Irish knee-jerk, anti-Israeli attitudes and the pathological pre-occupation with Israeli behaviour so clearly outlined by Rory Miller and Alan Shatter.

In Ms Marlowe's world, the fact that the Israeli air force has a reputation for pin-point accuracy (unlike Hizbullah and Hamas) implies that, when they make mistakes, it must mean that, for some strange reason, they deliberately set out to murder women and children and moped riders! As for me, I wonder what would happen if the arsenals were swapped around and Hizbullah had the fire-power that the Israelis now have. God forbid! - Yours etc.

PADRAIG Ó SUILLEABHÁIN, South Circular Road, Limerick.

Madam, - The Israeli military, with the backing of the United States and Britain, engaged in a brutal war of terror against the Lebanese people, which killed more than 1,000 innocent Lebanese civilians, a third of them children and left many Lebanese towns and villages in ruins.

Crisis in the Middle East

The international community now has a moral duty to ensure that those Israelis responsible for the war crime of collective punishments against Lebanese civilians face justice, and that Israel and its backers pay full reparations to Lebanon for the deaths and damage inflicted on the country. - Yours, etc,

MAIRTIN Ó GLIOSÁIN, Athenry, Co Galway.

Load-Date: August 17, 2006

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LETTERS

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

July 24, 2006 Monday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Letters; Pg. 10

Length: 1107 words

Body

No peace unless futility of war is recognised

Middle East specialist Anthony Cordesman, as quoted in Paul McGeough's opinion piece ("Immoveable foes are playing for keeps", July 22-23), issues this most salutary warning: "For many ordinary Arabs and Muslims, there will be a clear linkage between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Lebanon conflict, war in Iraq, war in Afghanistan and the war on terrorism. They will see at least the US, and perhaps the West as a whole, as anti-Arab and anti-Muslim."

In other words, what Iran, in collaboration with Syria, is clearly managing to do is to unite the entire Muslim world against what al-Qaeda claims to be its No.1 enemy: the Zionist-Christian alliance.

This could well turn out to be a holy war that has the biblical makings of Armageddon. And unless the children of Abraham each recognise its futility, there can never be peace.

Reverend Dr Vincent Zankin

Rivett (ACT)

Hezbollah, the so-called defender of Lebanon, is proving to the world that it is, in fact, the destroyer of the country. It has shown that it has no restraints, moral or otherwise, and no responsibility for that which it is destroying.

Protest should be directed at Hezbollah, not at a country that has shown incredible restraint over the years absorbing terrorist acts, interpreted falsely by Hezbollah as weakness.

David Bornstein Balmain

The tragedy of the Middle East is a product of inhumanity to humankind. **Hamas** and Hezbollah were born out of the desperation of refugee camps of dispossessed people. One would have thought that nations would have learnt something from their own past experiences.

It is an unmistakeable fact that for Israel to have secure borders, it cannot rely on concrete walls but on the goodwill of its neighbours; that goodwill cannot come from its present policy of oppression and coercion.

Of course, the US could have played a statesman-like role, but that has been missing under the leaderless meanderings of a hateful and vengeful administration. Time and again, great opportunities have been wasted.

LETTERS

There was no statesman-like response to September 11, to the disaster of New Orleans and to the latest events in the Middle East.

Ultimately, the resolution will not come from the barrels of guns but out of a fundamental truth: no justice, no peace.

Paul Philippa Valentine

Euthanasia's no answer

Bryan Milner (First Word, July 22-23) obviously believes that a secular ethos will lead us to a better world. Who is he kidding? Surely one of the great hallmarks of an educated and humane society is its ability to give voice to those most vulnerable.

In general, children are not well served by divorce or homosexual unions, the unborn are considered "untermenschen" by abortion, voluntary euthanasia is all too easily abused to include those whose lives merely have a level of frailty, and stem cell research (presumably he means embryonic) is highly dubious in value but usually destroys viable life.

I'm a Christian, but I never find myself thinking that the teachings of Jesus are less relevant these days - in fact, quite the opposite. Especially the one about us as individuals being more valuable than the collective wealth in the world (Mark 8:36).

Bryan Milner should be happy that it includes him and is not dependent on what anybody else thinks or says. The secular alternative is to be a small disposable cog naked to exploitation in a gigantic machine.

Mark Rabich Mt Evelyn (Vic)

In 1999, June Burns, a bladder cancer patient, appeared in television advertisements in the Northern Territory as the face of the pro-euthanasia campaign. An emaciated and suffering Burns, clearly in pain, pleaded for the introduction of euthanasia laws.

Today, June Burns is in remission. If she had been euthanised, she would not have had the opportunity to spend the last seven years with her family. Somewhat ironically, the best argument against euthanasia has been provided by the pro-euthanasia lobby itself.

Nigel Freitas Roseville

Dog policy is wrong

The dreadful dog attack on Tyra Kuehne was, like most tragedies, a cascade of unlucky events, but it was not a failure of dog-control laws as has been claimed ("Debate unmuzzled: call to curb hunting dogs after girl's death", July 22-23). No law was violated, no law could have prevented the attack except one requiring secure caging of all dogs.

This attack, and others recently reported, illustrate the failure of the Government's approach to dog-safety legislation. Breed-specific laws, enacted to appease the media rather than any expectation of preventing attacks, not only have failed, but have distracted the Government from more effective approaches.

There is a dog-safety education campaign in preparation, which is a better approach than banning breeds because a specimen bites. Dog attacks can never be eliminated, but they can be reduced. They have not been reduced by the failed policies introduced to date.

Stephen Collier School of Human

and Environmental Studies, University of New England, Armidale

Need for fringe benefits

LETTERS

Michael Duffy is spot on regarding the attractions of Sydney being monopolised by a lucky minority when it comes to work opportunities, social facilities and entertainment ("More spread, greater good", July 22-23).

A more equitable sharing of community facilities such as good schools, hospitals and universities and other major employers would do wonders for some of Sydney's problems such as housing prices and transport.

I am one of those social outcasts, having dared to move from the North Shore to the western suburbs. I sometimes feel like a world away from my old friends and colleagues who have stayed in the North Shore or eastern suburbs.

I have worked as a specialist in outer-metropolitan hospitals at Nepean and Camden/Campbelltown for more than 10 years. Hardly any specialist doctors live "out in the sticks". It is virtually impossible to attract some specialties to these already under-resourced facilities. Many who start working out on the fringe eventually move to the "better" side of town.

I congratulate Michael Duffy on his perceptive analysis of life in Sydney.

Martin Low Green Valley

A negative direction

I hope the Herald's other **female** conservative commentator, Lisa Pryor, feels justifiably proud labelling teachers, police officers, nurses and other civil servants "losers".

Who else would do a job that requires the people skills of Nelson Mandela, the emotional temperament of Mother Teresa and the patience of Job? Accentuating the negative aspects of everything must be very rewarding and this commentator has got better and better at it every week since joining the Herald.

Ross Kennedy Rose Bay

Graphic

Photo:AP/Lefteris Pitarakis

Load-Date: July 17, 2007

Arabs' anger at America is hurting moderates; Islamists lifted by U.S. support of Israel

The International Herald Tribune

August 10, 2006 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 8

Length: 1148 words

Byline: Neil MacFarquhar

Dateline: DAMASCUS

Body

Mona el-Naggar contributing reporting from Cairo.

*

Moderates who seek changes across the Arab world say American support for Israel's battle with Hezbollah has put them on the defensive, tarring them by association and helping Islamist parties.

The very people that the United States wanted to encourage to promote democracy from Bahrain to Casablanca instead feel trapped by a policy that they now ridicule more or less as "destroying the region in order to save it."

Indeed, many of those who have been working for change in their own societies often isolated, harassed by state security or marginalized to begin with say American policy either strangles nascent reform movements or props up repressive governments that remain Washington's best allies in the region.

"We are really afraid of this 'new Middle East,'" said Ali Abdulemam, a 28-year-old computer engineer who founded the most popular political Web site in Bahrain. "They talk about how they will reorganize the region in a different way, but they never talk about the people, they never mention what the people want. They are just giving more power to the systems that exist already."

His opinion is shared by advocates of change across the Arab world.

Fawaziah al-Bakr, who works to promote educational change and **women's** rights in Saudi Arabia, helped organize **women** to protest the Israeli attacks. "Nobody is talking about reform in Saudi Arabia," she said. "All we talk about is the war, what to do about the war. There is no question that the U.S. has lost morally because of the war. Even if you like the people and the culture of the United States, you can't defend it."

The statement by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during a fleeting stopover in Beirut last month that the situation in Lebanon represented the birth pangs of a "new Middle East" is being juxtaposed with the mounting carnage to rally popular opposition against all things American.

Arabs' anger at America is hurting moderates Islamists lifted by U.S. support of Israel

In Lebanon, Israel continues bombing, even though the violence could destabilize the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, elected last year in a vote that the United States hailed as a democratic example for the Middle East. Iraq was the previous such example, moderates note bitterly.

In Bahrain, Abdulemam fears that a proposed new terrorism law could severely curb the freewheeling discussions on BahrainOnline.org, his Web site. It could perhaps even shut it down, because among other things the law bans attacking the Constitution. Recently, the government cut off access to Google Earth, he said, probably because too many citizens were zeroing in on royal palaces.

Members of Islamist political organizations, in particular, consider American actions a godsend, putting their own repressive governments under pressure and distancing their capitals from Washington, moderates say.

The Americans "wanted to tarnish the Islamic resistance and opposition movements, but in reality they only served them," said Sobhe Salih, a 53-year-old lawyer in the Muslim Brotherhood, which was swept into the Egyptian Parliament in last autumn's election after capturing an unprecedented 20 percent of the seats.

Glance at any television screen and chances are it will be showing mayhem in Lebanon, Baghdad or Gaza. It usually takes a minute or so to decipher which Arab city is burning. Popular satellite channels like Al Jazeera say repeatedly that the carnage arrives via American policy and American weapons.

Before 2003, the hardest step for any Islamic movement was recruitment, noted Mohamed Salah, an expert on Islamist extremist movements who writes for the pan-Arab daily Al Hayat from Cairo. Moving someone from being merely devout to being an extremist took a long time. No longer, he said. Moderate Arab governments, which have pursued peace with Israel for nearly 30 years, have seen that policy undermined among their publics by Hezbollah's ability to strike at Israel.

"Recruitment has become the easiest stage because the people have already been psychologically predisposed against the Americans, the West and against Israel," Salah said.

Moderates say they are driven to despair by what they see as inconsistencies in Washington's Middle East policy. For example, in Lebanon lives a black-turbaned Shiite cleric who runs a secretive militia close to Iran. His name is Hassan Nasrallah and Washington approves of Israel's campaign to stamp out his group, Hezbollah.

There is another black-turbaned Shiite cleric who runs a different secretive militia close to Iran. His name is Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, and he lives in Iraq. He is an American friend.

"In Iraq the same kind of group is an ally of the United States, while in Lebanon they are an enemy whom they are fighting," said Samir al-Qudah, a Jordanian civil engineer. "It has nothing to do with reform, but where America's interests lie."

The overwhelming conclusion drawn by Arabs is that Washington's interests lie with Israel, no matter what the cost.

"Those calling for democratic reform in Egypt have discovered that once Israeli interests are in conflict with political reform in the Middle East, then the United States will immediately favor Israel's interests," said Ibrahim Issa, the editor of the weekly Al Dustour, who faces a jail sentence on charges of insulting President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

Advocates of change invariably add that a credible effort to solve the issue of Arab land occupied by Israel, which they believe is the taproot of extremism, does not even seem to be on Washington's radar.

Nasrallah is particularly adept at exploiting public anger at civilian deaths in Lebanon by talking about how fickle the United States can be as a friend.

"I want you never to forget that this is the U.S. administration, Lebanon's friend, ally and lover," he mocked in a speech last Thursday. He also issued a pointed warning to other Arab leaders, that if they spent more time defending their thrones than the people of Lebanon, they might find themselves pushed off those thrones.

Arabs' anger at America is hurting moderates Islamists lifted by U.S. support of Israel

There is a general sense in the region that the Bush administration soured on pushing democracy because of the successes of Islamist parties in the most recent Egyptian and Palestinian elections the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and **Hamas**, an offshoot of the Brotherhood, in the Palestinian territories.

Political analysts are again comparing governments like that of Mubarak to that of the late shah of Iran an isolated despot who ignored the broad wishes of the population while currying favor with an American administration.

Some rulers are clearly nervous.

King Abdullah II of Jordan criticized Hezbollah when the fighting erupted nearly a month ago, but in an interview with the BBC on Tuesday he was dismissive of American plans for a "new Middle East." The monarch said he could "no longer read the political map" of the region because of black clouds gathering from Somalia to Lebanon.

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It is time for a new approach

The Scotsman

August 11, 2006, Friday

1 Edition

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Section: Pg. 27

Length: 1021 words

Body

THURSDAY, 10 August, 2006, enters the list of iconic dates that will figure forever in the history of modern terrorism. Thankfully, this time, the plot was foiled. Without the diligent investigations and swift action of the security agencies, some ten passenger aircraft might have disappeared over the middle of the Atlantic, condemning perhaps three or four thousand men, women and children to a horrible death. The worst that we have suffered on this occasion is airport delays.

The plot has all the hallmarks of an al-Qaeda operation - co-ordinated, simultaneous attacks on civilian airliners designed to cause the maximum fear and economic disruption. The operation looks very similar to an earlier - foiled - plot by al-Qaeda in the mid-Nineties to bring down 11 passenger planes over the Pacific. Known as operation Bojinka, this was masterminded by Ramzi Yousef (who carried out the first World Trade Centre bombing in 1993) and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the brains behind 9/11.

This earlier history of al-Qaeda is worth remembering, because it long pre-dates the overthrow of the Taleban, the invasion of Iraq to topple Saddam, or the current crisis in Lebanon. It reminds us that the conflict between the West and the extreme Jihadists is not new and cannot be explained merely as a response to more recent events or the alleged political failures of George Bush and Tony Blair.

The root cause of the Jihadist threat lies in the painful transition the Muslim - and particularly Arab - world is having to make towards political and economic modernity. This process has unleashed dangerous frictions between tribal, peasant communities and rapidly evolving urban society. It has produced insane differences in wealth between the oil elites and millions of unemployed Arab youth. It has undermined traditional values and community identities, leaving everyone from illiterate peasants to young PhDs feeling rootless and confused. In such a social maelstrom, people easily fall prey to extremist ideas and pat solutions.

Thwarted al-Qaeda plots

Understanding this does not lessen the need to counter Jihadist terrorism when inflicted on the West. There have been dozens of thwarted al-Qaeda plots since the 11 September attacks. Suicide bombers killed 52 people in London on 7 July, 2005; 58 in two attacks in Istanbul in 2003, and 202 in Bali in 2002. The Jihadists also murdered 191 people in Madrid on 11 March, 2004, and blew themselves up when the police closed in.

This pointless murder campaign has to be defeated and its proponents hunted down and brought to justice. If anything, yesterday's events indicate that it is time to redouble efforts to capture Osama bin Laden and ensure that the Taleban do not return in Afghanistan.

It is time for a new approach

Yet the past few years have also taught us in the West that it is too simplistic to conflate Hezbollah, Hamas, al-Qaeda, Saddam Hussein, Iran and suicidal Asian boys from the north of England into one amorphous movement under the banner "war against terrorism". The quagmire in Iraq and Lebanon is proof that we cannot bomb the Middle East into democracy.

But equally, those in the West who use the British and American failure in Iraq as a pretext to claim that the terrorist threat is a legitimate and rational response to western "imperialism" or American support for Israel are even more deluded than those US neoconservatives who thought toppling Saddam would bring instant peace to the Middle East. Bombing innocent passengers in aircraft or the London Tube is not rational politics. It is mass murder of the innocent perpetrated by fanatics who don't want to see a political solution in Palestine or anywhere else.

It is also the case that the young suicide bombers and would-be suicide bombers recruited among Britain's Muslim communities were disaffected long before Iraq and for reasons that have nothing to do with Tony Blair, geopolitics or the clash of civilisations. Iraq is merely the excuse for their misguided actions.

Long-term goals needed

If we are ever to return to a world where it is safe to get on an aeroplane, we need long-term goals as well as short-term security alerts. We require a new approach in the West towards engaging with the Arab world. One that combines a robust response to the Jihadist and Iranian threats to our own interests with a new, more multilateral approach to Arab governments. All that has been on offer so far is either extreme.

In Iraq, we are approaching a time when Britain and America will have to set a date for withdrawal. The main Sunni governments in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and even Turkey need to be persuaded that they will have to play a deeper role in Iraq post-withdrawal or risk seeing an Iranian Shia protectorate emerge.

In Lebanon, it is wrong to attempt a peace initiative that does not involve Syria, particularly if that splits Damascus from its unholy alliance with Tehran. In Palestine, Britain and America have to get Israel and Fatah's President Abbas back into negotiations in order to indicate that there is a way forward. None of these moves may produce instant results, but it is essential to fill the current diplomatic vacuum which allows al-Qaeda to flourish and win adherents.

Here in Britain, we have our own work to do. It is clear that Tony Blair should consider leaving office sooner rather than later in order to defuse the passions that have built up under his leadership and to give the UK a fresh diplomatic face.

It is also very important to ensure that yesterday's events do not blow up in the government's face. We are taking it on trust that the government's presentation of the plot to blow up the airliners with liquid bombs is correct. Regrettably, there have been occasions in the past when intelligence has proved inaccurate or when a potential threat was exaggerated for political purposes. That had better not be the case in this instance, or public confidence in the government's ability to protect its citizens and find a way to live with the Muslim world will be fatally undermined.

That said, we have survived another potential disaster. Congratulations are in order to the security forces.

Load-Date: August 11, 2006

Why Israel can no longer win this war; Whatever the terms on which the Middle East conflict is concluded, a leading expert on the region says Tel Aviv will not emerge victorious

The Evening Standard (London)

August 1, 2006 Tuesday

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London Evening Standard

Section: A MERGE; Pg. 13

Length: 1028 words

Byline: BERNARD WASSERSTEIN

Body

TO DECIDE whether a war is just, look at how it begins.

To determine whether a war is wise, watch how it ends.

Israel, no doubt, had every justification for regarding Hezbollah's unprovoked raids and rocket-launchings across its northern frontier as a violation of international law and a casus belli.

But the suspicion is growing that the Israeli government and High Command did not fully think through the foreseeable consequences of going to war. As the endgame approaches, the dismal likelihood is that Israel, not to mention Lebanon and the Middle East as whole, will emerge significantly worse off than before the fighting started.

Unless the Israeli armed forces manage to pull a dramatic rabbit out of the hat in the next few days, they will have to halt their operations without achieving the strategic objectives that they set themselves: elimination of Hezbollah as a threat to border towns in northern Israel; its humiliation, designed to serve as an object lesson to **Hamas** rocketlaunchers in the Gaza strip; and the unconditional release of the Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah.

With Israeli forces pressing into Lebanon there is no immediate sign of an end to the conflict. But discussions continue on a ceasefire, the terms of which fall far short of Israel's war aims and, if accepted, would amount to a galling rebuff for Israel. Those terms would allow Hezbollah to emerge bloodied but unbowed from the conflict. It might be required to withdraw its forces north of the Litani river but it would neither disband nor disarm. It would survive to fight another day, perhaps in another way.

Far from being humiliated, Hezbollah would emerge with an enormous boost to its reputation throughout the Arab world. Already its leader, Sheikh Nasrallah overshadows Osama bin Laden as a hero for militant Islamists.

Why Israel can no longer win this war Whatever the terms on which the Middle East conflict is concluded, a leading expert on the region says Tel Aviv will not e....

The introduction of some form of international force in southern Lebanon would represent a further setback for Israel. If her armed forces, operating with scant regard for the laws of war, cannot rein in Hezbollah, is it plausible that a UN force, however "robustly" mandated, will do the job better? Have we forgotten the lesson of the bombings of the US marine and French military barracks, resulting in hundreds of dead, in 1983 - and the way President Reagan, that most "robust" of leaders, hastily "repositioned" US forces out of Lebanon? If our memory is so short, we can be sure that Sheikh Nasrallah's is not.

Hezbollah seems no more ready now than it was a fortnight ago to release the kidnapped Israeli soldiers unconditionally.

Notwithstanding Ehud Olmert's fighting talk, he will probably have to follow the dismal example set by several previous Israeli prime ministers, and offer a disproportionate number of Arab prisoners as ransom for the soldiers' release.

To compound Israel's travails, she is now under pressure to surrender Sheba Farms, a tiny area that she has held since 1967. When Prime Minister Ehud Barak removed Israeli forces from Lebanon in 2000, the UN certified that the zone was Syrian, not Lebanese territory. Israel accordingly held on to it, pending an agreement with Syria about withdrawal from the Golan Heights - an agreement that was never reached. Hezbollah claimed that Sheba Farms was Lebanese and that its continued attacks on Israel constituted "resistance to occupation" and a liberation struggle. The strategic value of the area is slight. Supposedly its handover now would provide a face-saving inducement to Nasrallah to withdraw his men behind the Litani. But the symbolic victory that would be handed to Hezbollah would be enormous.

The bitter fruits of this war for Israel do not end there. The damage to the Israeli economy is enormous. Just two months ago Warren Buffett, supposedly the world's canniest investor, paid \$4 billion for an 80 per cent stake in the Iscar Metalworking Company. That was the largest single foreign direct investment in Israel's history. Iscar's main plant is situated in northern Galilee within earshot of the Lebanese frontier. Buffet says he doesn't regret the purchase one bit. We may doubt whether many other investors will share his fortitude.

And then there are the human costs on all sides. In less than three weeks Israel has already lost more dead and injured than in the previous six years of occasional Hezbollah harassment and crossborder pinpricks. As for the horrendous Lebanese civilian casualties, these represent a devastating further blow to Israel's moral reputation, already at a low ebb because of her conduct in the occupied territories. Some cynics are prone to dismiss such considerations as a luxury Israel cannot afford. Even on prudential grounds, they are wrong. In the long run, as Jefferson said: "The good opinion of mankind, like the lever of Archimedes, with the given fulcrum, moves the world".

We hear it argued that the destruction being wreaked by Israel in Lebanon will, at least, force her enemies to think twice before daring to attack her again. History does not lend encouragement to this notion. If the slaughter, by Israeli shelling, of a hundred civilians in the UN compound at Qana in 1996 failed to stop Hezbollah, why should the massacre of 60 innocents in the same place in 2006 make Nasrallah (let alone his Iranian and Syrian backers) pause for reflection?

The awful reality is that, by a long series of missteps, erroneous calculations, and overweening hubris, Israel's leaders have boxed their country into a dead end. They now face the terrible dilemma: either they yield to ceasefire terms that amount to a strategic defeat or they wade back into the inextricable bog that Mr Sharon so blithely entered with his invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

That was justified at the time as a response to the attempted assassination of Israel's ambassador in London and as a strategic effort to root out terrorists from southern Lebanon. The enterprise ended in ignominy, shameful civilian bloodshed, and an unproductive 18-year military commitment.

This war may be more justified. On the current evidence it is even less wise.

Why Israel can no longer win this war Whatever the terms on which the Middle East conflict is concluded, a leading expert on the region says Tel Aviv will not e....

. Bernard Wasserstein is the author of Israel and Palestine: Why They Fight and Can They Stop?

(Profile Books).

Graphic

DESTROYED: A LEBANESE **WOMEN** FLEES THE SOUTHERN TOWN OF BINT JBAIL FOLLOWING ATTACKS FROM ISRAELI FORCES

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20,000 from Canada await rescue by boat: Chartered cruise ships to start evacuation on Wednesday

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

July 18, 2006 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Byline: Matthew Fisher, Juliet O'Neill and Chantal Eustace, with file from Mike Blanchfield, Ottawa Citizen., CanWest News Service; Vancouver Sun; with files from Ottawa Citizen

Body

A fleet of six chartered cruise ships is to begin the evacuation of as many as 20,000 Canadians from Lebanon Wednesday as attacks by Israeli warplanes continue to hammer the capital Beirut and other areas of the country.

After being criticized for not doing enough to help the thousands of Canadians stranded in the country, especially in the wake of the deaths of eight members of one Lebanese-Canadian family who died in an Israeli airstrike on the weekend, the Conservative government said Monday its rescue effort would take about 4,500 people daily to Cyprus by ship.

Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay accused his critics of the "utmost irresponsibility," and said Canada has pulled evacuation plans together as quickly as any other country.

"This is not an easy exercise," he said in an interview. "Planning started as soon as the conflict erupted."

North Vancouver resident Mohamad Seblani, 56, is relieved evacuation plans are underway but says things need to move quickly.

His wife and two children are in Lebanon on vacation and he fears for their safety.

"I don't know what our government is waiting for? It's getting worse every day," he says. "I'm afraid for them. I'm so worried for them."

Seblani says he wants his family out of Lebanon as soon as possible.

Mona Chaaban, 50, a restaurant owner in Vancouver with extended family in Lebanon, agrees the government's response is too little too late.

"With all respect to my government, it's taken them too long to act," says Chaaban. "It took six or seven days. It doesn't look good for Canada."

20,000 from Canada await rescue by boat: Chartered cruise ships to start evacuation on Wednesday

MacKay said the cruise ships, each with a capacity of 600 to 900 passengers, would start picking up Canadians at the port of Beirut as of mid-day Wednesday. They will ferry people back and forth for at least three days, possibly more.

The government doesn't know how many Canadians want out, but the number of those registered with the government has doubled to about 25,000 in the last few days and about 50,000 are believed to be in the country.

MacKay guessed a third of them are in the south part of the country, where bombing by Israel precludes any rescue of Canadians or safe overland passage to Beirut.

"The intensity right now of the bombing is such that to send people there, even to send buses or armoured cars, we don't have that equipment on the ground," he said.

A 16-member Canadian military contingency planning assistance team will oversee the evacuation at each end, ensuring orderly boarding of passengers based on a priority system that puts ill or injured or elderly people, and women and children first, he said.

"Once they're on the boat there will be time to decide whether the flights have to take off right away, whether there might have to be an overnight, all of those logistical plans will be worked out by the teams on the ground," he said.

Responding to a string of weekend reports in which Canadians complained they could not find out about evacuation or about their loved ones, MacKay defended the government's communication system. He said wait times for those calling had been reduced to five minutes, that 40 more personnel were en route to Lebanon to help the embassy and that more than 100 wardens, Canadians who live in Lebanon, would help ensure communication among Canadians within the country.

MacKay rejected critics who say Canadians have had to wait too long to get in touch with the embassy or Foreign Affairs, and that evacuation plans have lagged behind other countries and may not work smoothly. He said it's easy to criticize from the sidelines, but that simply fuels insecurity, frustration and anger.

"This is going to be a mess," predicted Jim Karygiannis, Liberal MP for Scarborough-Agincourt. "They've dropped the ball on this, massively. They're not prepared."

Vancouver resident Nick Kahwaji is pleased with the evacuation plans for his Canadian friends and family, but worries this strategy could make things worse.

"I'm happy Stephen Harper will accelerate evacuation but it's a double-edged sword," Kahwaji said. "If we get the western people out quickly, it could escalate war. They'll be safe, but we think it will escalate war."

Kahwaji said he'd like the Canadian government to act a mediator in the dispute.

"We want Canada to broker a ceasefire," said Kahwaji. "We'd like it to be resolved through negotiation and understanding."

Rida Bazzi, a 35-year-old Vancouver pharmacist, said the evacuation plans won't help his loved ones trapped in Lebanon since they are not Canadian citizens.

"Canada plays a role of a peaceful country all over the world," Bazzi said. "I'd like Canada to find a peaceful solution and stop the killing."

The immediate plan is to have chartered flights waiting at an airport in Cyprus to fly people back to Canada, MacKay said, although that part is still a bit sketchy and depends on numbers of people and the capacity of the airport.

For now, Canada has chartered three planes.

20,000 from Canada await rescue by boat: Chartered cruise ships to start evacuation on Wednesday

The United States is planning to evacuate several thousands of its citizens from Lebanon, while groups ranging from a few dozen to several hundred have already been rescued -- most overland to Syria -- by Sweden, Norway, Britain, Denmark and Germany.

Officials from Jordan say about 1,200 people fleeing Lebanon through Syria have been arriving daily. Syria puts the number of the displaced crossing its border at about 100,000.

As many as 100 Israeli warplanes ranged over Lebanon for the sixth day Monday, hitting army bases in the north and a gas tank farm in northern Beirut. The aircraft, which have flown more than 2,000 sorties since last Wednesday, also returned to attack old targets, pounding the port of Beirut and destroying the last two functioning tanks containing jet fuel at the Beirut airport. Gas stations were also targeted again across the country.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert vowed Monday that the attacks would continue until three soldiers kidnapped by Hezbollah and Hamas are returned.

"Israel will not be held hostage -- not by terror gangs or by a terrorist authority or by any sovereign state," Olmert said in a speech that was broadcast live across Israel.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Mark Van Manen, Vancouver Sun; Mohamed Seblane is concerned for the safety of his children, Mustafa, 16, and daughter Rabab, 14, who are on a vacation in Lebanon, in the town of Rayak in the east.

Load-Date: July 18, 2006

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Harper to fly evacuees home

The Toronto Star
July 20, 2006 Thursday

Copyright 2006 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd.

Section: NEWS; Pg. A01

Length: 1006 words

Byline: Oakland Ross, Toronto Star With files from Les Whittington, Star wire services

Dateline: LARNACA, Cyprus

Body

This palm-rimmed Mediterranean island calls itself "the gateway to peace and safety" in a war-scarred region, and it was here that Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper spent the night last night, sleeping aboard his airplane.

"This is something that's quite important to the PM," said an official from Harper's office, who briefed a handful of Canadian reporters early this morning in a restaurant at Larnaca's modest airport. "We don't know when he will be leaving."

Harper was determined to wait for an estimated 261 Canadian evacuees who last night were at sea somewhere between the Lebanese capital and the coast of Cyprus, which this week has been receiving hundreds of foreign nationals a day, all fleeing the aerial bombardment and the bloodshed in the conflict between Israel and Arab militants in southern Lebanon.

Chartered by the Canadian government, a 62-metre cruising yacht called the Blue Dawn departed Beirut harbour last night, and an ambitious Canadian rescue effort was finally, formally underway.

During a stopover in Paris on the way home from the recent G-8 summit in St. Petersburg, Russia, Harper and his staff decided to detour to Cyprus to carry at least some of the first flurry of Canadian evacuees home.

To make space on Harper's aircraft, 21 reporters and photographers who had been travelling with him through Britain, Russia and France were left in Paris, and personnel on the aircraft was drastically reduced. The skeleton crew included a doctor, at least a half-dozen RCMP security personnel, the Prime Minister's official photographer and three communications assistants. Harper's wife, Laureen, was also on board.

That left room for about 100 Canadian evacuees to make the non-stop trip to Ottawa.

The Canadian government has seven vessels booked to evacuate people from Lebanon but the vast majority are going to Turkey, not Cyprus.

The foreign affairs department also chartered an aircraft to meet the Canadians arriving in Cyprus and said enough seats would be available on the two planes to fly out the entire first boatload of evacuees.

It was unclear when the other ships and aircraft would arrive.

Harper to fly evacuees home

"There is a bottleneck, all countries are having difficulty getting their ships into the harbour" in Beirut, Sandra Buckler, the Prime Minister's spokesperson, said earlier yesterday.

The federal government has also commissioned Air Transat and Air Canada to provide flights home for some of the thousands of Canadian refugees trying to flee Lebanon.

The government was finalizing its plans yesterday to have Air Canada fly home Canadians from Turkey and Cyprus, while Air Transat has confirmed it will pick up 1,000 Canadian evacuees from Turkey.

Harper's aircraft touched down in Cyprus at a little past 11 p.m. local time yesterday, and he was greeted by Cypriot foreign minister Yiorgos Lillikas, who boarded the plane.

Harper did not leave the plane last night, and an official in his office said he was not expected to disembark at any point during his brief stay in Cyprus.

The Challenger is equipped with a separate sleeping compartment, but the official from Harper's office said the room was a modest affair, as was the Prime Minister's bed.

"It's not the most comfortable," the official said. "It's small in size."

The official objected to recent reports in the Canadian news media that have been critical of what some call a slow start to the country's efforts to rescue its citizens trapped in Lebanon by the current conflict.

"We have acted quite quickly," the official said. "We've acted within days."

He described the operation as a complex logistical challenge and noted that Canada has more of its nationals in Lebanon at present - as many as 50,000 by some estimates - than any other Western country.

On Monday, 16 Canadians arrived here aboard an Italian naval destroyer, the first of their compatriots to escape the war by way of Cyprus, but they will not be among the passengers aboard the Prime Minister's aircraft when it leaves the island.

"I think they are leaving later on," said a Canadian diplomat yesterday.

Those who do join Harper for the homeward journey will likely be selected on the basis of urgency, with the sick, elderly, families with small children, and pregnant women at the top of the list, the official from Harper's office said.

He became vague, however, when asked what security screening the rescued passengers or their luggage would be subjected to before they boarded the Prime Minister's plane.

"There's a certain process they need to pass," he said, but he did not elaborate.

In Paris early yesterday, Harper denied that his detour was a publicity stunt meant to counter criticism that his government had mishandled efforts to rescue Canadians from Lebanon.

"It's more than a symbolic trip, there is a need for air support in Cyprus," Harper told reporters after he cancelled his return to Ottawa and ordered his government Airbus to Cyprus.

"Because of the seriousness of the situation and our relative proximity to Cyprus, I've decided to take the Canadian Forces aircraft we've been travelling on to help airlift evacuees back home.

"We believe it's the right thing to do and that's why we are going to do it," Harper said. Buckler told reporters the federal government would foot the cost of the rescue operation, which could take weeks.

Harper said Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert telephoned him yesterday to "communicate the sorrow of the Israeli government" for the death of eight Canadians killed in an Israeli air strike in Lebanon this week.

Harper to fly evacuees home

Harper said he received assurances from Olmert that the Israeli military would try to minimize civilian casualties in the fighting in Lebanon and would not block ships carrying Canadians from Beirut.

In his call to Harper, Olmert expressed his appreciation for Canada's statements of support for Israel in the campaign against Hezbollah and **Hamas**.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard also called Harper yesterday and asked for help getting Australians out of Lebanon. Harper reportedly said Canada would do what it could.

Load-Date: July 20, 2006

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Israelis turn Gaza into camp of despair

The International Herald Tribune

July 13, 2006 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 5

Length: 1088 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger

Dateline: SHUKA, Gaza Strip

Body

Khairi Edbary and his family of eight normally share a tiny concrete house with his brother and his family of eight a raw dividing wall of concrete blocks providing a touch of privacy.

These days, however, the house is almost empty. The Edbarys live on the eastern edge of the broken runway of what was once the Gaza airport, which has now been taken over by Israeli troops. Like many of the people here, mostly poor farmers, the Edbarys have heeded the Israeli call to evacuate their homes to escape the fighting and are now sleeping in UN schools in nearby Rafah.

Edbary, 36, displayed a large brass shell from an Israeli heavy machine gun that had fallen from an attack helicopter onto his roof. "At night," he said, "the noise is frightening, and the firing shakes the ground. They shoot at anything moving at night."

He had returned to his house on Tuesday to prepare some food for his family and retrieve documents for a sick daughter, before making his way back about three miles to the Rafah Elementary Boys School, run by the UN Relief and Works Agency, which helps Palestinian refugees and their families.

In the past week, the agency has opened two schools in Rafah to house the displaced people of Shuka and southern Gaza. There are about 1,000 people in 136 families at the two schools, sleeping on thin mattresses in empty classrooms, said Jamal Hamad, an agency spokesman, "but the numbers are increasing every day."

Initially, people like Fayez Sawarka, 40, stayed at home. But the Israeli incursion into the airport and its surrounding neighborhood, with tanks, armored bulldozers and artillery, destroyed some of the narrow roads and made it difficult if not impossible for farmers to get to their fields or to bring in food.

The shelling and the noise were followed by Israeli calls on loudspeakers for residents to leave their homes for their own safety.

"We just took our identity cards and the clothes we were wearing," Sawarka said, adding that he, his wife and their 10 children lived for a week in the open, outside Rafah. Locals fed them, and the UN agency finally brought them a tent, then began to open the schools.

"We left all the crops in the ground," he said: watermelon, garlic, cucumbers and tomatoes. "I know nothing about my house."

Israelis turn Gaza into camp of despair

The agency provides food, water and shelter, plus some social workers. But no one knows how long this will last.

For John Ging, the director of operations for the agency in Gaza, the Israeli incursion aimed at forcing the release of a captured soldier is the latest strain on a population already suffering from a broad economic boycott of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, which has been unable to pay salaries for five months.

"There is now a humanitarian crisis here," Ging said. "For many Palestinians now, it's a struggle to survive, for the basics of life."

Before the Israeli incursion, the agency and other aid institutions were struggling to help people cope with the lack of jobs and salaries.

Now, he said, with the destruction of Gaza's only power plant, the bombing of some key bridges, the damage to water pipes and the sleep deprivation caused by sonic booms, "there is collective suffering here that doesn't distinguish" between civilian and fighter.

"We are all collectively living with the consequences of that Israeli military action," he said. "It affects everyone."

Ging said that Israeli citizens under Palestinian rocket fire were also living in fear, and that that was equally unacceptable. "All lives are equal," he said.

Still, his job is Gaza, and with the closure of the Karni border crossing because of security alerts, "we'll run out of broad beans and whole milk in another day," he said.

The agency now distributes food packages to 725,000 of Gaza's 1.4 million people, an increase of 100,000 in the past month, he said. There are 235 shipping containers of food in Israel, he said, at the Ashdod port, waiting to be brought through the Karni crossing.

According to the World Food Program, "the last two weeks have had a significant impact on food security," with shortages of milk and sugar, and only a week's supply of flour remaining, said a spokeswoman, Kirstie Campbell. Food companies and bakeries are struggling with the power cuts, she said, and fishermen are not allowed out beyond the harbor, though Israel allowed the program to bring in some canned meat and flour on Monday through the Erez crossing, normally used only for people.

"The issue is capacity," she said. The one truck through Erez took an hour and contained 25 metric tons of food, she said. But 1,000 metric tons of flour is waiting in Ashdod, though that represents only a third of the agency's monthly needs for its 160,000 recipients.

Israel has said that it is trying to minimize harm to civilians as it seeks to force the release of the soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, and stop rocket fire into Israeli towns. Since the Israeli incursion began nearly two weeks ago, more than 50 Palestinians have died, most of them militants.

Israel also said that it has allowed in needed gasoline and diesel fuel, medicine and foodstuffs, and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert noted Monday that Israel was still supplying Gaza with water and electricity because "we don't want to punish the civilian population."

Still, after the damage to the power plant, most Gazans get only six hours of electricity a day, at unpredictable times, so food refrigeration becomes a problem. So does water supply, because many Gazans use electric pumps to get their water, and there are similar problems with sewage treatment.

On Saturday the head of Israel's Gaza liaison administration, Colonel Nir Press, told The Jerusalem Post that "the situation in Gaza is not even close to developing into a humanitarian crisis," saying such charges made by the Palestinians were aimed at deceiving the international community.

Ging, the UN representative, said in response: "There's growing resentment expressed to me about the debate whether it's a humanitarian crisis or not. It is a humanitarian crisis."

Israelis turn Gaza into camp of despair

In Shuka, Edbary said that he supported the raid into Israel that captured the soldier and thought that Israel should be willing to negotiate some form of prisoner exchange.

"At least Israel should release the women and children prisoners of ours that they have," he said. "It's shameful."

Does Edbary think his government bears some responsibility for the troubles he now has? His eyes wandered. "I don't care about politics," he said. "I care about our dignity."

Load-Date: July 13, 2006

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Democracy is more than just voting

The Philadelphia Inquirer

July 23, 2006 Sunday

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The Philadelphia Inquirer

Found on Philly.com

Section: CURRENTS; Pg. E07

Length: 1087 words

Body

Frida Ghitis

is a freelance correspondent on foreign affairs

It seems a distant memory now, but only a year ago, the Arab Middle East appeared poised for a democratic transformation. Even some of Washington's harshest critics grudgingly conceded that an "Arab Spring," inspired by American support and intervention, had begun to flower. Change was indeed coming to the least democratic region in the world.

Lebanon had seen a "Cedar Revolution," with massive popular protests forcing Syria to loosen its grip and pull its troops out of the country in time for new elections. Egypt's seemingly eternal president, Hosni Mubarak, announced he would allow other candidates to compete against him in the next election. Kuwait finally agreed to let women vote and run for office. And Saudi Arabia opened the polls for municipal councils. The world took notice when Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt described what he called "the start of a new Arab world."

"The Syrian people, the Egyptian people," Jumblatt noted, "all say that something is changing. The Berlin Wall has fallen. We can see it."

If so, someone quickly rebuilt much of it. Today, such optimism is not much more than a memory. Little more than a year after the Arab Spring, the blossoms are wilting in the summer heat. Israel and Hezbollah trade bombs, missiles and threats of all-out war, while the impotent government of Lebanon looks on, the country's army a sad irrelevance.

Iraq has a parliament but also chaos. In the Palestinian Territories, elections brought to power Hamas, a radical Islamic organization considered a terrorist organization by most Western nations. In Iraq, secular parties barely registered in elections against much better-organized religious parties. There, too, the sword looks mightier than the poll.

In Egypt, a questionable election turned members of the Islamic Brotherhood into the second-largest bloc in parliament. The government has indefinitely postponed the next elections, and repression is again the order of the day. For democracy advocates in Cairo, euphoria has given way to something bordering on despair.

Democracy is more than just voting

"The country is falling apart in front of our eyes and we can't do anything about it. It's like watching a train wreck." That's the mood according to one progressive Egyptian, known by his blog name, SandMonkey.

Not that pushing for democratic change in the Mideast was itself a mistake. After all, the Mideast's entrenched autocracies produced staggering economic, educational and political stagnation in the Arab world. They turned the region into a lab for extremist ideology spreading around the globe like a toxic oil spill. When government does nothing for its people and forbids participation in any organization except the mosque, fundamentalism by definition becomes the only alternative.

America's mistake lay in stressing elections while ignoring other indispensable elements of democracy. That let sly regimes trick the United States (again) into fearing that democracy would inevitably bring extremists to power.

Instead, America - and the world - should push for the basic requirements of democracy, the freedoms without which elections don't really mean very much: political parties, a free press, freedom of assembly, an independent judiciary, and other elements of civil society and human rights.

Beyond that, no democracy can survive with assorted militias using force to pursue objectives not shared by the elected government. As Lebanon painfully demonstrates, a government needs more than democratic elections to establish its credibility and authority. An essential requirement for a functioning sovereign state, as philosophers and political scientists have long noted, is that the government must have a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force.

A government that claims to rule, while armed militias it cannot control run amok, risks becoming a bystander in the kind of chaos and instability we now see in Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Iraq. When militias take their orders from another government and foreign forces enter the scene, the will of voters becomes collateral damage - no matter how heartfelt the excitement on election day.

Elections alone are not enough. When I asked Alhamed Alanezi, a Saudi, if he ever participated in political activities, he told me he would do it "only if I wanted a little time to myself, away from the family, in a prison cell somewhere." Alanezi recently moved to London, where he writes the blog *The Religious Policeman*.

Iraq was unique, since the alternative to elections was keeping an American-appointed government in power. Elections were the only way to begin building a new system. But, just as in the rest of the region, years of political repression meant that only religious organizations have had the chance to promote their views. Hardly surprising, then, that they did so well in the polls.

Arab regimes have long argued that allowing people to vote would bring radicals to power. To prove this, countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia made sure any democratic test brought gains only to extremists. The most egregious example was Mubarak's imprisonment of his progressive opponent Ayman Nour. Nour, a liberal who challenged Mubarak for the presidency last year, today languishes in jail on trumped-up charges.

Democracy activists say they value and need America's help. Most - not all - think the Iraqi war was a terrible way to force democratic change. America, they say, should be firm and supportive, but it is the countries themselves that must take the lead.

Despite the reverses, it's not all brushfires and wilted flowers along the path to democracy. In some places, the United States has applied pressure in just the right spots.

I reached Lulwa al-Mulla, a democratic activist in Kuwait, during an unforgettable election day in the emirate. For the first time in history, women could run for office and cast their vote. Exhilarated and proud as she watched women streaming to the polls, she told me, "We fought for our democracy." Americans, she said, proved extremely helpful - not only by freeing Kuwait from Iraqi invaders in 1990, but also by pushing for women's rights and helping with democratic training and education.

Democracy is more than just voting

The region remains in desperate and urgent need of change. Accepting entrenched dictatorships will not help. Democracy remains the only solution. The last year proves only that achieving it will require much more than simply calling voters to the polls.

Contact Frida Ghitis at fghitis@gmail.com.

Load-Date: July 23, 2006

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**Comment & Debate: Only Hizbullah can defend against an Israeli invasion:
Attempts to impose an international force would risk destroying Lebanon's
government and revive the danger of civil war**

The Guardian - Final Edition

July 28, 2006 Friday

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Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES ; Pg. 33

Length: 1090 words

Byline: Jonathan Steele, Beirut

Body

A rally of well-dressed middle-class ladies, perhaps 40 in all, protested outside the UN's offices here on Wednesday, calling for a ceasefire. Representing the Lebanese Council of Women, they handed out leaflets appealing to Kofi Annan to get something done.

They were fewer in number than the recent anti-war demonstrators in Tel Aviv, but more representative. While today's peaceniks in Israel are a lonely, though perhaps slowly growing, minority, the cry for a ceasefire is overwhelming in Lebanon. Why bother to demonstrate when the issue is so obvious?

So my strongest impression of the rally came from Lamia Osseiran, one of its organisers: "The Israelis are radicalising Lebanon, even liberal democrats like me. I took part in last year's demonstrations against Syria. I was a critic of Hizbullah. Now I cannot help but support Hizbullah's fighters who are defending our country." What about Hizbullah's rocket attacks on Haifa? "It's right," she replied. "It's not only Lebanese who should have to suffer. Are human rights available only to Israelis? You can't have winter and summer on the same roof."

Similar views can be heard from many Shias. They have closed ranks behind Hizbullah under the weight of Israeli bombing. Among Sunnis the mood is more complex. The port town of Sidon, south of Beirut, is 90% Sunni. Over the past week it has taken in 70,000 Shia refugees, most of them militant supporters of Hizbullah. They are eager to convince their new Sunni neighbours of the justice of the Hizbullah cause. Whether they have succeeded will not be known until the bombing stops, but every new day of Israel's air strikes on the south lessens the force of the argument that it is all Hizbullah's fault.

The stronghold of anti-Hizbullah feeling is in Lebanon's Christian areas. They have suffered little bombing, and many people argue that Hizbullah is reaping what it sowed. As Youssef Haddad, a young teacher at the American University of Beirut, put it: "If you want a war with Israel, you have to pay the price. I didn't take the decision to attack Israel."

Yet what counts most for now is not the popular reaction but what is happening inside the Lebanese government. Condoleezza Rice seems to have little understanding of the country's political forces. Last year's so-called cedar revolution, with its simplistic "people power" image and the election victory of anti-Syrian parties, apparently led Washington, and alarmingly Downing Street as well, to believe that Lebanon has a radically new and pro-western government.

Comment & Debate: Only Hizbullah can defend against an Israeli invasion: Attempts to impose an international force would risk destroying Lebanon 's government a....

In fact, Lebanon has a government of national unity in which Hizbullah has two ministers. Being anti-Syrian is not the same as being anti-Hizbullah, and the election winners from the March 14 movement, which developed after the car-bomb murder of the former prime minister Rafik Hariri, wisely recognised that the party is an authentic part of Lebanese society. It was better to have it in the government rather than outside.

Demonising Hizbullah as terrorists or Iranian and Syrian agents confuses the picture. Moreover, the only party that declined to take part in government, the Maronite Christians led by Michel Aoun, made a tactical alliance with Hizbullah. Since the Israeli attacks Aoun has been one of Hizbullah's most vocal defenders.

While accepting Hizbullah's political weight, no Lebanese politician believes that its military wing can be disarmed against its will. Their view has to be the starting point for any discussion of an international force for southern Lebanon, whether it is a beefed-up version of the current UN force, Unifil, or some sort of "coalition of the willing".

In one sense Israel created Hizbullah. Its occupation of Lebanon after 1982 turned a group of suicide bombers into a resistance movement like Europe's second world war partisans. Expecting foreigners to remove Hizbullah's weapons is a non-starter. Israel is taking heavy casualties in attempting it. How would other foreign occupiers have more success?

Earlier this year Lebanese parties were holding a "national dialogue" to work out, among other issues, how to strengthen the Lebanese army and find a different role for Hizbullah's guerrilla forces. "One option would be to absorb the militia into the Lebanese army and another would be to turn it into a national guard under government control," Michel Faroun, an MP from the March 14 movement, said last week.

The dialogue on Lebanon's defence strategy was only exploratory, since the government agreed that no decisions could be taken until Israel withdrew from the land known as Shebaa farms, occupied since 1967. The latest two weeks of Israeli attacks have reinforced Hizbullah's argument that it cannot disarm until the Lebanese army is stronger.

It is not a question of redeploying the Lebanese army in Hizbullah's place. Only Hizbullah knows the terrain well enough, and has sufficient experience and motivation to defend Lebanon against any future Israeli invasion.

The Lebanese government's position on the idea of an international force is not yet clear. Hizbullah and Amal, the other Shia party, insist that the prime minister, Fouad Siniora, only had a mandate in Rome on Wednesday to call for a ceasefire and a prisoner exchange. Although Siniora expressed support for strengthening Unifil, analysts assume he thought this position was safe as long as the mandate and mission are still to be agreed. If the idea took off he would have time to argue that it can only come in with the consent of Hizbullah and Amal.

Attempts to impose a force would risk destroying the Lebanese government and revive the danger of a civil war. Perhaps this is Israel's intention. It has shown great skill in exacerbating splits between Fatah and **Hamas** in the Palestinian territories, and may think of doing the same in Lebanon.

European governments should resist the idea. Jacques Chirac has rightly said a Nato force is out of the question since the alliance is seen as "the armed wing of the west". Even without this association, any force would risk being seen as Israel's instrument. Israel's plan seems to be either to use foreigners to do its work or, if that fails, to turn south Lebanon into a giant Rafah - the city in Gaza where it demolished hundreds of homes and created a free-fire zone in which anything that moved was shot.

What Lebanon needs, as Siniora said in Rome, is an immediate ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal so that refugees can go home before any more destruction is wrought. The world should take its cue from that.

j.steele@guardian.co.uk

Load-Date: July 28, 2006

Comment & Debate: Only Hizbullah can defend against an Israeli invasion: Attempts to impose an international force would risk destroying Lebanon 's government a....

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For now, at least, the west should play Iran at its game

Financial Times (London, England)

June 30, 2006 Friday

London Edition 1

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Section: COMMENT AND ANALYSIS; Pg. 15

Length: 1072 words

Body

A paymaster to violent Islamists, a would-be nuclear power and an implacable enemy of Israel: Iran presents a profound threat to the Middle East and to global security. Before too long, an Iran back in the international community and closer to democracy than any of its neighbours could emerge as a pivotal, pro-western force for stability in the region.

Both pictures can be convincingly drawn. Scratch below the surface of the anxiety about Tehran's nuclear ambitions and most western governments hold to the two propositions simultaneously. The tension between them explains the hesitations and frustrations in their relationship with Tehran.

How to deal robustly with the present Iranian leadership without strengthening the domestic authority of the fundamentalists; how to reassure pro-democracy reformers of the west's good intentions, even as it threatens Iran with isolation and pariah status?

You do not have to sit in the White House to worry about Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad, the Iranian president. Today's Iran is a proud sponsor of Hizbollah and of other Islamist groups committed to violent upheaval in the region. It has backed Shia militias in the sectarian violence in Iraq. Its links with Hamas point to a strategy to assume the leadership of radical Islam across the Middle East.

Statements by Mr Ahmadi-Nejad demanding that Israel be swept into the sea echo those long made by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader. Whatever the leadership says about the peaceful intentions of its nuclear research, the International Atomic Energy Authority has documented an extensive history of deceit.

Now peer, albeit hopefully, into the future. Everything about the social, political and cultural complexion of Iran points to its potential to emerge as a moderate, perhaps even pro-western, Muslim state. The parallel with Turkey is often drawn.

According to United Nations estimates, nearly a third of Iran's population is under the age of 15. About half are 20 or younger. This overwhelmingly young demographic profile is leaving the ayatollahs behind. For Iran's youth, the fall of the Shah and the confrontation with the "Great Satan" are fading pages from history. Culturally, at least, the young are instinctively pro-American.

There are other obvious markers of modernity: high standards of education, a democratically-minded middle class that has remained tuned in to the world beyond; and, for all the restrictions imposed by the ayatollahs, a level of

For now, at least, the west should play Iran at its game

emancipation among women scarcely known in neighbouring Muslim nations. Where else do the basic conditions for democracy look so propitious?

The snag is that there are two different time cycles at work. The best guess of international nuclear experts is that Iran's scientists are four or five years from building a nuclear weapon. They are closer than that to mastering most of the intricate technology. Yet even those resolutely optimistic about a pluralist political future for Iran believe that it could well be another 10 years before pro-democracy reformists triumph.

The international community is left to navigate the dangers of the present without sacrificing the opportunities of the future - to offer Mr Ahmadi-Nejad a mix of incentives and penalties sufficient to persuade him to impose a moratorium on Iran's nuclear programme without strengthening his hand against those who would like to see Iran re-integrated into the international community.

The decision by the US to offer direct negotiations with Iran - and to put its name to the package of incentives offered by Britain, Germany and France, the so-called EU3 - was an important step in this direction. In its own terms, the bargain now on offer looks a reasonable one. Iran would be assured of its unalienable right to peaceful nuclear technology and would be guaranteed access to fuel for its reactors and to European know-how.

Beyond that, the promise is admission to the international economic system through membership of the World Trade Organisation, talks on regional security arrangements and an easing in US sanctions. All this represents a significant shift by the administration of President George W. Bush. In return, Iran is asked to declare a moratorium on uranium enrichment and any other routes to nuclear weapons.

There are few signs for optimism. Some of the rhetoric from Tehran has been half positive. But Ali Larijani, Iran's chief negotiator, has thus far seemed more intent on delay than engagement. The regime wants more time to perfect the centrifuge technology that has seen it begin to enrich small quantities of uranium.

It also knows how to exploit the differences within the UN Security Council. Russia has made no secret of its opposition to sanctions if Iran rejects the latest offer. China has slipped in behind Russia in stalling agreement on a UN resolution that would allow sanctions. Moscow and Beijing share the strategic objectives of halting Iran's nuclear programme but, for a mixture of commercial and political reasons, recoil from a confrontation with Tehran.

Russia's Vladimir Putin may shift a little to prevent the divisions from overshadowing the July summit of the Group of Eight nations in St Petersburg. But as long as Moscow equivocates, Mr Ahmadi-Nejad will grab the chance to divide and rule. The temptation for Washington will be to force the issue, perhaps in favour of sanctions applied by a coalition of willing allies.

That would be a mistake. If the Iranian regime is playing a delaying game, the west should not abandon the waiting game. The nuclear threat is real but not yet imminent. Now that it has broken with its previous refusal to talk to Tehran, the US should set out more explicitly the opportunities open to a non-nuclear Iran. These should include a firm security guarantee. Mr Ahmadi-Nejad must be seen by his fellow Iranians to be dragging Iran into isolation rather than being pushed there by the US.

Ultimately, there may be little that the international community can do. The regime's determination to acquire a nuclear weapons capability may be such that it will resist blandishments and sanctions alike. In that case the only option will be a return to the hard-headed policies of containment and deterrence deployed against the Soviet Union during the cold war. But we are not there yet. To ostracise Iran now may be to further radicalise it. In dealing with today's threat, the west must keep an eye on tomorrow's opportunity.

Load-Date: June 30, 2006

A light in the darkness; A college in Israel is using film to promote understanding between warring factions in the Middle East. By ROGER CLARKE

The Independent (London)

June 23, 2006 Friday

First Edition

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The  INDEPENDENT

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Byline: ROGER CLARKE

Body

In its promotional brochure, Sapir College calls itself "a lighthouse in the Negev". Despite being in the firing line of **Hamas** Qassam rockets hurled daily from Palestinian Gaza territories, the college holds the Cinema South Film Festival every year with a particular orientation towards the graduation films of its students and invited guests from around the world. Sapir is the largest public college in Israel and does its best to encourage the admission of Muslim students. This is the Israel you never hear much about.

Avner Fainguelernt runs the film department in Sapir and lives with his wife and three children near the college. A few years ago he made a remarkable documentary about a Palestinian fisherman. I met Fainguelernt in London last year and he impressed me with his commitment to the idea of a film festival that actually brings communities together. For a few months I did my best to act as an intermediary between his festival and various Iranian and Arab directors whom he was keen to invite. But the situation was impossible. Iranian film-makers would tell me in private that they wanted to attend - but dealing with Israel can mean imprisonment and possibly even death in Iran.

This year Fainguelernt invited me to be on the graduation film jury. The day before I left at the beginning of June there was a sudden deterioration in the situation in Gaza, after an Israeli artillery shell killed a family enjoying a day at the beach. By the time I arrive at the kibbutz at Nir-am by Sderot, there are more than 20 home-made Qassam rockets a day being fired into Israeli zones. In truth, these unguided projectiles have killed almost no one over the years, but their effect on the Israeli psyche is considerable.

I leave almost immediately for the city of Rahat - about 45 minutes from Sderot - one of the poorest cities in Israel. But the story of Sapir College's link with it is astonishing. With its Bedouin population, the city is almost entirely Muslim' the darker-skinned inhabitants are, I am told by Eyal Sivan, the descendants of slaves snatched from Africa. Sivan is the Paris-based Israeli dissident and documentary-maker who has helped put together the programme in Rahat with Fainguelernt.

A light in the darkness A college in Israel is using film to promote understanding between warring factions in the Middle East. By ROGER CLARKE

Two years ago Sapir College sourced financing from the Goldfarb Fund for the purchase of cameras and an editing room solely for the use of people in Rahat. Local Muslims were encouraged to make their own short films. I have the extraordinary experience of sitting in a cinema in Israeli territory with about 60 women wearing hijabs and watching the film *Paradise Now* by Hany Abu-Assad, the Oscar-nominated drama about Palestinian suicide bombers.

Another film the festival is showing in Rahat is called *Shadya* - the true story of a 17-year-old Muslim girl from North Israel who becomes a karate champion in the Israeli national team, to the horror of her conservative brothers. At the beginning of the screening Fainguelernt makes an impassioned plea to the young Muslim audience to come and study at Sapir College - scholarships are liberally bestowed. "It's remarkable how the women students in particular have taken to making films as a way of stepping outside of their lives," Sivan tells me. "It's a safe way for them to express themselves."

As we leave Rahat, a full moon is rising in the sky and Fainguelernt drives us on to the Nabia Meeri promontory above the Beit Hanoun refugee camps in Palestine. Flares light up the landscape as the Israeli army scours the landscape for bombers. The Nabia Meeri site was originally planted with olive trees to commemorate the Druze (that is to say Islamic) colonel in the Israeli army from Galilee and was intended to be a place that celebrated peaceful co-existence between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Now it seems abandoned, the olive trees dusty and untended.

On Monday the situation deteriorates further - I actually hear my first Qassam rocket explode. Every time a Qassam is detected coming over the wall, an Israeli loud-hailer system blares the Hebrew words "red dawn" over and over again, which is possibly even worse than the attacks themselves. On the Israeli news, the wife of a former minister who lives in Sderot implores everyone to come to the film festival as an act of resistance. It's not quite the best advice. The festival itself is the opposite of an act of resistance to Palestine and I'm told that not even Israelis from Tel Aviv will come.

In the evening, security goes into overdrive when the Israeli arts minister pays a surprise (and some say unwelcome) visit and promises new funds for the cinema buildings. During his speech, an irritated Sivan conspicuously leaves his seat in the audience. "I had a fight with him before he went on stage," Sivan tells me later. Fainguelernt seems to be spending all his time taking calls from the Israeli media, incredulous he could be so foolish as to run a festival in these times.

During the week, I'm glad to discover the second cinema building is technically classified as a bunker, as on Tuesday the Israeli army attacks the house of a Qassam mastermind. Onstage, I talk with Samba Felix N'Diaye from Senegal, who has brought his documentary about the Rwandan genocide with him. It's very good. Where were Africa's writers, film-makers and intellectuals during the genocide? He has no answer and it clearly bothers him.

Before I leave, it's time for the closing ceremony. We give first prize to a very promising drama, *For Rachel, Thy Younger Daughter* by Efrat Corem. Second prize goes to an absurdist documentary about suburban Israeli hip-hop, *Who's your Daddy* by Rotem Malenky. Where are all the political films? Where are the Muslim films? There will be some next year, says Fainguelernt. It's a slow process, two years down the road of a three-year programme.

It's been a humbling experience. Film festivals can be such monuments to human triviality, and to find such an oasis in the midst of so much hatred and recrimination has forced me to reassess my view of Israel. Fainguelernt tells me: "I sincerely believe that 90 per cent of Muslims and 90 per cent of Israelis just want to live their lives and get on with each other." It's a good thought to go away with.

Graphic

A light in the darkness A college in Israel is using film to promote understanding between warring factions in the Middle East. By ROGER CLARKE

Palestinian concerns: Ali Suliman (left) and Kais Nashef in 'Paradise Now' 'Men on the Edge' Fishermen's Diary' by Avner Fainguelernt and Macabit Abramzon

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End of Document

Batten Down the Hatches

New York Sun (Archive)

June 15, 2006 Thursday

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Byline: By DANIEL JOHNSON

Body

"When two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of the weather. "These words are as true today as in 1758, when my most illustrious namesake, Dr. Samuel Johnson, first wrote them. The fact that no two English skies are ever the same is the reason why the greatest cloudscape painter of all time was an Englishman, John Constable, as visitors to London can now see for themselves at the splendid new Tate Gallery exhibition.

Constable grasped how to transform the notorious unpredictability of the English climate into a sublime cosmic drama. Artists are more trustworthy than climatologists: Whether or not the English weather has changed since the 18th century, its changeability is unchanged.

In war and peace, as in painting, it is for our leaders to make the weather. If they fail to do so, the enemies of society will do so instead. Here in London, this unusually sultry June has been dominated by two imports from the Middle East: a hot wind from the Sahara desert and Islamist terrorism.

A fortnight ago, the police and MI5 (the equivalent of the FBI) mounted a massive raid on a house in northeast London. They were acting on intelligence that warned of an imminent chemical weapons attack to coincide with the first anniversary of the July 7 bombings.

In the course of the raid, two brothers were arrested: Abul Kahar and Abul Koyair, who was shot and wounded in the chest. Both have now been released without charge after the police failed to find any evidence of terrorist activity. The most likely explanation is that British intelligence was set up. Every Al Qaeda training manual explains how carefully planted disinformation confuses and demoralizes the security forces, undermining public confidence and alienating Muslims.

Led by the BBC, however, the media are portraying this minor incident as conclusive proof that Britain has become a police state. So the Metropolitan Police Commissioner is under pressure to resign.

At a press conference on Tuesday, the two Muslim suspects were flanked by "civil liberties heavyweights." They included Gareth Pierce, a left-wing lawyer who also represents Guantanamo detainees and sundry other extremists, and Asad Rehman, a former sidekick to George Galloway (founder of the Respect Party) and self-appointed spokesman for every anti-Western, anti-war, anti-capitalist cause. Looking slightly out of place among the shaven-headed, bushybearded Islamists was Canon Ann Easter, a dean of the Church of England.

Canon Easter had turned her church into a television studio for the benefit of this leftist-Islamist media circus. Somehow, it does not surprise me that the local mosque had declined to do this. The Islamists disapprove of

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women priests, but they presumably see in Canon Easter what Lenin called a "useful idiot" who can reassure the infidels.

Unfortunately, Canon Easter is by no means untypical. England's established church has a deplorable record of "internalizing the hatred of the West that defines the shared universe of radical Islamism and the revolutionary left," as Melanie Phillips puts it in her book "Londonistan." Peter Mullen, one of the few remaining conservatives among the Anglican clergy, reports that on September 11, 2001, a gathering of Anglican clergy reacted to the horrific spectacle with one sentiment: "I hope Bush doesn't retaliate. The West has brought this judgment on itself."

The Church of England has a schizophrenic attitude to religious minorities. It supports the Palestinian cause, even now that it is led by the genocidal fanatics of Hamas, and its anti-Zionism often shades into anti-Semitism, glossing over the history of Christian persecution of Jews. It also turns a blind eye to Muslim persecution of Christians; the only senior cleric to protest recently, the Bishop of Rochester, is a Pakistani-born convert from Islam.

As for Muslims: The church demands only that that they should accept its groveling apologies for everything from the Crusades to the removal of Saddam Hussein. The Supreme Governor of the Church of England is the monarch, and the Prince of Wales has given notice that he wants his coronation to be a "multi-faith" mishmash. Neither Prince Charles nor the Archbishop of Canterbury would dream of telling Muslims that they must adapt to Britain, not vice versa.

It was left to the Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks, to make the point, by drawing a subtle contrast between the Jewish and Muslim experience of minority status. Yesterday, British Jews celebrated the 350th anniversary of their return under Oliver Cromwell, and Rabbi Sacks recalled Jeremiah's advice to the Jews during their Babylonian captivity: "And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray to the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." The question is: Can Islam ever accept peace except on its own terms?

To return to my original metaphor: The political and religious leaders of Britain have failed to make the weather, so they must not be surprised when Islamic radicals seize their opportunity. There was, however, one straw in the Saharan wind this week: the success of Ehud Olmert's first visit as prime minister. Pundits had predicted that Mr. Olmert's meeting with Prime Minister Blair would be overshadowed by the so-called "beach massacre" in Gaza, on which the media have rushed to judgment despite Israel's denial of responsibility.

In fact, Mr. Olmert and Mr. Blair evidently got on famously, and the Israeli prime minister was delighted by his British counterpart's implicit endorsement of disengagement. Mr. Blair went further than President Bush by hinting that he supports the Sharon-Olmert policy of fixing unilateral borders if the Palestinians refuse to negotiate. "You can only negotiate with people who accept your existence and stop violence," said Mr. Blair. "What you cannot have is the situation where nothing happens. It just means that the situation continues to deteriorate."

Though Mr. Blair is finding it harder to make the weather at home, abroad he is still energetic in support of those who do. He blazed a trail a few weeks ago for Mr. Bush's lightning trip to Iraq, where the allies are staking everything on the possibility that the new man in Baghdad, Nouri al-Maliki, will also prove himself to be a weather changer. The temporary dislocation of the insurgency in Iraq caused by the elimination of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is a unique opportunity for the Iraqi army to show its mettle.

One frank comment on the suicides at Guantanamo by deputy assistant secretary Colleen Graffy - "a good PR move" - evoked a synthetic rage here in Britain that ranged from left to right. Yesterday, the State Department was apologizing for the remark on the BBC. That was a mistake. Professor Graffy's statement happened to be true - and truth is the West's most powerful weapon in the war on terror. Those who make the weather must also batten down the hatches.

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Batten Down the Hatches

End of Document

NO TEARS FOR A KILLER

Weekend Australian

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All-round Country Edition

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Body

MATP

Terrorist Zarqawi's death leaves the world a better place

GUNSHOTS rang out across Iraq on Wednesday evening, for once not in anger but in jubilation. At 12.15am (AEST) Thursday, or 6.15pm Wednesday in Iraq, two planes each dropped a 500-pound bomb on a safe house northeast of Baghdad where the Jordanian-born Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, was hiding out with several aides. When the bombs exploded, they took with them a man who has, perhaps more than anyone else, worked to destabilise and derail Iraq's transition from dictatorship to democracy. The list of crimes committed or inspired by Zarqawi is too numerous to detail, but they go far beyond gruesomely decapitating men like American contractor Nicholas Berg. He is thought to have killed thousands of men, women and children -- mostly Iraqis, rather than soldiers from the occupying multinational force -- both by his own hand and via the suicide bombers he dispatched against soft civilian targets.

He worked to foment civil war between Sunni and Shia Muslims and was behind the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra which led to hundreds of deaths in the subsequent violence. The 39-year-old Zarqawi would first meet Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in 1988 and go on to found or fight for a number of terrorist organisations with links to the Saudi billionaire. When the Iraqi people learned of his death, they filled the streets and fired guns into the air in celebrations of the sort that had not been seen since the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in 2003.

While Iraqis by and large cheered Zarqawi's death, in some corners of the West, reaction was sadly, if predictably, more mixed. In the US, a few anti-war congressional Democrats dismissed Zarqawi's killing as a stunt. Many media outlets looking for a contrary news grab on the terrorist leader's passing were quick to point to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's statement that "we cannot pretend (Zarqawi's death) will mean the end of the violence". Tellingly, they played down or ignored the rest of his statement, in which Mr Annan -- who opposed the invasion of Iraq -- said "it is a relief that such a heinous and dangerous man who has caused so much harm to the Iraqis is no longer around". The Palestinians, true to form, did themselves no favours in the wake of Zarqawi's death. The ruling Hamas faction proclaimed Zarqawi, the man responsible for the deaths of so many Arabs and Muslims, a "martyr of the (Muslim Arab) nation". The Sydney Morning Herald's Paul McGeough, who in 2004 was convinced that interim Iraqi prime minister Iyad Allawi shot suspected insurgents in cold blood for sport, yesterday opened his dispatch on Zarqawi's death wondering if the terrorist was dead. But perhaps the most bizarre reaction to Zarqawi's death came from Robert Fisk. Echoing his confused and confusing appearance on ABC's Lateline last April during which he averred that Zarqawi was little more than a creation of the fevered minds of the West, Fisk weighed in on the

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terrorist's death in yesterday's *The Independent*. He again proposed that Zarqawi's infamy was the result of conniving between the Western media and military -- two groups not normally known for their ability to work together. He questioned Zarqawi's evil, saying "Maybe he was all these things. Or maybe not." And he repeated the old canard that Zarqawi was some sort of independent actor with no real ties to bin Laden or al-Qa'ida. Fisk and his legions of imitators protest too much with this argument. In not letting the truth get in the way of a chance to sneer at an American achievement in Iraq, they ignore legions of evidence pointing to Zarqawi's role in al-Qa'ida. Earlier this year, Ayman al-Zawahiri -- thought to be the de facto CEO of al-Qa'ida -- released a video calling on Muslims around the world to support his "beloved brother" Zarqawi in Iraq, saying, "I have lived with him up close, and have seen nothing but good from him". Reasonable people can disagree about the war, but those who opposed its prosecution because of the hardships it would impose on ordinary Iraqis should be the most cheered -- as Mr Annan was -- by the elimination of a man who did so much to foment death and chaos in that country.

There is one sense in which the Robert Fisks of the world are correct. The death of Zarqawi will not mean the end of an insurgency that takes the lives of so many of the Iraqis it allegedly wishes to liberate from the yoke of foreign occupation. US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said as much when he noted that another terrorist would "pop up" to run al-Qa'ida's Iraqi branch. After three years of being targeted by Zarqawi, Iraq's Shi'ites have formed death squads to target Sunni Muslims, leaving them scared, besieged and bitter. Such Sunni-Shia violence was Zarqawi's goal, and it is the biggest threat to Iraq's long-term stability. Iran, too, has been implicated in fomenting unrest, especially in Iraq's Shia south, in an attempt to promote fundamentalism and sow division in their once-powerful neighbour. But to say that Zarqawi's death doesn't matter because, after all, someone else will step in to his place is defeatist and sloppy. It is the geostrategic equivalent of refusing to make one's bed in the morning because it will only get unmade again in the evening. The fact that Zarqawi was apparently betrayed by members of his senior staff shows that, contrary to the image of omnipotence and omnipresence al-Qa'ida in Iraq tries desperately to project, the terrorist organisation is vulnerable. Raids that followed Zarqawi's death have given coalition intelligence information that should further help crack the insurgency. In another boost for Iraqi morale and prospects for a long-term unity government, soon after announcing Zarqawi's death, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki finalised his cabinet, naming interior, defence and national security ministers.

Five years ago, Osama bin Laden and his minions were planning an attack that would, in September 2001, bring down the World Trade Centre, damage the Pentagon, and shake the world. Today, bin Laden is in hiding, his offside in Iraq is dead along with several of his lieutenants, a democratically elected government is taking shape in Baghdad, and the only successful al-Qa'ida attacks in recent memory have occurred in the Muslim world and not the West. The war on terror and the battle to stabilise Iraq are far from over. But the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and the actions that preceded it are a big step forward. He will not be missed.

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**Comment & Debate: Success is not the transition to death by electric drill:
The Iraqi occupation has made a bad situation worse, with real political
power passing to violent militias on the streets**

The Guardian - Final Edition

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Byline: David Clark

Body

It has long been clear to all bar its most stubborn advocates that the invasion and occupation of Iraq has been the mother of all foreign policy disasters. Three years ago this week, President Bush flew on to the USS Abraham Lincoln to announce that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended". In a display of premature triumphalism that quickly came to symbolise the hubris and folly of US policy, the banner over his head declared: "mission accomplished".

But judging failure and holding those responsible to account has been complicated by a lack of clarity about what exactly that mission was. So many justifications for war have been offered that its supporters have found it relatively easy to respond to the collapse of one by seeking refuge in another. It is only comparatively recently that they have run out of places to hide. The WMD case was beginning to unravel even before Bush declared victory. As the most recent US state department report demonstrates, terrorism is a greater threat than ever. There has been no "democratic domino effect" sweeping across the Middle East. And even the claim to have liberated Iraqis from a cruel and despotic regime now seems increasingly forlorn.

The failure to achieve these war aims would be bad enough in view of the enormous cost in blood and treasure, but there is now considerable evidence to suggest that in most respects the invasion has made a bad situation worse. That there was no Iraqi WMD threat, or even the prospect of one, is less of a problem than that the risks of proliferation have increased. The Blair-Bush-Gadafy axis of desperation may have delivered Libya's paltry WMD programme in exchange for international rehabilitation, but in the far more serious case of Iran, the Iraq quagmire means that Washington has few good options for preventing the mullahs going nuclear.

More broadly, Iraq has served to dramatically weaken the deterrence effect of American military power. Post-cold war American military planning had been based on a two-war standard: the ability to fight two medium-sized wars in separate theatres simultaneously. Iraq has revealed America's inability to contain even a single low-intensity insurgency without absorbing a large proportion of its available strength. Tied down, Gulliver-like, America today gives potential rogue states little reason to fear its wrath.

The argument that the invasion of Iraq was a natural extension of the war on terror was always weak. In fact, Iraq is a much bigger terrorist threat now that Saddam has gone. Claims of a link between Ba'athism and al-Qaida have become self-fulfilling as Islamists have been able to position themselves in the vanguard of opposition to the occupation. Furthermore, Iraq provides an ideal laboratory for perfecting the kind of terrorism al-Qaida wants to

Comment & Debate: Success is not the transition to death by electric drill: The Iraqi occupation has made a bad situation worse, with real political power passi....

export to the west. Unlike Afghanistan, which was little more than a jihadi playground, Iraq supplies an urban setting, an active theatre of operations and a steady supply of western targets.

In a report last autumn, a leading expert on counter-terrorism, Anthony Cordesman, identified 39 "major adaptations" in the tactics and capabilities of the insurgency. Many of these skills and the people who have perfected them could easily be used to bring violence to our own streets. It is a horrifying thought, but it is perhaps only a matter of time before suicide bombers carrying backpacks are replaced by Baghdad-style car bombs that are much harder to detect and are capable of killing hundreds instead of dozens.

The idea that the removal of Saddam's regime would unleash a wave of democratic sentiment across Iraq and the wider Arab world had its brief, heady moment of apparent realisation last year with elections in Egypt, Palestine and Iraq. How different things look in 2006. With the Muslim Brotherhood, **Hamas** and the theocratic Shia parties the main beneficiaries of the vote, the triumphalist "end of history" assumption that democracy will always replicate pro-western outcomes has been exposed for the wishful thinking it always was.

Meanwhile, the pro-democracy movement in Iran - the Middle Eastern country where it stood probably the greatest chance of indigenous success - has been suppressed as part of an authoritarian backlash against the perceived threat of American influence on its borders. The politics of national security always favour the demagogue, and President Ahmadinejad should be counted as one of the main beneficiaries of the Iraq war.

In many parts of Iraq real political power has passed to the street, where militias aligned to the ruling parties enforce their own laws, using violence against opponents of the regime, **women** who refuse to wear the veil and shopkeepers who sell alcohol. Much has been made of the suggestion that the supposedly moderate prime minister designate, Jawad al-Maliki, intends to disband the militias. Yet Maliki, deputy leader of the Islamist Dawa party, has promised to do no such thing. His plan is to merge the militias into the security forces, giving official sanction to their already widespread penetration of police and army. Whether it is in the ministries of Baghdad or on the streets of Basra, Iraq is now ruled by people who in any other context would be denounced by liberal hawks as Islamofacists.

The argument of last resort for those who supported regime change has always been that at least Saddam has gone and the torture chambers have been closed. Even that has turned out to be an illusion, with the news that the director of the Baghdad morgue has had to flee Iraq under threat of death for revealing that thousands of Iraqis are being killed by death squads, many of them linked to the interior ministry. Some of the victims have apparently been tortured to death with electric drills. The build up to war was full of contested claims about Saddam's secret police feeding his opponents into industrial shredders. Is our success to be measured in the transition from shredders to electric drills?

The final line of defence is to question the priorities of those who continue to raise Iraq, and dismiss the issue as a bore. Most of us would gladly move on from Iraq, but we should not do so on the self-interested terms demanded by those who led us to this disaster. Not while the people of Iraq continue to suffer the consequences. Not while those responsible remain in power. Not while there is the remotest chance that it might happen again.

David Clark is a former Labour government adviser Dkclark@aol.com

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Civilians in cross-hairs: What to do?

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0 Edition

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Byline: SUSAN TAYLOR MARTIN

Body

On Saturday, an Israeli missile killed the leader of a Palestinian organization committed to Israel's destruction. But the missile - fired in the crowded Gaza Strip at rush hour - also killed three innocent civilians, including a 5-year-old boy.

On Sunday and Monday, U.S. missile strikes reportedly killed up to 80 Taliban members in Afghanistan. But they also killed as many as 17 civilians, including children.

Similar incidents are also alleged to have occurred in Iraq as U.S. troops hunt for insurgents.

The two recent cases in Afghanistan and the Gaza Strip have prompted calls for investigations. And they have stoked the debate over whether attacks likely to kill innocent people are justifiable under certain circumstances or whether they constitute war crimes.

"Under international law you must take all feasible precautions to avoid or at least minimize civilian loss," says Marc Garlasco, senior military analyst for Human Rights Watch.

"Civilians can die without war crimes being committed, but you have to have an investigation to find out what happened, particularly in situations where we see time and again civilians paying the price."

Both Israel and the United States have agreed to obey international laws of warfare, which are based on two main principles. One, the attacker must distinguish between civilian and military targets, and two, the attacks must be proportionate to the anticipated military benefit. Taken to the extreme, that means it's okay to shoot a sniper but not okay to use a nuclear weapon that could wipe out countless innocents as well.

In reality, though, it is often hard to define what constitutes a military target or disproportionate force, especially in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where one side has superior technical might and the other operates in crowded conditions.

In Saturday's incident, an Israeli missile killed a leader of Islamic Jihad as he traveled through Gaza City by car. The missile also killed three civilians in a nearby vehicle and injured a 3-year-old girl so badly she may never again walk or breathe without a respirator.

Civilians in cross-hairs: What to do?

Israeli authorities say the attack was in response to repeated instances in which Palestinians have launched Qassam rockets at Israeli cities, often from densely populated civilian areas in the Gaza Strip. The crude rockets rarely kill or injure but are considered a serious threat.

"If (militant) Palestinians followed the rules of international warfare, they would not place themselves in proximity to the civilian population," says Ariel Cohen, senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation. "They deliberately place their rocket launchers and fighters and commanders among civilians, thus using their own civilians as shields in violation of international law."

But Garlasco says Israel isn't justified in attacking militants anywhere or anytime it chooses just because the militants themselves may violate rules of war.

"To say an Islamic Jihad leader can't drive in a car through Gaza City is just ridiculous. You can make a good case that he may be a military target, but the question is, 'Are we going to incur so much civilian harm that it's something we just shouldn't do at this time and in this manner?'"

Both Israelis and Palestinians accuse each other of deliberately targeting civilians, and Palestinians draw widespread condemnation for their use of suicide bombers. Islamic Jihad has claimed responsibility for all of the major suicide attacks against Israel in the past year, most recently one in April that killed nine at a Tel Aviv restaurant.

Since the start of 2006, however, Israel has killed more than twice as many Palestinian civilians as Palestinians have killed Israelis - 39 Palestinians compared to 17 Israelis, according to B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization. In March, the group urged the Israeli government to investigate whether an attack that killed three Palestinian children along with two militants was "disproportionate" and thus constituted a war crime.

Cohen, of the Heritage Foundation, calls B'Tselem a "an extremist, leftish organization" that plays into the hands of radical Palestinians.

"I think these people (at B'Tselem) are wrong because they do not recognize the deadly nature of Islamist terrorism, they do not recognize the hateful religious incitement and propaganda that brainwashes Palestinians," Cohen says.

B'Tselem denies that it minimizes Palestinian atrocities, noting that it has also accused the Palestinians of war crimes and other human rights violations. But as an Israeli organization, its main function is to ensure that the Jewish state follows a high moral code, communications director Sarit Michaeli says.

"Even Israeli public figures mention our existence as an example of the strength of Israeli democracy. We are doing this because Israel is important to us, and we want to make it the best it can be. All the friends of Israel should strive to do the same."

Showing that heavy force is not always necessary, Israeli troops on Tuesday surrounded the hideout of a **Hamas** military leader in the West Bank and said they would knock it down if he didn't come out. He surrendered without a fight.

The question of disproportionate military action also haunts several incidents in which U.S. troops have killed civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, including the weekend strike on an Afghan village.

President Hamid Karzai on Tuesday ordered an investigation into the attacks, expressing concern over the decision to bomb civilian areas but also condemning the militants' "act of cowardice" in using civilians as human shields.

In Iraq last November, U.S. Marines killed as many as 15 unarmed Iraqis "in cold blood" after a fellow Marine died in a roadside bombing, Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., recently charged. Many of the victims were **women** and children, including six members of one family.

Civilians in cross-hairs: What to do?

Garlasco, of Human Rights Watch, says an attack that took out a major enemy figure like Osama bin Laden or Abu Musab al-Zarqawi could well be justified. More problematic under international law are attacks that exact heavy civilian tolls with relatively little military gain.

"Why is the United States killing all these civilians?" he wonders. "Not only should they look at it from a legal perspective but also from a practical war-fighting perspective. By killing civilians you're alienating those peoples whose hearts and mind you're trying to win."

Susan Martin can be contacted at susan@sptimes.com.

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The New York Times

April 23, 2006 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section 6; Column 3; Magazine; Pg. 17; THE WAY WE LIVE NOW: 4-23-06

Length: 1061 words

Byline: By Jim Holt

Jim Holt is a frequent contributor to the magazine.

Body

Democracy is a wonderful thing. We Americans have been enjoying it for over two centuries. Gradually, fitfully, much of the rest of the world has joined us. Although competing systems may menace it for a time, they will eventually collapse because of their internal contradictions. That is why the advance of democracy is inevitable. And the best the United States can do is to help history along by pushing it on recalcitrant parts of the world, like the Middle East.

But wait. Are we sure that what we are enjoying and promoting is democracy? True, we call it that. But the regimes of the former Soviet bloc also called themselves democracies. Suppose their system had won out -- a possibility that may be hard to imagine now but that was once a source of anxiety in the West. They, too, would have proclaimed a triumph of democracy. But surely, you want to say, their democratic pretensions were ludicrous. When Kim Jong Il refers to his nation as the "Democratic People's Republic of Korea," it sounds like a case of a double positive yielding a negative. Our claim to be a democracy, by contrast, is fully merited. Just like the Greeks who, two and a half millennia ago, both coined the term and invented the thing, we have government by the people.

There are two problems with this line of thought. The first is that our form of government bears scant resemblance to what the ancients called *demokratia*. Tellingly, we hardly recognize the name of its inventor, Kleisthenes. The most distinctive feature of Athenian democracy, as the British political theorist John Dunn reminds us in his forthcoming book, "Democracy: A History," was its "fierce directness." Laws were made by an assembly that every full citizen had the right to attend, address and vote in as an equal. (Excluding women, resident aliens and slaves, that left about 30,000 participants.) The assembly's agenda for each meeting was decided on by a council of 500 citizens, chosen by lot. The only elected figures were military generals, and this was considered the least democratic aspect of the system.

Our own government, to the Athenians, would look like an elective oligarchy. In fact, it was deliberately set up to ensure, as James Madison wrote in the Federalist Papers, "the total exclusion of the people in their collective capacity, from any share" in it. Yet we insist on applying a Greek label to it as an honorific. And that is the second problem. For most of history, "democracy" was a term of abuse, connoting the rule of the vulgar multitude. The founding fathers fought shy of it, taking care to use "republic" instead.

Export This?

Today, democracy is what has been called an "essentially contested concept." We project our various pet values onto it, and then are puzzled that it cannot consistently hold them all. Francis Fukuyama, who has argued that democracy is "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution," refuses to admit the Athenian demos to the club, on the grounds that it failed to protect human rights -- notably, the right of its most famous citizen, Socrates, to corrupt the young and invent his own gods. Others are similarly loath to extend the rubric of democracy to present-day Iran, where elections are held under the supervision of a priestly caste, or to the Palestinian entity, on the grounds that the newly elected Hamas government is a terrorist organization.

The United States is governed neither by priests nor by terrorists (notwithstanding some overheated rhetoric to that effect) but by professional politicians -- or "electoral entrepreneurs," as the economist Joseph Schumpeter called them -- who compete for our votes. They are said to represent us, but representation is as vexed a notion as democracy itself. Clearly, politicians do not represent us in the sense of being like us: quite apart from some peculiar psychological characteristics common to the breed, they are older, maler, whiter and lawyers almost to a man. Ideally, though, they represent us in the sense of looking after our interests, the way a guardian represents an infant in law. Unlike an infant, we have an intermittent right to replace them with other politicians if we judge them to be ineffective in this representative role. But, owing to a byzantine division of labor, much of what politicians do is hidden away from the public eye. Moreover, in one of the more devastating theoretical arguments against democracy, Anthony Downs observed that most citizens have no economic incentive to learn enough about what politicians do to vote intelligently. Nearly half of American voters acquiesce in their infantilization by not voting at all.

Should any of this make us yearn for Athenian-style demokratia, where citizens come together on terms of equality to reach consensus about the common good? An innovation in this direction has been proposed by James Fishkin, a political scientist at Stanford, and Bruce Ackerman, a Yale law professor. They envisage a new national holiday, called "Deliberation Day," a couple of weeks before each major election. On this day, voters would gather in groups as large as 500 and hash out issues together, like the ancient Athenians. (Unlike the Athenians, participants in Deliberation Day would be paid \$150 each.) If this sort of thing sounds appealing, keep in mind that the right to address your fellow citizens is accompanied by the less agreeable duty to heed what they have to say, and that means all of them.

If nothing else, the system we sloppily call democracy provides a way to get rid of a lousy regime without the bother of overthrowing it by force. As for its apparent historic inevitability, that may owe largely to the difficulty of finding any other source of legitimacy besides "the people." "Virtue"? That went out with Plato. "Embodying the national spirit" became unfashionable with Hitler, as did "expressing the will of the proletariat" with Stalin. True, some rulers continue to imagine that they were chosen by God. But almost no one takes that idea seriously anymore.

U.S. states with the highest and lowest voter turnouts in the 2004 election

State	Voter Turnout
Minnesota	79.2%
Wisconsin	76.6%
Oregon	74.0%
Georgia	56.8%
Tennessee	54.6%
Hawaii	50.8%
U.S. average	63.8%

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Source: United States Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2004

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photo (Photograph by Doug Mills)Chart: "VOTING HABITS"

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Why Iran wants bomb: The Shia regime in Tehran believes its nukes will speed the second coming of the Mahdi

The Gazette (Montreal)

April 20, 2006 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL / OP-ED; Pg. A23

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Byline: AMIR TAHERI, The Sunday Telegraph

Body

Last week, just before he announced that Iran had gatecrashed "the nuclear club," President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad disappeared for several hours. He was having a khalvat (head-to-head) with the Hidden Imam, the 12th and last of the imams of Shiism who went into "grand occultation" in 941.

According to Shia lore, the imam is a messianic figure who, although in hiding, remains the true sovereign of the world. In every generation, the imam chooses 36 men (and, for obvious reasons, no women), naming them the owtad or "nails," whose presence, hammered into mankind's existence, prevents the universe from "falling off."

Although the nails are not known to common mortals, it is, at times, possible to identify one thanks to his deeds. It is on that basis that some of Ahmadinejad's more passionate admirers insist that he is a nail, a claim he has not discouraged. For example, he has claimed that last September, as he addressed the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the "Hidden Imam drenched the place in a sweet light."

Last year, it was after another khalvat that Ahmadinejad announced his intention to stand for president. Now, he boasts that the Imam gave him the presidency for a single task: provoking a "clash of civilizations" in which the Muslim world, led by Iran, takes on the infidel West, led by the United States, and defeats it in a slow but prolonged contest that, in military jargon, sounds like a low-intensity, asymmetrical war.

In Ahmadinejad's analysis, the rising Islamic superpower has decisive advantages over the infidel. Islam has four times as many young men of fighting age as the West, with its aging populations. Hundreds of millions of Muslim "ghazis" (holy raiders) are keen to become martyrs while the infidel youths, loving life and fearing death, hate to fight. Islam also has four-fifths of the world's oil reserves, and so controls the lifeblood of the infidel. More important, the U.S., the only infidel power still capable of fighting, is hated by most other nations.

According to this analysis, spelled out in commentaries by Ahmadinejad's strategic guru, Hassan Abassi, known as the "Dr. Kissinger of Islam," U.S. President George W. Bush is an aberration, an exception to a rule under which all U.S. presidents since Truman, when faced with serious setbacks abroad, have "run away." Iran's current strategy, therefore, is to wait Bush out. And that, by divine coincidence, corresponds to the time Iran needs to develop its nuclear arsenal, thus matching the only advantage that the infidel enjoys.

Why Iran wants bomb: The Shia regime in Tehran believes its nukes will speed the second coming of the Mahdi

Shortly after Ahmadinejad announced "the atomic miracle," the head of the Iranian nuclear project, Ghulamreza Aghazadeh, unveiled plans for manufacturing 54,000 centrifuges to enrich enough uranium for hundreds of nuclear warheads. "We are going into mass production," he boasted.

The Iranian plan is simple: playing the diplomatic game for another two years until Bush becomes a lame duck, unable to take military action against the mullahs, while continuing to develop nuclear weapons.

Thus do not be surprised if, by the end of the United Nations' Security Council deadline, Ahmadinejad announces a temporary suspension of uranium enrichment as a confidence-building measure.

Also, don't be surprised if some time in June he agrees to ask the Majlis (the Islamic parliament) to consider signing the additional protocols of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

Such manoeuvres would allow the International Atomic Energy Agency director, Muhammad El-Baradei, and Britain's foreign secretary, Jack Straw, to congratulate Iran for its "positive gestures" and denounce talk of sanctions, let alone military action. The confidence-building measures would never amount to anything, but their announcement would be enough to prevent the G8 summit, hosted by Russia in July, from moving against Iran.

While waiting Bush out, the Islamic Republic is intent on doing all it can to consolidate its gains in the region. Regime changes in Kabul and Baghdad have altered the status quo in the Middle East. While Bush is determined to create a Middle East that is democratic and pro-Western, Ahmadinejad is equally determined that the region should remain Islamic but pro-Iranian.

Iran is now the strongest presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, after the U.S. It has turned Syria and Lebanon into its outer defences, which means that, for the first time since the 7th century, Iran is militarily present on the coast of the Mediterranean. In a massive political jamboree in Tehran last week, Ahmadinejad also assumed control of the "Jerusalem Cause," which includes annihilating Israel "in one storm," while launching a takeover bid for the cash-starved **Hamas** government in the West Bank and Gaza.

Ahmadinejad has also reactivated Iran's network of Shia organizations in Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Yemen, while resuming contact with Sunni fundamentalist groups in Turkey, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco.

From childhood, Shia boys are told to cultivate two qualities. The first is entezar, the capacity to wait patiently for the Imam to return. The second is taajil, the actions needed to hasten the return. For the Imam's return will coincide with an apocalyptic battle between the forces of evil and righteousness, with evil ultimately routed. If the infidel loses his nuclear advantage, it could be worn down in a long, low-intensity war at the end of which surrender to Islam would appear the least bad of options. And that could be a signal for the Imam to reappear.

At the same time, not to forget the task of hastening the Mahdi's second coming, Ahmadinejad will pursue his provocations. On Monday, he was as candid as ever: "To those who are angry with us, we have one thing to say: Be angry until you die of anger!"

His adviser, Hassan Abassi, is rather more eloquent. "The Americans are impatient," he says, "at the first sight of a setback, they run away. We, however, know how to be patient. We have been weaving carpets for thousands of years."

Amir Taheri is a former executive editor of Kayhan, Iran's largest daily newspaper, but now lives in Europe

Graphic

Why Iran wants bomb: The Shia regime in Tehran believes its nukes will speed the second coming of the Mahdi

Photo: HASAN SARBAKHSHIAN, AP; Iranian men register their readiness for martyrdom, or to carry out suicide attacks against Israel.

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The frightening truth of why Iran wants a bomb The Shia regime in Teheran believes that its nuclear weapons will speed the second coming of the Mahdi, writes Amir Taheri

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

April 16, 2006 Sunday

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Section: FEATURES; Comment; Pg. 22

Length: 1031 words

Byline: Amir Taheri

Body

Last Monday, just before he announced that Iran had gatecrashed "the nuclear club", President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad disappeared for several hours. He was having a khalvat (tête-à-tête) with the Hidden Imam, the 12th and last of the imams of Shiism who went into "grand occultation" in 941.

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In Afghan Christian, story of larger conflict; Globalist

The International Herald Tribune

March 25, 2006 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 1032 words

Byline: Roger Cohen

Dateline: BERLIN

Body

Edmund Stoiber, the conservative German who runs the conservative and successful state of Bavaria, put his country's outrage bluntly. "A change of belief is supremely private," he said. "The state has nothing to do with it."

The change in question was that of Abdul Rahman, an Afghan Muslim who converted to Christianity. Apostasy is about as bad as it gets under Islamic law and Rahman is facing a possible death sentence in Kabul.

The plight of Rahman, who was denounced by his family for abandoning Islam and is in jail in Afghanistan, has got Germany in a tizzy. The case has all the elements to stoke German outrage.

It also has elements that should lead everyone to ponder whether the West's problem is really with a "perversion" of Islam, as politicians from President George W. Bush to Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain have insisted, or with Islam itself.

German ire has been particularly intense for several reasons: Rahman once lived in Germany; the country is ferociously opposed to the death sentence; it is ferociously attached to freedom of religious choice; and it has over 2,000 troops in Afghanistan to promote precisely the democratic values it sees being trampled in the Rahman case.

Rahman's words in a recent Kabul court appearance have become a kind of rallying cry for an indignant Germany: "I'm not an apostate, I'm obedient to God but I'm a Christian, that's my choice."

Seems reasonable enough to the average citizen of the West. But not to the conservative religious leaders who dominate Afghan courts. The judge told Rahman, who converted 15 years ago while working for an aid group in Pakistan, that he could face the death penalty if he refused to become a Muslim again.

So what, Germans wondered, were their troops doing in this faraway place, if a 41-year-old man who has not hurt a flea but prefers Christianity to Islam could face execution?

Politicians have scurried to register outrage. Chancellor Angela Merkel, a Christian Democrat, called the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, to protest. She then declared that "Afghanistan must keep to its international obligations," whatever they may be.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the Social Democratic foreign minister, has also been on the phone, speaking to the Afghan foreign minister, Abdullah. He expressed hope that a solution might be found and cautioned that the

In Afghan Christian, story of larger conflict Globalist

withdrawal of German aid or soldiers a measure demanded by several members of Parliament could "play into the hands of those who would like to reverse the process of recent years."

Germany, of course, is not alone in its indignation. Bush has said he's "deeply troubled." Condoleezza Rice, the secretary of state, has given Abdullah an earful. A State Department spokesman has alluded to the flouting of "universal democratic values." Christian talk shows in the United States have moved into overdrive.

With all this commotion, it seems reasonable to take a deep breath and ask what's actually going on. Afghan prosecutors have no doubt Rahman's a "microbe," as they've called him, and that they are fulfilling their obligations under Shariah law.

European and American politicians have no doubt that the values of the civilization they represent are being threatened in a state they are striving to remake, if not in their image, at least in an image acceptable to the West.

The mutual incomprehension, and anger, is strong. It reflects a basic fact that Western politicians have tended to shy away from: Islam, the youngest of the world's major religions, is still, more than a quarter-century after the Iranian revolution, in the midst of a tremendous political effervescence.

After the eclipse of Nasserite pan-Arabism, it became the political refuge of millions of people questing for some alternative to the corrupt Middle Eastern tyrannies they saw being supported by the West, particularly the United States. The contemporary rise of Hamas, and the political success of the Taliban in Afghanistan in the 1990s, are just two illustrations of this phenomenon.

Such political Islam takes many forms, but central to it is the notion that the Koran and other sacred texts provide a complete system of laws for societies and individuals. The Western notion of a separation of church and state, of religion and politics belonging respectively to the private and public spheres, is anathema.

In this sense, two worlds often confront each other across the gulf between the West and Islam, worlds that the West would characterize as modern and anti-modern. To ignore this seems treacherous.

But Western leaders have striven to confine the scope of the conflict. They talk of being at war with Islamic fundamentalists who have "perverted" their religion in the name of a murderous and fanatical ideology. They insist their quarrel is not with Islam itself.

This is understandable: Islam is a great world religion followed by more than a fifth of humanity. No Islamic text exhorts the random slaughter of civilians, although every violent and fundamentalist group of the bin Laden school has tried to sanctify its actions through references to jihad against the infidel and claims to represent a purer, more authentic Islam.

In reality, it seems, there is an overall conflict and there is a war. The war has been declared by Bush against Islamic extremism, the kind that produced the 9/11 attack. The overall conflict is illustrated in the Rahman case.

Here, over the fate of a Christian Afghan, the values of the West and the values of Islam fight each other. They are violently at odds; no ecumenical circumlocution gets around that.

The West and Islam also fight each other in European societies where honor killings take the lives of young Muslim women, or homosexuals get assaulted. Two views of society and the place of religion within it vie with each other.

In this sense, Rahman offers a timely reminder. The West and Islam are not at war, but they are in conflict. And it seems myopic and counterproductive to view the war as anything but the extreme expression of that conflict.

**

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In Afghan Christian, story of larger conflict Globalist

Monday: Elisabeth Bumiller on the departure of the White House pastry chef as calls for new blood in the administration go unheeded.

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Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Part 7 * False hopes

Christian Science Monitor

August 22, 2006, Tuesday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 1

Length: 2124 words

Byline: Jill Carroll and Peter Grier Staff writers of The Christian Science Monitor

Body

It was late January the next time we moved. Hot and tired of traveling, I threw up all over myself. They didn't know that I'd always been prone to car sickness.

"Do you need a doctor? Are you sick? We can bring you a doctor," said Abu Rasha, my No. 2 captor, who was driving. Again and again, I saw that their beliefs would allow them to deprive me of my freedom and kill Alan, yet also lead them to express sincere concern over my health and well-being as their hostage.

When we finally came to a stop I was led, stinking, into a new house - the sixth place I'd been, in the three weeks I'd been held. It wouldn't take much to prompt a move: a helicopter overhead, wild dogs barking at night, a US patrol in the vicinity. At the time, I thought the house was south of Baghdad. The US military now says it was near Abu Ghraib.

Once inside, they steered me directly into the bathroom, and I stripped off my soiled clothes.

The house was so new that the mujahideen were still building it around me. No family lived here. This was a house built by Abu Nour, my lead captor, solely for the use of the mujahideen. It was a meeting house, a bomb factory, and, for me, a jail.

In my head, I called it "the clubhouse."

Here there were no women and children to serve as buffers between me and my captors - or to witness my eventual fate.

I'd felt some measure of safety in the presence of the mujahideen families. That might have been an illusion. In any case, now it was gone.

As the weeks of my captivity accumulated, I felt physical and mental stress begin to mount.

The inactivity was claustrophobic. The psychological poking and prodding of my captors - who knew so little about Americans that they were shocked I wasn't blond - sometimes made me feel like an animal in a zoo.

Constant adrenaline crashed up against chronic fatigue. I'd lie down at night, and my eyes would feel swollen. I'd close my eyelids and it would seem as if they weren't big enough to go around my eyeballs.

Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Part 7 * False hopes

Sometimes I would think about people back home and I would feel a little better. My grandparents are Catholic and they go to Mass every day. I would figure what time it was in the US and would think, "I bet they're praying for me right now. I bet they're saying, 'Let's pray for our granddaughter, Jill Carroll.' "

If it was early morning in America, I would imagine my mom, dad, and twin sister, Katie, waking up. If it was a little later I would think, "They're having their morning meeting at the Monitor. Maybe they're talking about me."

That was my only escape.

* * *

At first in the clubhouse, I was happy to sit alone in my bedroom and not be bothered.

Between moments of terror, throughout my captivity were long hours doing nothing. Here, I didn't want to look around the room too much, because I wanted to save the newness, and the interest of looking at new things as long as I could. After fear, boredom was my tormentor, my constant enemy.

I'd think, "I'm going to spend today looking at the heater. And then tomorrow, I'll sit in a different part of the room, and it'll look different." I'd stare at flies for hours.

It sounds crazy now, but then it seemed normal. If you looked at everything all at once, it became familiar and boring really fast.

I sang camp songs to myself, and songs that Mom used to sing to me. I spun fantasies of US marines rescuing me. I ruminated over old boyfriends and choices I'd made. I deeply questioned my decision to come to Iraq. I had devoted a year in Jordan to studying Arabic and working at an English-language newspaper, slowly learning my craft. For what? To spend my last days under the thumb of the bleepin' muj? If I ever got out, I decided I'd never leave the US again.

At night, I would think hard about Katie, sending her mental messages: 'I'm OK. Don't worry. Can you feel me, Katie?' In my head, I'd write letters to Dad, in North Carolina, telling him about my days. I'd imagine him hugging me and hugging me in the doorway, telling me everything was OK.

I spent a lot of time staring at my toes, and wondering if I was slowly going around the bend.

After several days at the clubhouse, the guards asked me if I wanted to watch them make dinner. Then they let me watch a little TV. Eventually, they let me pace the length of the house, about 15 steps, and help wash dishes and prepare meals. I was overjoyed with these activities after so many hours spent doing nothing.

Access to sunlight became the most important new benefit, though. It poured into the sparse sitting room where my guards slept and where we all ate.

I was desperate for light after painful days in dim rooms in the Abu Ghraib house with my now-departed female minder, Um Ali. I had been handed off to a different cell under Abu Nour, to a different set of guards.

One of the guards at this new house, who had himself spent time in prison, seemed to understand the way I felt. One morning before breakfast, he tied back the thin curtains.

"Sun," he said smiling and gesturing at the bright streams pouring in through the etched glass windows.

I sat on the ground in the sunbeam and closed my eyes. It penetrated my eyelids and warmed my face.

* * *

By this point, I had learned much about the way the mujahideen operated. To me, at least, some of their tactics were surprisingly clever.

Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Part 7 * False hopes

Take transportation. Men with beards, and cars with only one or two men, drew too much attention from patrols and at checkpoints. So they shaved their beards and drove around as families, kids and women included. They played Shiite music. As insurgents, they knew how to not look like an insurgent.

They have the home-field advantage. As Abu Nour, the leader, told me more than once: "I can go out, plant my bomb, and go back and have a homemade dinner with my wife. What are American soldiers going to do? They go back [to their base] and do not have good food or get to see their family."

Abu Nour ("Ink Eyes") began coming to see me almost every day. Clearly, he felt freer to visit the clubhouse than the other places I'd been held. It was during one of these visits that he'd mentioned Margaret Hassan, and I'd hysterically begged for the guards to use a gun to kill me, not a knife.

At the clubhouse, he also appeared eager to have me "interview" him. He seemed to have begun to view me as a messenger - an idea I had been pushing, hoping it would give them a reason to set me free.

My hands always shook when I did these "interviews." Like all interactions with my captors, they felt like mine fields, or chess games.

Among other things, Abu Nour said that some people joined the mujahideen because they were angry about the treatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison or raids on their homes at night. Many enlisted following a battle they considered a great victory - the April 2004 fight for Fallujah, a city west of Baghdad in the Anbar Province.

Abu Nour added that too many of these new recruits had impure motives. That, he said, is why they lost Fallujah to US forces in November 2004.

"A good mujahid enters the war so [that] if he dies he goes to heaven," Abu Nour insisted.

Secular insurgents were useful allies, but wouldn't be allowed to take part in the Iraqi government after the mujahideen's final victory, he said. Sunni politicians participating in the current US-backed government were traitors to Islam and should be killed.

My captors would laugh, for example, when Adnan al-Dulaimi would appear on TV - either when he was pleading for my release or as part of a group of politicians trying to form a new government. I had gone to interview Mr. Dulaimi when they seized me in front of his political headquarters in Baghdad.

[In a press conference on Jan. 20, Dulaimi said: "By kidnapping her, you are insulting me. You're insulting the work that I've been doing for Iraq.... release her...." Nine days later he issued another tearful public appeal for Jill's release, which was featured in the Monitor's Iraqi media campaign in February and March.]

"Look, Jill. Ha, ha. There's your 'friend' Dulaimi," they scoffed each time he appeared. "Oh, please, please free Jill! Ha, ha, ha, ha." They mocked him.

Within minutes of my capture, I had suspected Dulaimi, the head of the Iraqi Accordance Front, a Sunni political party. The kidnapers were waiting for us when we left his office. They must have known about my appointment ahead of time.

During one of these talks at the "clubhouse," Abu Nour said that Dulaimi had been to see him that week. Dulaimi had begged Ink Eyes to let me go. Later, the guards told me that Dulaimi had been back again. Dulaimi said, "Please, please let her go. The [US] soldiers are threatening to arrest my sons. Tell me where Jill is. Let her go."

My captors were angry about being labeled "terrorists." But the deaths of innocent people caused by their activities - such as the murder of my interpreter, Alan Enwiya - didn't taint the purity of their jihad.

"Sometimes when we try to hit the American soldier or Iraqi soldier, sometimes we kill women and children in this operation," said Abu Nour at one point. "We don't want to ..., but this is war."

Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Part 7 * False hopes

Periodically, Abu Nour would tell me people were calling for my release. He would never say whether this was good or bad.

Throughout my ordeal, my captors would make oblique references to what I later discovered were organized appeals on my behalf. For example, Abu Nour wanted to know if I knew the leader of Hamas, the Palestinian militant group. I thought it was another test of my character. Later, I learned Hamas had issued a statement condemning the kidnapping of civilians.

When my father and mother made their first televised statements, Abu Rasha said, "Your father and mother say, 'Hello' to you."

"Very good man, good man, your father," he said.

It was clear that whatever my parents had said on TV had made a good impression.

One day Abu Nour arrived, and said that five women detainees had been released. This was important, and good news, he said.

"This is Step 1," he said. "Now we have to go to Step 2."

He wanted me to make another video, and ask for the release of all Iraqi women prisoners.

I was crushed. Another video meant days or weeks of waiting for it to air, then waiting for a reply. The black-eyed leader - someone who I thought never saw me as a person, despite the chocolates he brought from Baghdad - now thought he had something really valuable. The last thing they were going to do was let me go.

It wasn't until later that I figured the release of the five women had helped by making it harder to justify killing me.

Five Iraqi female detainees were released on Jan. 26, along with some 450 male prisoners. While US officials denied this was in response to Jill's captors' demands, her family saw it as a hopeful sign.

But four days later, Jill's twin sister, Katie, got a disturbing call from Amelia Newcomb, deputy foreign editor, who served as the Monitor's liaison to the family. The kidnappers had released another video, said Newcomb; and on this one Jill was crying.

Immediately Katie assumed the worst - that this was evidence her sister was being mistreated. She snapped on her television, and, indeed, saw a picture of a sobbing Jill. And in an instant, she felt much better.

Jill was faking, Katie thought.

She knew her sister. She knew that when Jill really cried it was like the Nile at the crest of a flood. The tears would come so hard, Jill wouldn't even be able to see, if she didn't wipe them away.

But this was different. This was ... restrained. Maybe the kidnappers were coaching Jill. Maybe she wasn't being physically mistreated.

Katie wasn't the only family member to take heart from the ostensibly disturbing video. Mary Beth Carroll didn't think her daughter was crying, either. Clearly, Jill was being fed - her cheeks weren't sunken - and she was dressed in a neat hijab, which seemed in some manner a token of respect.

Nine days later, a third video of Jill appeared on a Kuwaiti television station. This time, for the first time, her voice could be heard. "I am with the mujahideen," she said. "I sent you a letter written by my hand, but you wanted more evidence, so we are sending you this letter now to prove I am with the mujahideen."

Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Part 7 * False hopes

On Feb. 10, a day later, the owner of the Kuwaiti television station said that sources close to the kidnappers had told him there was a Feb. 26 deadline. Two whole weeks! The US had that long to release all Iraqi women from its prisons, or else. To Mary Beth, that meant Jill's safety was guaranteed for the next 16 days.

The day after the video came out, Mary Beth woke up in a good mood. After the daily worries she and the rest of the family had experienced, this was almost like being on vacation, she thought.

- P.G.

Next part: The new enemy

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Vote To Divest Seen Having Little Effect

The Forward

February 17, 2006

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Section: News; Pg. 3

Length: 1145 words

Byline: Jennifer Siegel

Body

When the Church of England's main legislative body voted last week to divest from companies whose products are used by Israel in the "occupied territories," Jewish groups were quick to offer condemnation. Missing, however, was the sense of alarm that greeted the June 2004 decision by the Presbyterian Church (USA) to start the divestment process rolling.

Jewish communal activists largely attributed the lack of panic to a string of victories during the past year in the fight to ward off divestment campaigns. Indeed, even as the Anglican Church held its vote last week, the commission charged with carrying out the Presbyterian policy took steps to table any action against Israel until 2008.

Anglican officials themselves rushed to say that last week's vote would have little practical effect because the panel officially charged with setting the church's investment policies already ruled against divestment in September.

If the divestment movement initially seemed like a gathering storm on Israel's horizon, lately both its supporters and opponents say they no longer see the issue as directly impacting on-the-ground realities in the Middle East. Instead, they said, fights over divestment now serve as a way to sway public opinion on the Israel-Palestine conflict in other parts of the globe.

Divestment campaigns "might not have a practical impact," said Liat Weingart, the campaign director for Jewish Voice for Peace, which advocated boycotts against Israel. But "when the archbishop of Canterbury says we need to look at [it]... that moves the discourse forward about 10 steps, and creates a space to talk about [Israel] where there wasn't a space before."

Reverend Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Canterbury and the leader of 77 million Anglicans, publicly backed the nearly 500 members of the Anglican Church's General Synod, which resolved February 6 to "heed the call from our sister church, the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East... to divest from companies profiting from the illegal occupation."

Neither the Synod nor Williams has commented on the Palestinians' recent election of *Hamas*, which has yet to renounce terrorism or recognize Israel's right to exist. The Most Reverend George Carey, the former archbishop of Canterbury, called his church's vote "a most regrettable and one-sided statement" that denied "the trauma of ordinary Jewish people" in Israel, according to The Jerusalem Post.

Jon Benjamin, chief executive officer of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said that church leaders had assured him that official policies were not slated to change because of the vote. But he said the Anglican vote, taken

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alongside other recent events, left him wondering whether England is experiencing an unfavorable turn in public opinion.

"I know that [in the United States] there is a feeling that" in Europe "we're all running for cover and there's Cossacks riding down the highway," Benjamin said in an interview with the Forward. In Great Britain "we consider ourselves in a different position," he said. "But obviously...people are asking whether there's a change. Rather than saying, 'Yes, there's a major shift and we are a beleaguered people,' they're asking, 'Well, should we start feeling beleaguered yet?'"

The same day that the Church of England voted on its resolution, the Guardian newspaper launched a two-part series equating Israel with South Africa's apartheid government, and investigating Israel's military ties to the racist regime .

An article calling for economic boycotts of Israel caused a stir at last month's World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The article, by Mazin Qumsiyeh, appeared in the summit's magazine, Global Agenda.

After Jewish groups protested, Klaus Schwab, the executive chairman of the summit, issued a public apology and said the article's inclusion was accidental. According to one Davos attendee, Rabbi David Rosen, director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee, organizers had contracted with an outside firm, Euromoney, to produce the magazine.

Accidental or not, some Jewish observers said that the divestment message resonated with the preconceptions many Europeans already have toward Israel.

"When the editors saw it, it didn't shock them," said Hillel Neuer, executive director of the Geneva-based U.N. Watch, an affiliate of the American Jewish Committee. "If there was an article questioning the right of some other minority group to exist - black people, women - it would have shocked them, but they read this and it didn't."

Europeans have a "guilt-complex about the history of colonialism, so to be able to portray Israel as a colonial bridgehead of America is a simplistic and satisfying demonization for certain elements" Rosen said. In the United States "the general context is not hospitable" to such assumptions.

American proponents of divestment have gained notoriety by mounting conferences on a number of college campuses - including one set for this weekend at Georgetown University - but even by their own estimation, the broader campaign has not been successful at winning public support.

This view was outlined in a statement on divestment issued last year by Jewish Voice for Peace. "On-campus 'Divest from Israel' campaigns have crashed and burned, generating fantastic opportunities for our opponents to collect thousands of signatures in defense of the Israeli government (e.g. Harvard) while our allies struggled to collect hundreds," the newsletter states.

The fight for support from liberal Protestant churches in the United States has also not gone well for pro-divestment forces. Several Christian denominations - including the Episcopal Church U.S.A., the American branch of the Anglican communion - have rejected divestment.

After Presbyterian leaders voted to initiate divestment in 2004, a survey conducted by the church's Research Services Office found that 42% of members opposed selective phased divestment - a long-term process that culminates in the selling of stock only after other measures are exhausted - while 28% supported it.

The Presbyterian divestment forces were dealt a major blow last week when the church commission charged with carrying out the 2004 vote announced that it would not make any recommendations at the church's biennial assembly in June.

In the meantime, several regional Presbyterian groups are planning to introduce resolutions which call for the abandonment of the policy altogether. Divestment proponents also plan to introduce further resolutions, and both sides are hoping for a public relations coup.

Vote To Divest Seen Having Little Effect

"The big test will be the Presbyterian church in June," said Rabbi Eugene Korn of the American Jewish Congress. "Divestment has become very, very unpopular in the United States, even with the rank and file. But once again you still have the ideologues and the extremists who are pushing the agenda."

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A clash of values

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

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Toronto Edition

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Section: ISSUES & IDEAS; Pg. A21; Jonathan Kay

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Byline: Jonathan Kay, National Post

Body

In 2003, artist Dave Brown published a cartoon in Britain's Independent newspaper depicting Ariel Sharon eating a Palestinian baby. "What's wrong?" Sharon is saying. "You never seen a politician kissing babies before?"

The cartoon provoked outrage for two reasons. First, it played on the debunked myth that Israel had massacred Palestinian civilians in Jenin the previous April. Secondly, it evoked the ancient libels against the Jews -- the most famous being the claim that Jews use the blood of Gentile children to make their Passover Matzoh.

Yet Brown never felt compelled to go into hiding from Jewish mobs. Nor was he bashful about showing up when the Sharon image won Political Cartoon of the Year honours from Britain's Political Cartoon Society. His award was presented by a former Cabinet minister at the London headquarters of The Economist, with nary a protester in sight.

Later, Canadian filmmaker Martin Himel interviewed the Cartoon Society's director, Tim Benson, to find out what he thought of Brown's award-winning creation. The exchange is captured in Himel's 2004 documentary Jenin: Massacring Truth.

Himel: "Why, in all these [British cartoons], don't we see maybe [Yasser] Arafat eating babies?"

Benson: "Maybe Jews don't issue fatwas."

Himel: "What do you mean by that?"

Benson: "Well, if you upset an Islamic or Muslim group, as you know, fatwas can be issued by Ayatollahs and such-like. And maybe it's at the back of each cartoonist's mind that they could be in trouble if they do so."

A dozen cartoonists who published crude depictions of Muhammad in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten are now learning this the hard way. At a rally in front of the Danish embassy in London yesterday, protesters held signs that demanded that such infidels be variously "beheaded," "slain," "exterminated" and "massacred." So much for freedom of speech. Or, as one protester's sign put it: "Freedom of expression -- go to hell."

That last one crystallizes the reason the Danish firestorm represents such a watershed in the clash of civilizations between the West and the Muslim world.

A clash of values

If the cartoons constituted garden-variety hate-speech, there would be no story. Political correctness is now as much a Western value as due process and representative democracy. In 1997, following a terrorist attack in Egypt, Gazette cartoonist Aislin published a cartoon showing a dog wearing an Arab headdress. The heading read, "In the name of Islamic Extremism ...," followed by the words "With our apologies to dogs everywhere." The Montreal newspaper quickly apologized to readers, and few even remember the incident. Such teapot tempests are old hat.

What makes the Jyllands-Posten controversy different is that it is not about hate censorship -- which has broad approval across all religions -- but about the idiosyncratic dogma of one particular faith.

As Haroon Siddiqui noted in the Toronto Star on Thursday, things began when a Danish author complained he could not get an artist to provide illustrations for an innocent children's book. The reason: Islam forbids pictorial depictions of Muhammad -- or at least of his face -- as risking idolatry. It doesn't matter whether the depiction is flattering or unflattering, peaceful or menacing. It is forbidden, period. That is what led an editor at Jyllands-Posten -- in a misguided effort to uphold the principle of free speech -- to commission the cartoons at issue.

I say misguided because the cartoons are crude, and not particularly clever. Had they been submitted for publication in the Post, or any other Canadian newspaper, they would have been rejected on that simple basis alone.

But in Europe, it's the lofty principle -- not its vulgar implementation -- that editors are now standing on. Which is why several other newspapers defied Muslim threats and republished the cartoons this past week. Their point is that the ban on depicting Muhammad is, from a secular perspective, arbitrary -- like a fiat against showing a man's elbow. Or an avocado. Or the number eight. And if you give in to that, you're validating a quantum leap in political correctness that opens the door for extremists -- of any religion -- to enforce any no-go area they please.

All across Europe, the ingredients for a violent culture war are in place. American conservatives like to lampoon Europeans as touchy-feely lefties who will do anything to appease militant Islam. But in recent years, the continent has begun to fight back.

The French decision to ban the hijab from public schools in 2004 is the most famous example. But there are many others. From Jan. 1, 2006 onward, for instance, the German state of Baden-Wurttemberg has required immigrants to take a "conscience test." The questions include: "(13) What would you do if your daughter wants to marry a man of a different religion?", "(22) You have learned that a terrorist operation is under way. How would you act?", "(27) Some people think the Jews are responsible for many evil actions in the world and even believe that the Jews were behind the Sept. 11 attacks in New York. What do you think?", and, most pertinently to the current crisis, "(3) Some films, plays and books offend the religious sensitivities of people of different religions. In your opinion, what methods should be employed for the prevention of religious sensitivities from being hurt?"

As you run through the test's 30 questions, you realize how abundant and fundamental are the moral divisions between traditional Islam and secular Western society. Some pundits have written that Hamas's victory in last week's Palestinian election was a good thing, because it showed Israel what it's up against. The Danish affair may have the same effect on Europe.

Westerners tend to make triumphalist assumptions about their values. We assume that once traditional societies get a taste of free speech, female emancipation, capitalism and all the rest, they'll quickly cast off their patriarchal strictures and religious dogmas. That's proven true in most of the developing world -- including East Asia, eastern Europe and Latin America. But the Muslim world is putting up a stronger fight. A lot of blood will be spilled before it's over. And some of it may belong to cartoonists.

Graphic

A clash of values

Colour Photo: Mohamed Torkoman, Reuters; IGNITING HATRED: Anti-cartoon protesters in U.K. call for violence, Gaza erupts: A Palestinian man, with a boy on his shoulders, holds the Koran at an anti-cartoon protest yesterday in the West Bank city of Jenin.: (Photo ran on pg. A1.); Black & White

Photo: Stephen Hird, Reuters; British protesters outside the Danish embassy in London on Friday.

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Rasmussen says Danes are bitter over crisis; He points to attempts to gain commercial advantage in Mideast

The International Herald Tribune

February 10, 2006 Friday

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Byline: John Vinocur and Dan Bilefsky

Dateline: COPENHAGEN

Body

Asked Thursday whether Danes felt abandoned by their allies during a week of crisis with the Islamic world, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen replied that attempts to secure commercial advantage at his country's expense had struck at their hearts.

At the same time, Rasmussen tried to shield the Bush administration and some of Denmark's partners in NATO from accusations that they had been tardy and overcautious in coming to its defense in the crisis, which the prime minister said was more about attempts by Iran and Syria to cause diversions in the Middle East than 12 cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper.

Looking tired after what he acknowledged had been a difficult week, Rasmussen said in an interview in his office that attempts by European companies in the Middle East to disassociate themselves from Denmark or Danish products was considered by Danes to be "disgraceful."

Rasmussen did not refer to a particular business organization or country. But his response came in reply to a question referring to attempts in the Arab world by companies associated with Nestle, the Swiss food giant, and Carrefour, the French retailer, to distance themselves from Denmark. Danish industry estimates it has lost more than \$55 million in sales in the Middle East since the furor began.

Rasmussen appeared particularly irritated about the circumstances because they contradict "all our efforts to promote free trade."

But the prime minister avoided criticizing the Bush administration for its slow and cautious defense of an ally. President George W. Bush referred to his solidarity with Denmark for the first time on Wednesday after five days of rioting in the Middle East against Danish citizens and Danish embassies.

"I have never doubted that Bush would stand up for Denmark," Rasmussen said. "He values faithfulness and loyalty. I was not surprised he decided to call me and express support."

Rasmussen reiterated that there would be no Danish apology for the cartoons. He brushed aside any suggestion that Denmark's policies requiring that immigrants accommodate Danish tradition were at fault, and asserted: "We are on the right track." More broadly, he said, "I see a very clear tendency that other European countries will go in our direction."

Rasmussen says Danes are bitter over crisis He points to attempts to gain commercial advantage in Mideast

In light of statements here that Denmark had been abandoned in the early phase of the crisis, Rasmussen was asked whether the Danish Parliament would maintain troops in Iraq and Afghanistan if it were asked to vote on the issue tomorrow.

"The situation would be the same. We haven't changed," he said. He added, referring to the allies: "It's crucial that Denmark feel their strong support when we need it."

Rasmussen argued that the cartoon crisis had been hijacked by Middle East countries that were using the caricatures for domestic ends. He said Iran, isolated over its nuclear program, was using the cartoons to generate support in the Muslim world while Syria, under investigation for the assassination of the former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri, was trying to create a distraction. And the Palestinian Authority, divided over the recent election of **Hamas** representatives, was exploiting the cartoon crisis to unite its disparate elements, he said.

"We have religious extremists who exploit the situation and fuel the flames to pursue their own agenda, and people shouldn't make any mistake about that. Religious extremists aim at destabilizing the situation in the whole region," he said.

Rasmussen said that Western allies were slow to understand the magnitude of the crisis. "I think we have to realize that it was only at the weekend" that the allies "realized how much more was at stake" than a debate about the propriety of 12 cartoons.

Rasmussen could not point to a clear path toward a resolution of the confrontation but said he hoped that reasonable voices would be able to find a common ground. He avoided any comment about a statement on Wednesday by the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, that Denmark must ask for forgiveness for the publication of the cartoons, or calls from the Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, Thursday for Muslims not to rest until Denmark had apologized.

When asked if leaders from more moderate Muslim countries were getting involved in attempts to find a solution, Rasmussen replied, "We have to be a bit discreet. I can't go into details about diplomatic contacts."

The crisis would be discussed at a meeting continuing Friday of NATO defense ministers in Sicily, he said. But Denmark expected no statement at the meeting's conclusion.

Rasmussen said he believed that Islam was compatible with democracy but argued it was incumbent on Muslim immigrants in Denmark and in Europe in general to embrace the liberal values of their adopted countries. "Denmark is a liberal country. We do believe in individual liberty and freedom. People can live according to their own customs," he said. "However, I think we have to insist on respecting our core values, including freedom of expression, gender equality for **women** and men and a clear distinction between politics and religion." Rasmussen said the perception of Denmark in the Muslim world had been distorted by falsehoods spread by cellphone and Internet messages across the Middle East. In particular, he said the Danish government was re-evaluating its relations with local Muslim leaders who traveled to the Middle East in December, and had stoked tensions by showing the cartoons to religious leaders, including caricatures depicting Muhammad as a pig that never appeared in the Danish press.

Asked if he would have done anything differently in retrospect, Rasmussen said he had no regrets. "I don't think we could have done something in another way," he said. "We are witnessing events with deep sadness and disbelief. We are not used to it in Denmark."

He added that the crisis had awakened Denmark to the implications of operating in a globalized world. But he said he did not believe it would fundamentally alter the country of 5.4 million. "The effect will not be a more inward-looking Denmark," he said. "But the core values on which we have built our society will remain. Danes will not change that view."

Rasmussen says Danes are bitter over crisis He points to attempts to gain commercial advantage in Mideast

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This is the devastation rained on Beirut. But as this dispatch reveals, Israel remains utterly defiant in the face of global censure

Daily Mail (London)

July 15, 2006 Saturday

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Byline: RICHARD PENDLEBURY

Body

THE first rocket exploded just two blocks from where I stood. The concussion from the blast shook windows and set off a cacophony of car alarms.

A telltale plume of grey smoke rose overhead, marking the place where another Katyusha rocket had hit downtown Nahariya shortly after 7.30pm.

I reached the scene before the emergency services, passing an old woman who was dragging her husband uphill, limping and protesting, away from the carnage.

Fire was already raging at the Hamayasdım Street crossroads. A bagel shop burned and flames rose the height of an electricity pylon on the junction, which was a field of broken glass.

The rocket had not exploded on the street, as it first appeared, but in the top floor of an apartment block above, blowing out the corner walls of what might have been a bedroom, spilling fire onto the pavement below.

It was too hot to approach and check what had happened to the residents.

Please God, that they, like so many others, had already fled, or taken to a bomb shelter.

This previously jolly seaside town of 50,000 people just five miles south of the border with Lebanon is now in the frontline, because Israel is at war - again.

Reservists have been called up and Beirut and southern Lebanon are being pounded by its aircraft.

An all-out invasion, like the one of 1982 in which Israel sought to destroy the PLO, cannot be ruled out.

In short, the Middle East teeters on the brink of a new catastrophe.

Even in a country born in blood and hardened by perpetual conflict, what is happening now along Israel's northern border is something more than a skirmish; far more frightening or portentous than the regular pinpricks by Palestinian insurgents or the sudden outrages of the suicide bombers.

It began on Wednesday when a well-planned ambush by Hezbollah guerillas, operating from south Lebanon, killed eight Israeli Defence Force soldiers, wounded several more and destroyed a tank.

This is the devastation rained on Beirut. But as this dispatch reveals, Israel remains utterly defiant in the face of global censure

Two Israeli soldiers were also taken hostage, pawns for a possible prisoner swap, like Corporal Galid Shalit who was seized by Palestinian militants in Gaza last month, sparking a major Israeli incursion there. Now Tel Aviv has another military confrontation.

By itself the Hezbollah ambush and kidnap would have caused Israeli outrage and massive retaliation. But, from early Thursday morning, they have kept up the attack by firing volleys of Sovietdesigned Katyusha rockets into northern Israel from Lebanese territory. So far, 160 rockets have been fired killing two civilians and wounding more than 100.

The Israeli response has been swift and fierce: a major bombardment of the southern Lebanon towns and villages from which Hezbollah launch their rockets; backed up with attacks on the capital crippling the airport and forcing a mass exodus from the city.

More than 50 people have been killed in Lebanon and the south of the country is virtually severed from the north as Israel's harshest campaign of air and artillery bombardments in ten years has destroyed many of the bridges across the Litani river.

It is an extraordinary - some would say excessive - response but the people of Israel believe it is fully justified. Visiting the towns in northern Israel I could understand the sense of vulnerability they feel.

Nahariya has been hit by three rocket barrages and it's here that the first Israeli civilian was killed.

It is also the home town of Ohad Goldwasser, one of the two Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah.

The rockets come suddenly without warning from a clear blue sky and as the sabbath approaches, the dusty roads south are packed with cars full of hot, frightened and tired Israeli families fleeing the barrage with what belongings they can

carry. Border communities have become ghost towns and those that stay have been ordered to remain in their shelters.

Nothing like this has been experienced since Saddam Hussein launched missile strikes against Israel during the 1991 Gulf War.

'It is all out war, by any definition,' said one commentator on Israeli radio as news of another rocket attack came through.

Hezbollah escalated matters further when, for the first time ever, the northern city of Haifa, 25 miles from the Lebanese border was hit by a long-range Katyusha. One and a half million Israelis are now within range.

The people of Israel are aware of the human cost on both sides of the border. But for them, this is not a question of an internal terrorist campaign.

They see it as a matter of a sovereign state being attacked by terrorists operating quite freely from inside another sovereign state, using weapons supplied by other sovereign states.

As far as Israel is concerned, a line has been crossed. They call it 'the new reality'.

In northern Israel the people and politicians whom I have met and spoken to in the past few days - including the Israeli president himself - repeatedly invoked not only the name of Lebanon, the terror group's base, but that of Syria, its weapon supplier, and Iran, Hezbollah's spiritual guide.

Six years have passed since Israel withdrew its forces from southern Lebanon and the United Nations redrew the mutual border along the so-called 'Blue Line'.

This is the devastation rained on Beirut. But as this dispatch reveals, Israel remains utterly defiant in the face of global censure

Under a UN resolution, the Lebanese government was supposed to deploy its army to fill the vacuum. Yet it failed to do so, say the Israelis.

Instead, Hezbollah forces were allowed to set up bases and operate in the area, using the country as a launch-pad for attacks on Israel.

This week the organisation launched its blitz. And in return, a punishment of Old Testament ferocity is to be visited upon Lebanon for so long the puppet or punchbag of the regional powers by its powerful southern neighbour.

The endgame has begun.

Defence minister Amir Peretz has promised that Hezbollah will never be allowed to return to its southern Lebanese bases.

It will be purged forever.

These are not empty threats.

Blood must be paid in blood, many have said to me here.

Enough is enough.

One of the first Katyusha rockets fired at Nahariya on Wednesday passed by a miracle through a 10ft gap between two residential apartment blocks filled with breakfasting families.

It buried itself three feet deep in the concrete courtyard of a coffee house, just off the town's main boulevard. The explosion blew out windows and sprayed shrapnel 40ft up the sides of the buildings.

Danny, the owner of the cafe, had stepped out of his door when the missile struck.

A mangled training shoe still lay on a stretch of bloodsmeared lino.

Shrapnel had taken off part of his leg, residents told me.

Standing amid the debris, Effy Eitam, a Rightwing opposition MP and former Israeli army general, said: 'This is a moment of truth.

'The Lebanese government has to decide if it wants Lebanon without Hezbollah or Hezbollah without Lebanon. It has failed to fulfil its obligations. We were wrong to leave Lebanon so quietly. Now our civilians are being killed, as you can see.' But more civilians are being killed north of the border, in the parts of Lebanon now under attack by Israel.

The feeling here is that Lebanon has only itself to blame for the situation.

Mr Eitam added: 'Hezbollah must be destroyed once and for all by very aggressive action and a message must be sent out to Syria and Iran, who are the line of supply for these rockets.

'Firepower is the only answer.

After we have cleaned them out then we can sit down and make the political negotiations with the Lebanese.' Such views found a sympathetic audience a couple of miles away at Hazamir No 5, an apartment block on the edge of the town, where another rocket fell.

At that moment many of the residents were already preparing to leave for their shelters, having heard the sound of the rocket strikes in the town centre.

This is the devastation rained on Beirut. But as this dispatch reveals, Israel remains utterly defiant in the face of global censure

'I had got my baby and a bag of belongings then, my God, the explosion! My head still aches,' said 26-year-old Margarita Lakin, who came to Israel from the Russian Far East seven years ago.

The Katyusha hit her block on the floor above, punched through a flat roof and detonated on the balcony of the flat next to her own.

Unfortunately its 40-year-old Argentine-born owner, Monica Lerer, was having breakfast there when it struck. The rocket killed her instantly and blew her body onto the balcony below.

'Those bastards have rockets with a range of 100km,' raged Meir Baruchi, a 50-year-old seaman standing outside the apartment block.

'If they see we are weak soon they will have rockets with a range of 300km and Tel Aviv will be hit. In Beirut the Lebanese, who allowed this to happen, sit in their cafes and drink coffee like it was Paris while we have to hide in our bunkers. For too long you could see Hezbollah flags on the other side of the Lebanese border, flaunting their presence.

'Now is the time for power not politics. If the Lebanese want to return to the days of destruction then so be it. It is their fault for doing nothing.'

A man next to him said the Shi'ite Hezbollah were no different to the Sunnis of the Gaza strip and West Bank.

'I am sorry for the way people have to live in Gaza,' he said, referring to the narrow strip of land alongside the Mediterranean in southern Israel where 1.4million Palestinians live in squalid conditions and where unemployment and poverty are widespread.

'But they had a choice between Fatah and Hamas in their elections and they chose Hamas. They voted for blood.' By the late afternoon Nahariya is all but empty save for police and army.

All the shops are closed and the citizens in their bunkers or fleeing south, as directed by the government.

In the lobby of the the municipal headquarters volunteers from the army and youth groups pack thousands of loaves of bread into bags to be distributed to the bomb shelters.

They are hard at work when, without any fanfare the Israeli president's motorcade arrives.

These are difficult times for Moshe Katsav. He is about to be impeached for the alleged sexual harassment of five young women in his office.

Perhaps that is why he arrives on this unscheduled visit with his rather dumpy wife on his arm.

Perched on a sofa in a small office upstairs he says he has come 'to show solidarity with Nahariya and the North'.

Just like the people in the street outside he names the culpritshe believes responsible for the attack on his country. 'Syria is behind Hezbollah,' says President Katsav. 'All its military equipment comes from Damascus.

'But the Lebanese government is also responsible for this.

It is up to them to avoid a serious escalation which will set them back scores of years.' Later, as the afternoon shadows lengthen my translator and I stop at the large, concrete beachfront Sol Marin hotel, next to the pleasure gardens.

The hotel should be jammed with holidaying Israelis on a day like this.

It is empty of guests and staff, save one solitary young Arab who sits behind the reception desk. 'Yes, there have been some cancellations,' he admits ruefully.

This is the devastation rained on Beirut. But as this dispatch reveals, Israel remains utterly defiant in the face of global censure

We sympathise, then buy two choc ices from the freezer beside him and stroll outside again to eat them and watch two Israeli attack helicopters.

Picked out by the setting sun, they hovered only a few miles further north, firing their cannon on targets along the Lebanese border.

Nearby stands the family home of Ohad Goldwasser, the local soldier captured by Hezbollah.

Neighbours say that he is 31 years old and married last October. His wife is pregnant.

Private Goldwasser's wounded comrades are being treated, along with civilian victims of the rocket attacks, at the West Galilee hospital on the edge of town.

Here too there is fear. The top floor had been evacuated and 30 new mothers from the maternity ward transferred to the basement; windows are crisscrossed with anti-blast tape.

I am talking to the soldier on guard at the gate when there were three almost simultaneous detonations close by.

'Katyusha,' says the soldier, unstrapping his helmet from his belt. The evening barrage has begun.

As we drive into town there are more explosions. Two of them are very close, clearly in the centre of Nahariya; acrid smoke begins to drift across the roof tops as sirens wail.

Terror has come to urban Galilee. More people were leaving Nahariya yesterday and similar scenes were being enacted across the border in Lebanon.

International condemnation about the severity of the Israeli response has been swift. In many eyes it is totally disproportionate to what the country has so far suffered at the hands of Hezbollah.

Just as refugee centres are now springing up in Israel for those fleeing the rockets, so thousands of innocent Lebanese civilians, who have only recently discovered something akin to peace and even prosperity after decades of civil war and destruction are suffering once again.

But all I can report is what I have seen on the Israeli side of this seemingly intractable, ongoing conflict: the fear, the suffering and the desire for revenge.

It is a response born of decades surrounded by enemies, and the belief that one has to fight, fight, fight, simply in order to survive.

When will it stop? And who will be sucked in?

Israel's abiding fear of an Iran equipped with a nuclear warhead, has not been lessened by the events of the last few days.

For the moment the missiles are conventional and being fired by Tehran's proxies.

But a line has been crossed.

Graphic

SHOCK AND AWE: A LEBANESE SOLDIER STANDS NEXT TO A CRATER LEFT BY AN ISRAELI STRIKE ON BEIRUT YESTERDAY ;DIRECT HIT: THE SPECTACULAR SIGHT OF DEBRIS FLYING UP INTO THE AIR

This is the devastation rained on Beirut. But as this dispatch reveals, Israel remains utterly defiant in the face of global censure

AFTER ISRAELI JETS SLAMMED MISSILES INTO A BRIDGE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON YESTERDAY IN A SERIES OF PRECISION RAIDS ;KEY TARGET: BEIRUT'S MAIN AIRPORT COMES UNDER ATTACK ;DESTROYED: THE MISSILES FLATTENED THIS FLYOVER IN BEIRUT ;INFERNO: BLOWN-UP FUEL TANKS CAST A PALL OVER THE CITY

Load-Date: July 15, 2006

End of Document

'We don't do God, we do Palestine and Iraq'

The Sunday Times (London)

February 12, 2006

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Section: FEATURES; News; Pg. 12

Length: 1019 words

Byline: Amir Taheri

Body

It looks like a duck, quacks like a duck and flies like a duck. And yet it insists that it is not a duck. This is the image that comes to mind when watching those anti-cartoon marches in western capitals, including London, in the name of Islam.

Isn't Islam supposed to be a religion? Shouldn't it be concerned with the broader issues of human existence rather than with a set of cartoons, a Dutch television documentary, the head-covers of French schoolgirls or a novel by a British-Indian author?

Today the visible Islam, the loudest Islam, is a political movement masquerading as a religion. Many mosques in this country have been transformed into political clubs where Kashmir, Iraq and Palestine and "the misdeeds of Anglo-Saxon imperialism" have replaced issues of religious faith as the principal theme.

Not long ago when I asked an imam in a London mosque why it was that God hardly featured in his sermons, he thought I had lost the plot. "What matters today is the suffering of our brethren under occupation," he snapped.

In other words: in our Islam we don't do God, we do Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Iraq.

That is not all. This political Islam also has grievances about aspects of British and more broadly European domestic politics. It is unhappy that gays and lesbians are allowed to live without hindrance. It does not like the way women are allowed to "get cheeky" and even argue with their menfolk.

It is scandalised by the West's "corruption and debauchery" and that there is no "moral force" to set strict limits to individual liberties.

"We have no religious grievances in this country," said Azam Tamimi, a pro Hamas British Muslim scholar. "Here we can practise our religion with more freedom than in any Muslim-ruled country. It is therefore natural that we should focus on political rather than religious issues."

There are at least three reasons for the excessive politicisation of Islam in the West.

The first is that Muslims in the West come from a wide variety of ethnic, sectarian and cultural backgrounds. Many have long histories of sectarian feuds in their homelands. Since those feuds cannot be continued here they tend to minimise the religious aspects of Islam and emphasise the political themes that can unite them.

'We don't do God, we do Palestine and Iraq '

For example, no Sunni Muslims could ever agree with a Qaderi or a Jaafari Muslim on key theological issues. But all three hate gay marriages and can unite in a march against Israel.

The second reason is that the public expression of Islam is controlled by political groups and parties that are often banned in the Muslim world itself.

Once again Britain and the West in general offer the only space in which all Islamic political movements can thrive. There are more than 400 Islamic associations and societies in Britain operating through some 2,000 mosques. But scratch any one of them and you will find that it is, in fact, a cover for a political movement.

Because it offers a unique freedom, Britain has become host to dozens of Islamist parties which are banned in the Muslim world. The Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), the Tunisian An-Nahda al-Islamiyah, the pan-Islamist Hizb al-Tahrir (Liberation party), the Iranian Mujaheddin Khalq (People's Holy Warriors), the Iranian-sponsored Hezbollah movement and a number of other groups that could best be described as terrorist outfits have had propaganda bases and safe havens in Britain for two decades.

The third reason for the politicisation of Islam in Britain is its rapprochement with the extreme left over the past decade. Today political Islam and the British extreme left are in coalition in a number of organisations, including the anti-war alliance. Muslims provide the street muscle and the "poor masses" that the traditionally atheistic extreme left lacks. In exchange the extreme left puts its experience in militant politics at the service of political Islam. Hatred of "bourgeois democracy", anti-Americanism and opposition to Israel provide the unifying factors of this unnatural alliance.

Islam cannot have it both ways: pretend to be a religion and demand special respect while operating as a political ideology which, by definition, must be open to criticism and even denigration.

Politicised Islam's attempt at destroying individual freedoms is as much a threat to Islam as the inquisition was to Christianity.

By preaching martyrdom as the highest goal for Muslims and beating the drums of "the clash of civilisations", it is also a threat to world peace.

To protect itself, Islam needs to revive its theology with emphasis on divinity.

In other words, Islam must re-become a religion.

It is a sad fact that such terms as spirituality (ruhaniyat), theology (kalam), theologian (mutukallim), and philosopher (failasuf) have disappeared from the Islamic lexicon. Excessive politicisation is killing Islam as a religion and, at the same time, destroying Muslim literature, art and culture. More importantly, as far as Britain is concerned it is also mobilising negative energies that could threaten our democracy.

This does not mean that Muslims should stay out of politics or not be concerned about Palestine, Iraq and Kashmir or any political cause.

It means they should recognise that those causes are political, not religious.

Nobody prevents Muslims practising their faith in Palestine or Kashmir, let alone Iraq. These disputes are about territory, borders, statehood, form of government, not about faith.

Politicised Islam is a form of totalitarianism. Its primary victims are Muslims.

In many Muslim countries it has been exposed and can no longer deceive the masses.

In the West, however, it has duped media, government and academia into treating it not as a political movement, but as a religion.

'We don't do God, we do Palestine and Iraq '

Advocates of politicised Islam claim that a call for Islam to return to God, to resuscitate its dead theology and to re-become a religion is nothing but a "Zionist- imperialist plot" to divert "the rage of the Muslim masses".

More Muslims, however, are beginning to miss God, to feel His absence in their religious discourse and to long for His return where He belongs -at the heart of the faith.

Load-Date: February 12, 2006

End of Document

1953 Sharon raid burns in psyche

The Toronto Star

January 12, 2006 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A10

Length: 957 words

Byline: Mitch Potter, Toronto Star

Dateline: QIBYA, West Bank

Body

It was the night that put Ariel Sharon on the map and the night the fledgling Jewish state, then just a few years old, signalled in the deadliest terms it would stop at nothing to defend itself.

And for the survivors of the West Bank village of Qibya, a night that lives on in infamy. Today, as the elders of this Palestinian town crane over their radios for updates on the fate of the stricken Israeli prime minister, the searing memory of Oct. 14, 1953, burns still.

Muslim propriety prevents Ibrahim Mohammed Hamad, 63, from rejoicing in Sharon's demise. But one week after a devastating stroke, as Sharon battles back from the brink of death, Hamad finds it difficult to hear world leaders such as George W. Bush praise the ailing "man of peace" without choking on his hummus.

"As human beings, we do not make fun of the death of others," said Hamad, who was 9 years old the night Sharon's crack paratroop unit brought down his town, detonating 42 homes and a schoolhouse with 500 kilos of explosives.

"But do not think we will shed tears for Sharon. I don't know if he acted alone or on orders from above. But he did not come here to get a suntan."

With Sharon's condition gradually improving, doctors hoped yesterday to completely remove the prime minister from sedatives soon - a process that could take 36 hours.

Dr. Yoram Weiss, one of Sharon's doctors, said it would take several more days to determine the extent of his brain damage, Associated Press reports.

Seventy-five Palestinian men, women and children died in what is remembered as the Qibya Massacre. And while neither Palestinians nor Israelis have ever doubted the sheer audacity of the mission, they read the moment in mutually exclusive narratives.

For Israel, the night represents prototypical payback for terror. The national myth holds that though civilians were never meant to die, the Arabs - Palestinian was not yet a word Israelis could bring themselves to use - had to be taught a lesson for those early Fedayeen raids that harassed innocent Israelis.

1953 Sharon raid burns in psyche

Sharon's Unit 101 provided the ruthless answer, just a few days after the killing of an Israeli mother and her two infant children in the nearby town of Yehud. And for his actions, he was rewarded with his first audience with Israel's founding prime minister, David Ben-Gurion.

For Palestinians, the night gave birth to the myth of Sharon the Butcher, whose hands would be reddened by complicity in other massacres, including the slaughter of Palestinians at the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla - for which he was found indirectly responsible.

Sharon always denied knowing there were Palestinian innocents crouched in the houses of Qibya when his men laid waste to the town, which was then under Jordanian rule, a few kilometres from the 1948 Israeli border. In his 1989 autobiography, *Warrior*, he describes sending his men in to rescue Arab toddlers before each blast.

But in typically unapologetic fashion, he makes clear the purpose of the mission. "The orders were clear: Qibya was to be a lesson," Sharon wrote. "I was to inflict as many casualties as I could on the Arab home guard ... I was also to blow up every major building in town.

"A political decision had been made on the highest level. The Jordanians were to understand that Jewish blood could no longer be shed with impunity. From this moment on there would be a heavy price to pay."

Hamad dismisses Sharon's claim, remembering the night through the eyes of a terrified child. He says the only buildings razed were those with lights on. The dark, uninhabited homes, he said, were left untouched.

Hamad led us yesterday to the arch-roofed cold cellar where he huddled in 1953 with 23 others among his extended family and neighbours. When the Israeli detonation came, the house fell in on them, but their carved-stone ceiling held up, creating an air pocket. A 2-year-old girl succumbed in the night, he said, likely asphyxiated by the acrid soot and dust of the blast. But the rest survived and dug their way to freedom early the next morning, after Sharon's men had withdrawn.

Ahmed al-Bardawi, another survivor, told the Star he was guarding the town's olive crop from poachers that night when Sharon's men closed in. His weapon was seized and his hands bound with heavy cord. Bardawi managed to free himself, sustaining a rifle shot through his wrist as he fled into the terraced hillside, where he sat shivering and bleeding through the explosions to come.

"Sharon blew up our town," he said yesterday, rubbing the scar on his 75-year-old wrist. "Now God has blown up his head."

Abdul al-Hafed, 44, head of Qibya's town council, observes that the town's elderly still live with an enduring fear so acute they are reluctant to speak of the night. It wasn't until 1989, a full 36 years after the killings, that Qibya formally observed its loss, dedicating the Mosque of the Massacred to the victims.

"My great grandfather and 12 of his family were killed by Sharon's men," allows Hafed. "So we cannot ask for God to have mercy on the soul of Sharon."

But as Hafed watches his town drift into the political hands of the militant Islamic movement - seven of the town's 11 seats went to **Hamas** in municipal voting in September, and he expects similar results from Jan. 25 national elections - he wonders aloud if leaders such as Sharon aren't preferable to what the future might hold.

"As a personality, Sharon is the last of the founding generals. And the old generals knew the rules of the game," he said.

"Maybe the new generation will act more irrationally than Sharon. If they continue pushing the Palestinians into a corner, there could be a backlash of violence. And we might find people will not have the wisdom of the old generals in knowing how to stop it."

Graphic

Mitch Potter Toronto Star Ibrahim Mohammed Hamad, 63, was 9 years old at the time of the 1953 Qibya raid led by Ariel Sharon. More than 40 homes in the West Bank village were destroyed by Sharon's crack squad.

Load-Date: January 12, 2006

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Shabina's right to choose; A Muslim schoolgirl is stepping up her fight to wear the jilbab in class. Here a liberal columnist defends her controversial stance

The Evening Standard (London)

February 9, 2006 Thursday

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**London
Evening
Standard**

Section: A MERGE; Pg. 13

Length: 955 words

Byline: JONATHAN FREEDLAND

Body

WHEN I see Shabina Begum, the schoolgirl fighting for the right to be clad head to foot in a jilbab, I feel a double twinge of distant recognition.

For one thing, she comes from Luton, my father's hometown; her legal battle is with Denbigh High, where my Dad was once a pupil. More pertinently, I remember from my own childhood a battle that was smaller and quieter - it certainly didn't go to the House of Lords, as Shabina's did this week - but which centred on precisely the same question.

The 1970s were turning into the 1980s and I was at University College School, an enlightened institution in impeccably liberal Hampstead. Between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of the pupils were Jews - just as some 80 per cent of Denbigh High is Muslim. One or two boys decided they wanted to wear a kippa, the skullcap worn at all times by orthodox Jewish males.

The authorities at UCS were thrown: they justly prided themselves on their tolerance and inclusiveness, but this seemed to cross a line. They refused the boys' request. UCS was, they explained, a rigorously nondenominational school; to allow boys to wear religious garb of any kind would violate that principle, by appearing to favour one sect over another. (Though quite how that squared with Christian hymns sung at assembly was never quite explained.) Now, a quarter-century later, Shabina Begum is refusing to do what those Jewish boys did - and take no for an answer. She has fought her case through the highest courts in the land, arguing for the same right those lads demanded: to dress the way she believes God wants her to dress.

I can see why Denbigh High tried to block her, and why they have refused to accept the Court of Appeal's ruling last year that they were wrong to exclude Ms Begum, thereby denying her two years of education. They believed they had found a happy medium at the school, one that allowed for a range of different religious minorities.

Shabina's right to choose A Muslim schoolgirl is stepping up her fight to wear the jilbab in class. Here a liberal columnist defends her controversial stance

They had come up with a creative solution to the school uniform problem, letting pupils wear the shalwar kameez, the traditional trousers and tunic familiar across the Indian subcontinent. That was meant to suit Hindus and Sikhs, as well as Muslims.

The school can be forgiven for feeling frustrated that even this inventive, pluralist approach was not good enough for Ms Begum.

THEY might wonder what the point of school uniform is if one individual can break the rules and wear what she likes - with the blessing of the courts.

Perhaps they quietly shudder at Shabina Begum's reasoning: the Law Lords heard on Tuesday that she didn't want to wear the kameez because it was "normally worn by disbelieving women".

Others may simply baulk at the very idea of the jilbab, whose full length is designed to conceal a woman's arms and legs, as if it is somehow her responsibility to divert the lecherous gaze of men. Or they might be troubled by the reported involvement in her case of the radical Islamist group, Hizb ut-Tahrir.

For all that, I hope the Law Lords side with Ms Begum. First, the law is on her side. Britain has now, through the Human Rights Act, something close to a Bill of Rights - and one of them, spelled out in Article 9, is freedom of religion. Not that we need a charter to tell us that. Instinctively we know that, just as we should be free to believe what we like, we should be free to dress as we like - provided we do not infringe on anyone else's genuine rights in the process.

That, though, as we've seen in recent days, is not as simple a principle as it looks. For Shabina's case is one more illustration of what has become the issue of our times. The first three items on the radio news yesterday morning were the verdict in the Abu Hamza trial; the ongoing, and increasingly lethal, row about the Danish cartoons of Mohammed; and a new statement from the Palestinian Islamist movement, Hamas. One way or another, how the West encounters Islam is looking like the central challenge of the age.

The Luton schoolgirl points the way to one possible answer. In the fevered discussion over the cartoon row, plenty of commentators have taken up a muscular liberal position. "Yes, Mohammed is sacred to you," they say to Muslims, their fingers wagging.

"But freedom of speech is sacred to us. And you better get used to it."

Those voices are right to defend liberty so staunchly; I too see free speech as a right that should be constrained only in the rarest circumstances, when it directly incites hatred, strictly defined. But my fellow liberals make a mistake when they imply free speech belongs only to "us", the non-Muslim majority - and they make a more serious mistake when they raise it like a bludgeon over Muslim heads. The West shouldn't be bullying Muslims with the "threat" of freedom. The West should be seducing them with it instead, explaining that liberty is a universal right that benefits everybody - even if it exacts the cost of being badly offended from time to time.

Freedom shouldn't be cast as a menace to Muslims, one that will see their most sacred beliefs profaned: if it is, then more will rally to the sick slogans and placards brandished by those extremists last week - including the banner that declared "Freedom of Expression, go to hell!!!"

So no more describing free speech as "our culture" or "the way we do things here". Instead, liberty has to be shown for what it is, as part of our common culture, the property of all of us.

Shabina Begum doubtless now feels that way about the Human Rights Convention: it's as much hers as any other Briton's. She has discovered that freedom and rights are not her enemy, but her friends. It's up to us to ensure Muslims and everyone else in British society sees liberty the same way - not as a threat, but as a promise we all share.

Shabina's right to choose A Muslim schoolgirl is stepping up her fight to wear the jilbab in class. Here a liberal columnist defends her controversial stance

Graphic

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: SHABINA BEGUM SHOULD BE AT LIBERTY TO DRESS AS SHE LIKES - PROVIDED NO ONE ELSE'S RIGHTS ARE INFRINGED

Load-Date: February 9, 2006

End of Document

Listen to Colonel Tim ...we'll all sleep safer

Mail on Sunday (London)

February 5, 2006 Sunday

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Section: FB 04; Pg. 35

Length: 934 words

Byline: SUZANNE MOORE

Body

RIP by drip come the details of the lies we were told and the blood of the soldiers who died in the name of those lies.

Hardly a week passes without some nugget of truth emerging about the run-up to the Iraq War. Each revelation reinforces just about every argument the antiwar lobby made at the time.

Whether it's Colin Powell's anaemic mea culpa about the 'mistake' he made in giving completely untrue evidence to the UN, or last week's leaked memo about Blair having agreed to go to war without a second UN resolution, it comes down to the same thing. Iraq was always going to be invaded by former alcoholic and now self-confessed oil addict George Bush.

But enough already. We are at war. Or at peace. According to whom you believe.

Get over it. OK, we didn't want a war but it's too late now. We'll pull out sooner or later.

Read all the bloggers and that is what they say. There are other things to attend to. Afghanistan for starters.

Another 3,000 or so of 'our boys' are off there because, actually, Afghanistan is not a yet a beacon of freedom or even a place where women can walk around without a shroud or get an education.

Vast parts of the country are lawless.

Then, of course, we need to worry about Iran which wants to prove it is our equal by having WMDs like we do.

YOU know that's really dangerous because Bush is now saying things like: 'We must never lose sight of our capacity to lead this world towards peace.'

Which we know means war as we have been here before. Then there's Jack Straw shuffling around doing 'diplomacy', Bush and Blair talking tough and the ominous threat to spread democracy.

Yet we recoil at what democracy in the Middle East produces.

Hamas in Palestine refuses to accept Israel's existence. Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad wants it wiped off the map. This is not quite what we had in mind but, as is said about Iraq, 'we are where we are'.

Listen to Colonel Tim ...we'll all sleep safer

Tim Collins, who led us into Iraq, now says a precondition for leaving is to address the Israel-Palestine question 'in a new uncompromising fashion [with] no Israeli veto to the progress'.

I think we should listen to him.

Like many soldiers, he is not sentimental about those who have made the 'ultimate sacrifice' as it must be called, but he is clear about how overstretched our Army is becoming.

Extra men are being sent to Afghanistan to stop the heroin production the war lords run.

But what, pray, is Afghanistan going to export in order to build schools and hospitals? And exactly how is it a British soldier's job to intervene in this age-old trade?

Our soldiers have been put in an impossible situation. They come back from Iraq if not dead then hardly covered in glory.

They have been sent there by Blair and his cronies.

Democratically elected, but horribly subservient, politicians went along with this.

As I said before, democracy doesn't always produce the results you want. It has produced a man who, after already agreeing to go to war, told Parliament Saddam would be given a final chance to disarm.

We have known for some time we were lied to. Now we can count the ways.

Just bear this in mind as the self-confessed oil addicts start gearing up for another war which is again supposed to make the world a safer place.

The last of Ms Moss? You must be joking

MOST ludicrous headline of the week: 'Is this the last we'll see of Kate?'

This refers to Kate Moss's move to America. As long as you never look at an advert, read a magazine or a newspaper or you are severely visually impaired, it is just possible. But even then I wouldn't put money on it.

DAVID CAMERON has been voted the 92nd sexiest man in the world in a poll by New Woman magazine. Very confusing. Are we to believe he is really more sexy than boy wonder Alex Turner of the Arctic Monkeys? How is that possible?

Still, it explains Norman Tebbit's attack on him. Norman didn't figure in the poll at all.

AREN'T you ecstatic that crisps will now be good for you? Well, not good, actually. Just not so bad. Walkers has taken out full-page ads explaining that its crisps will now have less salt and be cooked in sunseed oil, whatever that is.

Unfortunately the company says it can't turn 'crisps into a health food'.

How very disappointing. If they can't make them into a superfood like broccoli or blueberries, they should just keep quiet.

This wreck of a comedian

THE rehabilitation of Michael Barrymore is fascinating to behold. I am happy he is now sober but even in his sobriety he is an incoherent wreck of a man, the very opposite of someone who purveys in that quaint phrase 'light entertainment'.

Listen to Colonel Tim ...we'll all sleep safer

Indeed his problem is not that he was a gay alcoholic who fled the scene of a terrible accident or crime. It is that what made him successful is no longer in vogue. His impressions of Hitler or French onion sellers on Big Brother were embarrassing.

The only role he is suited for is being flayed alive on Ricky Gervais's Extras.

Clearly the public have moved on in their attitudes towards Michael Barrymore.

But his comedy hasn't and that remains the saddest thing of all.

Oona, the catwho deserves the cream

NO ONE could have enjoyed George Galloway's 'cat that got the cream' performance in Big Brother more than Oona King, whom he ousted as MP for Bethnal Green and Bow. She revealed last week that she was going through a last attempt at IVF treatment just before the election. Her level of stress must have been unbelievable and possibly contributed to the failure of the treatment. She and her husband are now looking to adopt. As she is a talented woman who understands that there is a life outside politics, I hope she succeeds in becoming a mother. However she goes about it.

Load-Date: February 6, 2006

Democracy not an export item

THE AUSTRALIAN

February 9, 2006 Thursday

All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Opinion / Op Ed; Pg. 12

Length: 1068 words

Byline: Leon Hadar

Body

MATP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Democracy not an export item

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Democracy not an export item

End of Document

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

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Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Demilitarization not in sight for Israel

University Wire

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Body

Israel has been at war for almost half a century. Change is needed in Israeli society to stabilize the region and resolve the conflict, said an Israeli peace activist.

Diana Dolev, professor at Wizo College in Haifa, Israel -- who works with a progressive organization called New Profile -- spoke at "Militarism, Feminism and Education in Israeli Society," a lecture sponsored by Ohio State Women in Development, in October.

Dolev's visit came at a critical time in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has cost the lives of roughly 3,734 Palestinians and 1,074 Israelis since September of 2000.

Several months ago, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon ordered a mass pull out of 9,500 settlers, signifying a glimmer of hope in an endless series of failed peace measures.

"I think this is a cover-up for what is actually going on at the moment in the West Bank," Dolev said.

She continued to elaborate on her views of the Gaza pull out. She said the Israeli government was not sincere and there was a strategy behind moving out the Jewish settlers.

New Profile is a volunteer grassroots organization in Israel that is committed to reforming Israel from a soldier state to an active peacemaking society. It believes that the words national security have often masked calculated decisions to choose military action for the achievement of political goals.

The Israeli government placed settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip almost 38 years ago, following the Arab-Israeli war, in order to maintain their occupation and presence in the Palestinian territories. According to international law and the Geneva Conventions, it is illegal for a country to transfer part of its own population into occupied territory.

So why does Dolev oppose these measures, measures that could potentially lead to the demilitarization of Israeli society?

Some opponents of the disengagement plan argue that this might be nothing but a long-term plan to establish a permanent Israeli presence in the West Bank. In this case Israel would need to maintain and even increase its military presence throughout the West Bank.

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"While people are led to believe that this was a first step toward moving back to the 1967 border," Dolev said, "in fact more (Israelis) are allowed to move into the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and more houses are being built there."

Another part of Dolev's humanitarian concerns with her government's seemingly generous concession is that there is no real protection for the Palestinian population that live in Gaza under the disengagement plan.

"The Israeli armed forces attack its population with artillery from the air and at sea," Dolev said.

The evacuation has resulted in Sharon's branching off the right wing Likud Party that he helped found almost 32 years ago. He announced Nov. 21 that he will lead a new political movement into the next elections, called National Responsibility.

Paul Fritz, a graduate student in political science, said he believes that concessions on both sides need to be made. This includes the removal of settlements in the occupied territories in order to make a viable Palestinian state, along with ending the violence on both sides.

Fritz, who visited Israel in 2001, is currently teaching various undergraduate courses this quarter, including Political Science 597, "Basic Conflict and Cooperation in the International system."

The need for Palestinian security is just as important as security for the Israelis, said Fritz.

He stressed U.S. and European involvement and the need to strive for an evenhanded engagement.

"There has to be some sort of counter to all of the (military) aid that goes to Israel so that people can see results because when it comes down to it - when a Palestinian on the ground sees a U.S.-made F-16 or an Apache helicopter with a hellfire missile coming at them - they know where it comes from," Fritz said.

On the other hand, resistance groups like Islamic Jihad and **Hamas** represent the militarized factions in the Palestinian society.

Fritz believes if demilitarization should take place, Palestinians and the Israeli society should both be demilitarized.

Dolev said the indoctrination of military life is seen from childhood where, in Israel, advertisements bombard people with army rhetoric and a glorified view of soldiers.

"Militarization includes dehumanization of the other," Dolev said.

Along with New Profile, Dolev wants to change the mindset that drives Israelis into repeated wars and justifies the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories.

Gideon Vennor, also an Israeli citizen and an Israeli Emissary to Columbus, disagrees with Dolev. He sees nothing wrong with Israel's military culture.

"You used the word 'indoctrinated.' I would not use that word. I would say that unfortunately military service is part of our lives, which is part of every Israeli's growing up," Vennor said. "We will all be happy when a time comes when we don't have to serve in the army."

Vennor, part of the executive staff of the Columbus Jewish Federation, said Israel is a peace-seeking and law-abiding state that has worked for peace year after year.

While supporting those who decide to reject military service through moral and legal help, New Profile seeks to promote humanistic education and independent critical thinking.

Israeli law requires every male and **female** to serve in the army after the age of 17. If one refuses he can be court-martialed and jailed for periods of at least 35 days.

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There are currently 1,662 Israelis who refuse that service. The five groups of conscientious objectors to the occupation that are currently active include Yesh-Gvul (There is a Limit), Shministim (High School Seniors), Courage to Refuse and Pilots Group.

A Web site created by Courage to Refuse includes accounts from Israelis who refuse military service.

"The situation in the occupied territories nowadays is itself illegal. Israel defines itself as a democratic nation and yet denies 3.5 million people, over a third of its population, the most basic civil rights," said Arik Diamant, director-general of Courage to Refuse.

Dolev compared joining New Profile to coming out of the closet, because it is unheard of in Israeli society to question the motives of the government.

"You're suddenly exposed to very painful questions that you ask yourself," Dolev said. "What have my parents done? Did they demolish Palestinian houses? Did they kill innocent people? Did they send people in trucks to leave their homes and not return forever? Reality suddenly dawns on you."

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To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire

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Byline: By ANDREA ELLIOTT

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

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Necessary Dialogue

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mosque Under a Microscope

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'From the Stones of Insults'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

One Imam, Many Audiences

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

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

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

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

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

To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TOMORROW

To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire

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

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

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

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

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

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

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

Load-Date: March 6, 2006

End of Document

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

The Daily Telegraph (LONDON)

September 2, 2006 Saturday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 22

Length: 1195 words

Byline: Charles Moore

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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9/11 and five years of folly

Yorkshire Post

September 11, 2006

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Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9/11 and five years of folly

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9/11 and five years of folly

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

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

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

Load-Date: September 12, 2006

End of Document

Delusion in Britain

New York Sun (Archive)

August 31, 2006 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 9

Length: 1138 words

Byline: DANIEL JOHNSON

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Delusion in Britain

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Load-Date: September 1, 2006

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

Christian Science Monitor

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 1

Length: 1112 words

Byline: Peter Grier Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Epilogue * Family reunion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How to help

Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Epilogue * Family reunion

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

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

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

The Alan Enwiya Fund

c/o The Christian Science Monitor

One Norway Street

Boston, MA 02115

The Adnan Abbas Fund

c/o The Christian Science Monitor

One Norway Street

Boston, MA 02115

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A new kind of true believer

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

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Byline: PAUL KELLY EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Body

MATP

We are witnessing rising tensions between secularism and faith in Australia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A new kind of true believer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A new kind of true believer

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

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

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

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

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

Load-Date: August 22, 2006

Saudi Arabia's moment of redemption?; Moderating Islam

The International Herald Tribune

September 2, 2006 Saturday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 6

Length: 1258 words

Byline: Afshin Molavi

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Saudi Arabia 's moment of redemption? Moderating Islam

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Saudi Arabia 's moment of redemption? Moderating Islam

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

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

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

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Load-Date: September 3, 2006

End of Document

War without victors

Weekend Australian

August 19, 2006 Saturday

All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Inquirer; Pg. 27

Length: 1216 words

Byline: Martin Chulov

Body

MATP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

War without victors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

War without victors

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

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

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

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

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End of Document

News Summary - Correction Appended

The New York Times

July 10, 2006 Monday

Late Edition - Final

Correction Appended

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

Length: 1111 words

Body

INTERNATIONAL A3-10

Rampages and Bombs Kill Dozens in Baghdad

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

U.S. Stresses Talks with Korea

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

India Tests Long-Range Missile

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

Israel Vows Ongoing Action

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

Polish Leader Elevates Twin

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

Russian Plane Crash Kills 122

News Summary

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

Wolfowitz Urges Trade Talks

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

NATIONAL A11-15

Republican Gives Details Of Intelligence Withheld

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

Court's Decision Divides G.O.P.

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

Tough Race for Republican

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

Florida Mayor Pushes Fines

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

Football Lures Male Students

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

NEW YORK/REGION B1-5

Small Towns Resist High-Voltage Towers

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

Gap in Campaign Money

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

Five Killed in Car Crash

News Summary

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

SPORTSMONDAY D1-8

Italy Wins World Cup Title

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

ARTS E1-8

Harvard Divided Over a Room

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

BUSINESS DAY C1-8

Data on Defibrillators

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

Executive Turmoil at EBay

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

AOL's Strategy Shift

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

Business Digest C2

EDITORIAL A16-17

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

Columns: Bob Herbert, Paul Krugman.

Bridge E6

Crossword E2

Metro Diary B2

Obituaries B7

TV Listings E8

Weather B8

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Correction

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

Correction-Date: July 11, 2006

Graphic

Photos

Load-Date: July 10, 2006

End of Document

More Airstrikes as Hezbollah Rockets Hit Deeper

The New York Times

July 15, 2006 Saturday

The New York Times on the Web

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

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Byline: By GREG MYRE

Dateline: METULA, Israel, July 15

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

More Airstrikes as Hezbollah Rockets Hit Deeper

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

More Airstrikes as Hezbollah Rockets Hit Deeper

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

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

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

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

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

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Load-Date: July 17, 2006

Crisis in the Middle East

The Irish Times
July 18, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 15

Length: 1281 words

Body

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

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

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

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

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

MICHAEL BERMINGHAM.

Droichead na Dothra,

Baile Átha Cliath 4.

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

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

Crisis in the Middle East

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

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

WE SHEPHERD,

Blackwater,

Co Wexford.

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

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

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

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

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

TONY ALLWRIGHT,

Killiney,

Co Dublin.

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

Senator DAVID NORRIS,

Seanad Éireann,

Dublin 2.

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

Crisis in the Middle East

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

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

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

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

DAVID PETER FINE,

St Pappin's Road,

Dublin 11.

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

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

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

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

ELEANOR DUNN,

Chapelizod,

Dublin 20.

Load-Date: July 26, 2006

End of Document

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

The Independent (London)

July 17, 2006 Monday

First Edition

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The  **INDEPENDENT**

Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 1178 words

Byline: ROBERT FISK in Beirut

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

D The weapons of war

Fajr-3 missile

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

Fajr-5 rocket

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

Raad missile

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

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

Katyusha

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

Kassem

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

F-16 fighter

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

Graphic

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

Load-Date: July 17, 2006

A Perverse Habit

New York Sun (Archive)

July 10, 2006 Monday

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Section: EDITORIAL & OPINION; Pg. 9

Length: 1175 words

Byline: Daniel Johnson

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Perverse Habit

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Load-Date: July 10, 2006

TheirSpace

The New York Times

June 25, 2006 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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

Length: 1266 words

Byline: By ROBERT F. WORTH

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

Body

TERROR ON THE INTERNET

The New Arena, the New Challenges.

By Gabriel Weimann.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Drawing (Drawing by Viktor Koen)

Load-Date: June 25, 2006

End of Document

Economical victory

Guardian.com

June 26, 2006

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theguardian

Length: 1263 words

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

Body

AN ECONOMICAL VICTORY

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

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

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

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

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

* Independent: The feelgood factor

* Times: Shias cut back Iraq olive branch

* IHT: Israel threatens to strike Gaza after raid

MEASURE BY MEASURE

Economical victory

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Drug firms' a danger to health'

* Telegraph: Family life faces state 'invasion'

* Mail: GBP500 to stay out of jail

STEEL DEAL

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

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

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

* FT: Arcelor and Mittal agree to merger

* IHT: Mittal's stormy quest

THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

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

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

Economical victory

* Times: New boundaries favour Tories

* Telegraph: Tories pledge bill of rights

A SICKLY PERFORMANCE

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

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

* Richard Williams

* Sun: Queasy does it

SKIRTING THE ISSUE

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

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

* Sun: You setsy thing

* Rusedski takes adversity in his comeback stride

COMING UP ON GUARDIAN UNLIMITED TODAY

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

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

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

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

Load-Date: June 26, 2006

The man with an answer for everything

Yorkshire Post

June 14, 2006

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Length: 1214 words

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The man with an answer for everything

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The man with an answer for everything

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Load-Date: June 14, 2006

Quest for a Homeland Gains a World Stage

The New York Times

April 16, 2006 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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

Length: 1166 words

Byline: By DAVID KAUFMAN

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quest for a Homeland Gains a World Stage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quest for a Homeland Gains a World Stage

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

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

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

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

Load-Date: April 16, 2006

End of Document

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

The Toronto Star

May 7, 2006 Sunday

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Section: IDEAS; Pg. D01

Length: 1127 words

Byline: Olivia Ward, Toronto Star

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Graphic

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

Load-Date: May 7, 2006

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

The New York Times

April 1, 2006 Saturday

Late Edition - Final

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

Length: 1213 words

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

Dateline: BAGHDAD, Iraq, March 31

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Load-Date: April 1, 2006

End of Document

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

South China Morning Post

March 11, 2006 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 13

Length: 1156 words

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

Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reprisal attacks against Sunni mosques around the country was swift. As many as 1,300 people have since died, pushing Iraq to the brink of civil war.

Observers contend many of the attacks against Sunnis were orchestrated by Mr Sadr's Mahdi Army militia, which operates in the Shi'ite slum of Baghdad's Sadr City and in Shi'ite strongholds throughout the country. The young cleric has denied such claims, saying he was in Lebanon at the time. Nonetheless, the worst of the violence began to die down when he joined moderate Shi'ite clerics in calling for peace.

Whatever his connection to the unrest, the message was loud and clear: Mr Sadr controls the streets and no deal to restore order would be successful without his support. Instantly, all of Iraq's political and religious leaders and

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

even the US paid attention. None - not even the foremost Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani - would at this stage dare challenge him.

That was apparent when Mr Abdul Mahdi finally caved in and signed the decree. As a result, a looming political crisis may also be stifled: Opponents of Dr Jaafari's candidacy on grounds he would be unable to form a government of unity due to his links to Mr Sadr may yet reconsider their campaign.

Dr Jaafari's confirmation as prime minister would be a major challenge to mainstream Shi'ite parties and the US and its allies, which had been hoping a stable government would allow them to gradually withdraw troops. He would undoubtedly give Mr Sadr's followers important posts in the new government, providing them with the power to make key decisions.

The cleric has already hinted at what that might mean. Returning to his home in the city of Najaf, south of Baghdad, last month, he suggested his militia not be disbanded and instead be given a formal role to work "in co-ordination with the Iraqi government, army, police and people". That would undercut efforts to create a professional Iraqi military and prevent foreign troops from leaving any time soon.

Further proving his vision for Iraq's future is markedly different from other leaders, he told followers that "there is no such thing as Sunni or Shi'ite mosques - the mosques are for all Iraqi people and all Muslims".

In the southern city of Basra, his militiamen have reportedly bombed shops selling alcohol and entertainment material considered improper, while women wearing what is deemed improper clothing are berated.

Mr Sadr also supports the hardline regimes in neighbouring Iran and Syria, which he visited to much acclaim last month. In Syria, he praised the victory of the militant group Hamas in Palestinian elections, saying: "I hope it is the beginning of an Islamic awakening and that it will be the start ... of Islam's triumph in other Islamic countries."

Despite such statements, Mr Sadr does not have the scholarly background in Islam that other leaders of his stature enjoy. His lack of religious education puts him at a middle rank within Shia Islam; only in a decade, assuming he fulfils his scholarly obligations, would he attain the top-most position, which would permit him to interpret the holy book the Koran and hand down edicts.

Nevertheless, he has a loyal following of thousands of supporters, many of whom vow they would die for him. Mostly from the slums of Iraq - his lack of religious credentials have made better-educated, middle-class Iraqis wary - they refer to him as "al-Sayed", or master, and he wears the black turban reserved for descendents of Mohammed.

His pedigree to lead is flawless. His father was Iraq's top Shi'ite cleric, but fell out with Hussein's regime and was assassinated along with Mr Sadr's two elder brothers in 1999. The same fate befell his uncle, a prominent ayatollah and philosopher, in 1980. His grandfather was Iraq's prime minister in 1948.

With Hussein's removal by the US-led invasion in 2003, Mr Sadr began his rise to prominence, first setting up his militia in defiance of American orders, and then a newspaper that was temporarily shut down for allegedly inciting anti-US violence.

The radical cleric has led uprisings against US forces at Najaf, prompting the intervention of Ayatollah Sistani. He has also evaded an arrest warrant over the murder of a moderate Shi'ite leader killed just two days after the fall of Baghdad.

Mr Sadr is not a great orator; he stands woodenly before his supporters, reading his speeches in a hesitant, often awkward, manner. He makes up for the lack of this skill by showing compassion.

"I feel for you my beloved demonstrators and find that you tire yourself greatly," he said in calling off street protests in April 2004. I am with you in heart and body and will never leave you to face difficulties alone."

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

Such sentiments are met with gusto at rallies. His mostly young supporters wave giant photographs of his father and chant their readiness to die for him. Such devotion could take him a long way in Iraq. He has manipulated himself into a strong position and the rewards could be many.

But Iraq is also going through tumultuous times and what may seem certain now could well be tragedy tomorrow.

Graphic

Credit: Illustration: Terry Pontikos

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Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Two clocks are ticking: Obsessed with trying to stop Tehran from going nuclear, we are neglecting democracy

Guardian Weekly

March 17, 2006 Friday

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***The*GuardianWeekly**

Section: Pg. 5

Length: 1216 words

Byline: Timothy Garton Ash

Body

Rome was not built in a day and Persia will not be changed in a day. As we contemplate our very limited options for influencing that ancient, self-referential and now defiant country, we must be clear that we are in for a long haul. We cannot make Iran peaceful and democratic; we can only help to create conditions in which Iranians themselves might eventually make it so.

Two clocks are ticking in Iran: the nuclear clock and the democracy clock. The strategic objective of western policy must be to slow down the nuclear clock and to speed up the democracy clock. Our problem is that some of the things we might do to slow down the nuclear clock are likely to slow down the democracy clock as well.

Millions of Iranians who are fiercely critical of the country's theocratic regime, and of its wildly ranting president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, also believe that Iran is entitled to civilian nuclear power. Many of them think that it's entitled to nuclear weapons as well. If the West imposes sanctions just on the nuclear issue, without linking them to respect for human rights inside Iran, there will be an anti-western backlash among parts of the population who would otherwise be a force for change. That may well be what Ahmadinejad is counting on. There is method in his madness.

Last week's report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) puts the issue of Iran's nuclear programme firmly before the UN security council but, despite American and European pressure, Russia and China are extremely reluctant to bring things to a crunch. The next step in the diplomatic dance will probably be a "presidential statement" from the security council, something well short of a condemnatory resolution and sanctions. Even that may be many weeks in the making.

If the security council does finally "impose meaningful consequences", as the US vice-president, Dick Cheney, put it last week, the Islamic Republic of Iran can strike back in two ways. First, it can do what it has already promised to do, and let rip with its nuclear enrichment programme, while stoking up a siege mentality at home with a propaganda of patriotic resistance to nefarious British-American imperial diktat. It can also make lots more trouble for the West and its allies in the Middle East by supporting more extreme elements in the Shia south of Iraq, in **Hamas** and in Hizbullah. Already Iran's revolutionary guards are busy recruiting candidates for what they call "martyrdom-seeking operations". All this under the banner of leading Islamic resistance to western imperialism.

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Two clocks are ticking: Obsessed with trying to stop Tehran from going nuclear, we are neglecting democracy

So as the nuclear diplomacy grinds on, we need to think urgently about the other track: speeding up the democracy clock. At first glance, we seem to have the familiar spectacle of a hard line from Washington and a soft line from Europe. In fact, Washington's line on democracy promotion is more complicated and Europe's is non-existent.

It's true that the same American neocons who talk of bombing Iran will also tell you their preferred option is to foment a revolution to overthrow the mullahs. Brave of them to risk other people's lives. Meanwhile the Bush administration has announced a budget allocation of \$85m to finance satellite television broadcasting to Iran, and other forms of support to civil society and elements of democratic opposition in the country. The senior state department official spearheading this effort is Elizabeth Cheney, the daughter of Dick Cheney - in itself enough to damn her in the eyes of many Europeans. In a recent speech to the Foreign Policy Association, she argued that there are "many similarities and more than a few differences" between what happened in central Europe in the 1980s and the wider Middle East today. The "most direct parallel" she finds with the Solidarity movement in Poland is the role of women as the spearhead for change across the wider Middle East.

Now you may - and I would - question the historical comparison with Solidarity. But you also have to answer these questions: do you think movements for the emancipation of women in the Muslim world are a good thing? Do you think we should be supporting them? If the answer is yes, then why don't you agree with her? Is it just because she's an American called Cheney?

Rather than sitting on the sidelines carping at whatever Washington does, we Europeans should do something better ourselves. Instead of merely expressing (justified) scepticism about an American satellite TV channel for Iran, which will be widely seen there as Bush administration propaganda, we should be urging the British parliament to make money available for a 24-hour BBC satellite television service broadcasting to Iran in Farsi. For the BBC does have real credibility in Iran. Rather than just sniping at Washington's sometimes clumsy efforts at democracy promotion, we should be developing our own.

When I say we, I mean all the member states of the European Union, pooling their resources and know-how. After all, we - not the Americans - have the diplomats, business people and journalists on the ground in Iran. Between our 25 countries, we have a unique body of experience about how democratic states can encourage peaceful change in their less democratic neighbours. In the last decades of the cold war, West Germany tried to do this with its Ostpolitik, and Poland, having been on the receiving end, can help us to learn from the mistakes of that Ostpolitik. Not all the European precedents fit Iran, but some do. For example, we should be weaving a dense web of human contacts between Iranians and freer countries, as we did between the western and eastern halves of a divided Europe.

Our universities should invite their academics and students, who have often been in the vanguard of standing up for free speech and human rights in Iran. Our newspapers and journalism schools should bring over their journalists. Our trades unions should hitch up with their unionists, some of whom have organised major strikes. Our parliaments should establish links with their parliament which, though far from fully democratic, has been giving Ahmadinejad a rough ride. Writers, artists and filmmakers should be encouraged to travel, carrying ideas in both directions. Women's movements in Iran, representing half the population systematically discriminated against, should be supported by women's movements in Europe. Iran's Islamic thinkers and jurists, both reformist modernisers and conservatives, should be engaged in dialogue by theologians and scholars from other faith traditions.

All this should be done less by our governments than by our own societies, and not just by America and Britain - traditionally distrusted by many Iranians - but by all European countries, working separately and together. We need a European Iranpolitik.

We cannot know in advance which parts of such a catalytic action will have what effects over what period. Certainly we are talking years, not months. Iran is not Poland, and when change does come it will come from Iranians working in a distinctively Iranian way.

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Two clocks are ticking: Obsessed with trying to stop Tehran from going nuclear, we are neglecting democracy

It may be that the nuclear clock will still tick too quickly and the democracy clock too slowly. However, to work only on the nuclear clock, and not make any systematic attempt to speed up the other, is to condemn ourselves in advance to almost certain failure.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian (Australia)

July 24, 2006 Monday

All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Letters; Pg. 9

Length: 2600 words

Body

MATP

Israeli aggression helping lose battle for hearts and minds

MOST TALKED ABOUT

LEBANON CRISIS

YOUR editorials ("Israel must win the war of ideas", 21/7, "Foes must accept the Jewish state", 22-23/7) are correct. The battle of ideas -- or, to use an older phrase, the battle for hearts and minds -- is being lost for Israel. But the answer is a radical change of behaviour by Israel. Compassionate people cannot stand to see Lebanon destroyed this way and hundreds of innocents killed.

The Israeli ambassador to Australia said on ABC radio that this is happening because Hezbollah hide themselves and their arms amid civilians. This was surely known to Israel before it retaliated and should have meant it adopted other means.

Prisoners have been exchanged with Hezbollah before, in 2004, for example. Given the danger to civilians, a prisoner exchange should have been agreed to this time.

The best way to deal with Hezbollah is via Iran and not this frontal attack which has only strengthened the militia and led to global hostility towards Israel. Many believe Israel fell into Hezbollah's trap and it appears so.

Mike Rubbo

Avoca Beach, NSW

YOUR editorial (22-23/7) was a disgrace. I didn't realise you were on the Israeli Government payroll. Israel can never win the war of ideas -- unless the media totally distorts the truth -- because it cannot win the war of facts. Why don't you tell your readers why Hezbollah and Hamas challenge Israel's right to exist?

Why don't you tell readers that less than 100 years ago, 90 per cent of the population of the land that is now Israel was Palestinian? Why don't you tell them that the West gave Israel to the Jews to assuage their Holocaust guilt without regard for the wishes or intrerests of the Palestinians.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why don't you tell your readers about Security Council Resolution 242 and all the other resolutions that Israel has ignored? Why don't you tell them about the ruling of the International Court of Justice against Israel's apartheid wall, which it has also ignored? You are a newspaper not a propaganda sheet.

S. Q. Marsden

Fitzroy, Vic

THE editorial (22-23/7) makes depressing reading. Most people would agree with Israel's desire to exist. Yet, until it and its supporters acknowledge and address the root cause of Palestinian unrest everyone will continue to suffer and Israel will lose the war of ideas.

D. Kilgariff

Rivervale, WA

YOUR editorial (22-23/7) came as a bolt from the blue: a carefully considered, humane and pragmatic insight. No one should have to thank a newspaper for accurate, honest and unbiased reporting, but it is so rare these days that I have no hesitation in expressing gratitude. You have shown me and those who support Israel, a glimmer of hope in the murky mire of anti-Israel bigotry that pervades journalism, from the BBC to the pseudo-intellectual rabid rags of Fleet Street, such as The Guardian. The Australian stands as a bastion protecting the true craft of journalism that elsewhere has become another casualty in this war.

Barry Walters

Subiaco, WA

THE federal Government has it wrong or else it is pandering to the racist minority by charging refugees for some of the costs of their evacuation from Beirut. Australian tourists caught up in the conflict must surely have travel insurance from which they can claim the cost. Those with dual citizenship but have been domiciled in Lebanon are the true refugees and should not be charged the cost of their rescue. They are severely disadvantaged and in need of our ongoing support.

Loucille McGinley

East Brighton, Vic

I AM absolutely fed up with the insulting and ungrateful attitude of some Lebanese-born Australians banging on about how little our government is doing to extricate them from the consequences of their decision to return to Lebanon. I understand there may be those there on holidays or cultural tours but there are many thousands living there simply because the exchange rate and other circumstances suit. These self-interested, self-absorbed and selfish individuals, abuse the privilege of citizenship by using a passport as nothing more than an emergency escape hatch. We really don't need egocentric people like these who are stuck in the pain of past conflict and not prepared to make a new life here. Australia needs to be a damn sight choosier about who we allow here and concentrate our efforts on people who wish to genuinely contribute to this wonderful nation.

Steve Graham

Hawthorn, Vic

I WONDER what the general reaction would be if a foreign power sent a raiding party into Australia and kidnapped two of our soldiers then threatened to kill them if their demands were not met. Would the media and general population of Australia be calling for restraint and a measured diplomatic response or baying for blood and revenge?

Doug Steley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Maroochydore, Qld

THE Lebanese protesters (in Sydney and other capitals) would find more Australians standing shoulder to shoulder with them if they also protested in the same numbers, and with the same emotion and vigour against Hamas and Hezbollah killing Jews.

N. Ford

Kambah, ACT

Economists should try living on the minimum wage

DAVID Uren's article ("Push to freeze wages of low paid", 22-23/7) seems to highlight severe problems. Economists seem to take the economy as an abstract without realising that there are real people on the end of their decisions. With the University of Canberra's Phil Lewis saying there was no reason for an increase, may I suggest Professor Lewis try to live on \$484.40 a week, year after year, and replace motor vehicles, go to the dentist, raise and educate children etc. He would very quickly come face to face with a reason.

I find it interesting that these people always look to cut the wages of those who can least afford it. They never do a survey of how many more people would be employed if the billions that are siphoned out of the community every year in corporate profits were funneled into extra jobs. It is time to recognise that these people suffer from a severe lack of empathy.

Rob Duff

Cairns, Qld

ALL those who wish to freeze the wages of the low paid, such as Phil Lewis, should come to the US and see what such policies encourage: homeless people in droves living under freeways with not enough money to pay the bond for an apartment. The US has not raised the minimum wage in nine years and it remains at \$US5.15 (\$6.85) per hour. It is a disgrace when the wealthiest in wealthy countries profit from the sweat of the least wealthy and refuse to pay a fair wage.

David Jamieson

Houston, Texas

ARE your headlines ("Push to freeze wages of low paid", "Scrap migrant pay safety net: bosses", "Restaurant man 'kept as a slave'", 22-23/7) a taste of the future for employment in Australia? With the introduction of the IR laws it seems that not only are the low paid going to suffer a decline in real wages but also migrant workers are going to be paid even less. Will we see more headlines about unscrupulous employers paying migrant workers a pittance and keeping them as slaves? If the rate of pay for Australian workers is too high, will we see an influx of unskilled migrant workers working for less? Will profits for Australian companies be made on the back of slaves from the Third World?

Robert Pallister

Punchbowl, NSW

THROWING our country open to temporary foreign workers will create the same problem that exists in the US which attracts illegal immigrants, such as Mexicans. The people we bring in will take a look at our lifestyle and vanish in the cities. Don't let greed drive us to an even greater problem.

Gary Gillies

Minyama, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AUSTRALIA'S Joint Strike Fighter is due in 2012. How could making something that small take so long? We need more foreign workers.

Derek Budd

Tweed Heads, Qld

Dogs always get the blame

I READ that police may lay charges over the mauling death by dogs of Tyra Kuehne. What about the child's mother? I feel sorry for all involved but it is always the dog and dog owner who get the blame. The animals were tethered in their yard. They are territorial, so when someone intrudes, they act naturally.

I am not a fan of hunting dogs and would be happy to see them eradicated from Australia. As a nurse in an emergency department, I have seen many unprovoked attacks on children and adults by common-breed pet dogs. Australian Veterinary Association president Kersti Seksel states: "The failure of owners to responsibly care for and control their dog is one of the major underlying problems." Try inserting the child for dog.

Margaret Ann Clarke

Mount Colah, NSW

I READ the distressing report ("NSW to get tougher on dangerous dogs", 20/7) of the savage attack on Tyra Kuehne and my heart melted with sympathy for the family. But why should this be? There are breeds that are known for their savagery but we allow them to be kept by owners that cry, "mine would not do anything like that". The answer is simple: defang the dogs. This allows the animals to be kept as companion animals and any family would be confident that the animal could never harm any child or person even if it escaped on to the street.

James A. Foster

Panania, NSW

Lessons on curriculum

I WAS most disconcerted to read Christopher Pearson's reckless advocacy of the postmodern scam of critical literacy in the secondary history curriculum through students developing a speculative attitude towards the seeming certainties of the times ("Let history be the judge", 22-23/7). The eminently reasonable Pearson has otherwise been a bulwark against the new age, politically correct mantras of faux-Marxist educationalists who appear determined to dumb down the curriculum and make relativism the order of the day.

The recent example of students audaciously satirising the Howard Government's new industrial relations laws in an impertinent rock eisteddfod piece suggests that encouraging critical thinking in schools, rather than the acceptance of received wisdom, will lead to the political hijacking of the nation's classrooms by the worst extremes of progressivism.

Mark Howie

Lawson, NSW

CHRISTOPHER Pearson's article (22-23/7) contained an illustration of Sir John Monash and, more particularly, his helmet, said to be used at Gallipoli. The steel helmet could not have been worn by Monash as they were not on general issue until 1916 when the Australian troops had arrived in France.

Des Martin

Mountain Creek, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FROM his rather narrow range of topics, Kevin Donnelly is again attacking English syllabuses ("It's all depths and deconstruction", 22-23/7). One basic concept about effective writing is shared by the sort of traditional English teaching that Donnelly hankers after and the quality of work being done in progressive English classrooms around the country. It is the notion that subject matter and the vocabulary selected to represent it should be appropriate for the intended audience. An explanation about jet engines in a primary school science book should certainly use different language from an article on the same topic in a journal for aeronautical engineers.

It is well to remember that the target audience for syllabus documents is the teaching profession and not, in the first instance, the general public. What can be cheaply decried as impenetrable jargon can also be seen as appropriate technical language. Is there a media outcry because professional publications in medicine, science and engineering contain vocabulary that the person in the street is unlikely to understand? A large chunk of human knowledge would have to be jettisoned if we were to restrict ourselves to ideas and vocabulary that the uneducated can readily understand.

New syllabus documents provide an opportunity for teachers to be presented with cutting-edge ideas. They should provide an element of challenge rather than being dumbed down to be within easy reach of the lowest common denominator.

Garry Collins

Stafford Heights, Qld

Defending the indefensible

GREAT hatchet job on the legal liberal Peter Breen ("MP with stars in his eyes for killers", 22-23/7). I had no idea the hysterical lynch-mob of Jonestown was the new target demographic of The Australian. You should be warned that competition in this target group is very crowded. Perhaps you should direct reporters to do "Inside story" pieces on the evils of refugee advocates, welfare recipients and nasty church leaders who say nice things about disgusting people, such as the poor.

Daniel Barnes

Brighton, SA

THE "Inside story" on Peter Breen (22-23/7) has clarified an otherwise incomprehensible situation. Learning that Mr Breen was elected on a platform of "reform the legal system" makes his otherwise seemingly bizarre actions somewhat more comprehensible though not more justified. My wife and I, who are campaigning for the reform of aspects of the legal system in South Australia following our 2005 experience with the system after the death of our daughter on the road, were left with the impression that there is a need to fix an unfair system. We doubt Mr Breen will be re-elected but we are not at all surprised that he was elected in the first place, such is the disenchantment in the community with the legal system. Mr Breen understands this community concern. Unfortunately, as far as we are concerned, he has chosen the wrong people to defend. He should have chosen instead the innocent victims.

Robin Percy

Redwood Park, SA

FIRST BYTE

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The twin problems of the wine glut and the water shortage might be solved if only we could identify someone who could turn wine into water.

Paul Phelan

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mount Beauty, Vic

There's no such thing as a free shopping bag, so charging an extra 10c seems to indicate collusion somewhere.

M. Mitchell

Lindenow South, Vic

Buying some frozen fish at Coles in Fremantle this weekend, the label revealed the country of origin as "Taiwan, Province of China". Is this an example of appeasement of China being taken too far?

Rod Steed

Bull Creek, WA

Nobel laureate Patrick White is honoured daily on Australian golf courses with a putt named after him. A "Patrick White" is a bad read way off to the left.

Frank Anning

Ascot, Qld

There is a chronic shortage of women in country Australia. The Government could introduce a Vietnam-style draft for women. Conscript the required number and send them out bush for a year. Farmers would appreciate an influx of young city girls every six months.

Russell Metcalfe

Glebe, NSW

I FEEL sorry for Wendell Sailor. I thought the crackdown on drugs in sport was about performance-enhancing drugs. While he may have broken some social taboos and exposed himself to prosecution for his private excesses, it does seem a bit over the top. Doesn't anyone know the difference between cocaine and EPO?

Peter Clark

Toowoomba, Qld

Goodbye Sailor!

Peter Thornton

Kureelipa, Qld

I'm of two minds. Should Howard stay on just to continue to infuriate Phillip Adams or should he retire just to shut Adams up?

Christopher Hanley

Mt Egerton, Vic

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Next phase of Sharonism: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater men - pullout from the West Bank

Guardian Weekly

January 20, 2006 Friday

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***The*GuardianWeekly**

Section: Pg. 6

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Byline: Jonathan Freedland

Body

With death at least, there are rules. All campaigning has to be suspended, journalists wear black ties, and politicians pretend to come together in a spirit of national unity. But with a medical situation that hovers close to death without ever quite touching it - a prime minister struck down but still alive - the rules are less clear. Like a man unsure whether to dress for a funeral, Israel has found itself unsure of its footing.

Accordingly, Israelis have spent the two weeks since Ariel Sharon's massive stroke engaging in a quintessential Jewish pastime: second-guessing the doctors, filling up newspaper columns and television airtime with a national debate on the quality of Sharon's treatment. The politicians, meanwhile, have been politicking.

After a decent interval of a few hours, they started assessing the new, transformed landscape. Before the stroke, most assumed that the March 28 elections would be a walkover for Sharon and his newly formed Kadima party. With him gone, it should be a genuine three-way contest, but that's not quite how it looks.

In the red corner stands Labour's new leader, Amir Peretz. A lifelong campaigner for workers' rights and a committed peacenik, he generated enormous enthusiasm when he took over in November. But his campaign stalled, damaged by the defection of the seemingly immortal Shimon Peres to Kadima. His enemies say Peretz is simply not prime ministerial timber, that he is a trade unionist rabble-rouser. Even his fellow Mizrahim, Middle Eastern Jews who should have been his natural constituency, have not rallied. "He's not one of the ones they can be proud of," says a Likud official acidly. His focus on domestic issues and lack of experience in the security sphere mean few see him as a serious contender for the top job. Labour hopes to turn that around in the next two months, but it won't be easy.

Back from the margins, returned as Likud leader, is Binyamin Netanyahu, who had looked set to be wiped out by Sharon. Now he is the sole former prime minister in the contest. "He has experience - the trouble is, it was not a good one," Yuli Tamir, a Labour Knesset member and close Peretz adviser, told me as she fidgeted with an anti-Sharon leaflet that will now have to be pulped. She reckons Israelis have not forgotten Bibi's last spell at the helm in the late 1990s, or his recent stint as Sharon's uber-Thatcherite finance minister, imposing a series of "cruel" cuts on the most vulnerable.

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Next phase of Sharonism: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater men - pullout from the....

That leaves Sharon's deputy, the acting prime minister, Ehud Olmert. Widely disliked personally and with little security background, few would ever have tipped him for the top in normal circumstances. But suddenly the premiership is his to lose. So far he has played it well, acting humbly, continuing to work out of his own office rather than the PM's. If he runs a smart campaign - using Sharon's face on Kadima posters, keeping his own in the background - he could come through.

None of these men will win an outright majority; Israel's election system allows for no such thing. Instead, two of them will end up as coalition partners. What then?

Sharon had not exactly spelled out his next move. Indeed, that was part of his political strategy. He kept his ideas vague and secret, giving the electorate little to disagree with. He discovered his personal standing was so great, Israeli voters were ready to give him a blank cheque. Don't bother us with the details, they said; if you think it's right, that's good enough.

Nevertheless, few doubted that Sharon was planning more of the policy that had come to define him: he would follow August's disengagement from the Gaza Strip with further unilateral withdrawals from the West Bank. Why else would he have formed a new party at the age of 77 unless he planned a major initiative, one that could not be thwarted by the dogmatists of the Likud?

The outlines were clear too. Whatever he said publicly, Sharon saw the security barrier, or wall, as the putative border for Israel. That way the major settlement blocks on the West Bank would stay under Israeli rule, while the Palestinians would get the rest. This would, of course, be hugely imperfect. Israel would be formally annexing territory that, officially speaking, it occupies only temporarily (albeit a temporary period of 39 years). And it's a real question whether the terrain Sharon left on the Palestinian side of the wall would, combined with Gaza, be enough to constitute a viable state.

Nevertheless his next move would have represented greater progress - the partial ending of the occupation and the dismantling of illegal settlements - than at any time for four decades. Now that prospect, near certain if Sharon had stayed on, is in peril. Optimists will note that Olmert shares the Sharon vision; indeed, he had a big hand in forming it. (Privately, Olmert would speak of Israel eventually withdrawing from all but 6% to 8% of the West Bank.) They will also argue that there is a genuine constituency in Israel for a party that sits between the zealous nationalism of Likud and the dovelike instincts of Labour, with its call for a negotiated peace with the Palestinians, a project too many Israelis regard as a lost cause - and which they will see as even more hopeless if Hamas triumphs in this month's Palestinian elections. "Sharon did not create Kadima in a vacuum," the former Likud cabinet minister Dan Meridor told me. Its support will not melt away just because Sharon has gone; it represents a national consensus.

Pessimists will see something else. Olmert has none of his mentor's strongman credentials, essential for driving through a second round of territorial withdrawals. He would need the public approval of the military brass, a group that could never outrank Sharon. Olmert will have to argue for his every move.

More depressing, the next phase of Sharonism might have defeated Sharon himself. The most striking conversation I had in Jerusalem was with a key player in religious Zionism, a man with a keen ear for rightist politics. He reports a new mood among the settlers. "There is tremendous criticism of the leadership, that they were too moderate over Gaza." Hardliners felt the Gaza Jews rolled over too easily, refusing to raise a hand to the soldiers who came to remove them.

The West Bank settlers will not go so quietly. "They are planning armed confrontations with the army, even mass suicides," he says. It will be the Masada manoeuvre: the shock of finding men, women and children dead by their own hand would stun Israel into calling a halt to the disengagement.

If Sharon would have struggled to withstand such an event, what chance Olmert? Withdrawing from Gaza - a place of next to no biblical significance to Jewish literalists - will be nothing alongside a pullout from the West Bank lands revered as Judea and Samaria. And these are not easy people to take on: witness the hardcore settlers whooping

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Next phase of Sharonism: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater men - pullout from the....

and cheering at Sharon's stroke, convinced it was the "finger of God" punishing him for the crime of disengagement.

So Olmert faces a year of great challenge: if he wins in March, he has to perform a political deed that has proved too hard for men both stronger and greater. Whether the occupation deepens or shrinks now depends on him.

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Revealed: civilian toll of a deadly assault that has ravaged Gaza;
PALESTINIAN CRISIS

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September 19, 2006 Tuesday

First Edition

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The  **INDEPENDENT**

Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

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Byline: By Donald Macintyre In Rafah

Body

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He says he clearly saw a bright flash next to the control tower of the disused Gaza International Airport, occupied by Israeli forces after Corporal Gilad Shalit was seized by militants on 25 June. "I went two or three steps and the missile landed," said Nayef, 24, "I thought I was dying. I shouted 'La Ilaha Illa Allah' [There is no God but Allah]."

When Jihad's older brother Kassem, 20, arrived at the scene: "My brother was already dead. There was shrapnel in his head. Nayef was shouting Allah, Allah'. The missile landed about four metres from where Jihad had been standing. There was shrapnel in his body as well, his legs, everything. He had been bleeding a lot everywhere."

Jihad Abu Snaima was just the most recent of more than 37 children and teenagers under 18, killed [out of a total death toll, including militants, of 228] during the operations mounted by the Israeli military in Gaza since 25 June, according to figures from the Palestinian Centre of Human Rights. Of these, the PCHR classifies 151 as "civilian", although beside non-combatants and bystanders, that total also includes militants or faction members not involved in operations against Israel at the time - for example those deliberately targeted in Israeli air strikes because of their involvement in previous attacks. Israeli defence forces have always maintained that being under 18 does not automatically exclude a person from taking part in action against them.

Gaza has remained a war that the world has known little about what with Israel's invasion of Lebanon gathering most of the headlines. But still the death toll rises.

Speaking from his hospital bed, Nayef has multiple, shrapnel-inflicted cuts on his arms and legs. His right leg was broken in the blast. But he was lucky compared with Jihad.

A school caretaker, with a five-year-old daughter, Nayef insists the evening of Jihad's death was just a family get-together. It is normal, he said, in this Bedouin community in the Abu Shoukha hamlet outside the southernmost Gaza town of Rafah, to socialise at each other's homes on a summer evening, and that he and Jihad were

Revealed: civilian toll of a deadly assault that has ravaged Gaza PALESTINIAN CRISIS

especially close. "I was always with him. He was an innocent person, kind. He was talking to me about how he was going to inherit part of his father's land and farm it and how he was going to get married and stay here." Nayef added tearfully: "He was a boy who had hopes.

He wanted to live his life." He added: "What is my daughter going to think? She is going to grow up hating the Israelis."

The family say that there was no shelling in the area at the time either before or after the incident' and that they therefore presume Jihad and Nayef were targeted by a tank crew. Equally, they insist there was no activity by militants in the vicinity against Israeli positions on the day of the attack. "This is an open area," said Nayef. "The resistance would not go there because they would be seen."

By contrast, the Israel Defence Forces said, without specifying Al Soukh, that on 10 September it had identified and hit "two men" moving near its forces in southern Gaza crouching on the ground, and "apparently planting explosives". It goes without saying that Nayef is adamant that on the night in question he and Jihad were merely pausing on an evening stroll to his own house.

The PCHR, which seeks to monitor every violent Palestinian death, does not only focus on the Israel-Palestinian conflict. It has, for example, repeatedly condemned the killing and injuring of growing numbers of civilians, also including children, during mounting inter-Palestinian disputes in Gaza' shootings by Palestinian security forces themselves' attacks on Christian churches by Muslims protesting against the Pope' the injury of civilians, including children, by Palestinian-fired Qassam rockets which fall short of targets in Israel' and the kidnapping last month of two Fox TV employees which has deterred journalists from visiting Gaza.

But Hamdi Shaqqura of PCHR's Gaza office - which accuses Israel of using repeated closures and destruction of the power supply to operate a policy of "collective punishment" in breach of international law in Gaza, argues that the excuse of "collateral damage" cannot justify the "very high" death toll in the operations since 15 June. He adds: "Israel's forces have been acting excessively and disproportionately, and this explains the high figures for the number of innocent civilians killed by them."

At the other, northern end of Gaza, close to al-Nada apartment blocks between Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya, Aref Abu Qaida, 16, was killed by an artillery shell on 1 August. Sharif Harafin, 15, said: "We had been playing football and we had just finished. I was carrying the ball. I was going to my home, and [Aref] was going to his home. I heard a loud boom and then I saw him cut to pieces."

As his family displayed Aref's shredded red baseball cap, Sharif said he saw his friend's severed head on the ground, adding: "His chest was torn out by the rocket. People were collecting parts of his body. I was crying a lot."

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Although the area had been shelled before, and some residents had fled in response to Israeli warnings the previous week, Mr Abu Qaida said the area had been quiet on the day - except that Qassam rockets had been fired about four hours earlier from northern settlements more than a kilometre away from the flats.

The IDF said last night that, of those killed in Gaza, it had the "positive identities of over 220 gunmen killed in fighting, and can confirm their affiliation with terror organizations." The 220 figure - said to be "unbelievable" by Mr Shaqqura - coupled with another 20 dead which the military acknowledges as genuine civilians - is all the more strikingly at variance with PCHR figures since it produces a total exceeding the centre's own records.

Revealed: civilian toll of a deadly assault that has ravaged Gaza PALESTINIAN CRISIS

Mr Shaqqura said that, at the absolute minimum, the IDF figures do not take into account the casualties under 18 - from which he said teenagers with militant connections had been excluded - or eight women killed since 15 June. "We do not believe their figures," he added. "We do not believe their investigations."

The IDF said: "Since the abduction of Cpl Gilad Shalit by the Hamas and PRC Terror organizations, the IDF has been operating in the Gaza strip against terrorist infrastructure and in order to secure the release of Cpl Shalit. In the course of the operations, the IDF engaged in intense fighting with Palestinian gunmen, who chose heavily populated areas as their battlegrounds. The IDF takes every measure to prevent harm to civilians, often at a risk to its soldiers."

Graphic

Aref Abu Qaida's family pay tribute to their son, who was killed after playing a game of football with his friends

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"I was always with him. He was an innocent person, kind. He was talking to me about how he was going to inherit part of his father's land and farm it and how he was going to get married and stay here." Nayef added tearfully: "He was a boy who had hopes.

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Letters, Page 34

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9/11 the fifth

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Dateline: NEW DELHI, India

Body

NEW DELHI, India, Sep 10 -- Another anniversary of September 11 and another round of assessments: who's winning the war on terrorism? The answer is nobody. Neither George W. Bush nor Osama bin Laden is doing well. But the real response is that the nature of the struggle has metamorphosed to the point that the question is redundant.

Let us first look at it from al-Qaeda's perspective. Bin Laden knitted together an otherwise motley crew of militant Islamic movements, each focused on overthrowing some specific Arab regime. He told them: hey, the country behind all these regimes is the US, so let's join together against this common enemy. He, or more likely al-Qaeda's ideologue Ayman al Zawahiri, argued that a spectacular terrorist attack would expose US weakness and, to use Jason Burke's words, "radicalise and mobilise" the Muslim masses against the likes of the House of Saud, Hosni Mubarak and, over time, Hugh Hefner.

Initially, 9/11 had a spectacular effect on the Arab Muslims. Newspaper surveys said 94 per cent of Saudis and two-thirds of Egyptians had put bin Laden on their personal pedestals. But things went downhill rapidly after that. The US speedily over-ran Afghanistan and disrupted al-Qaeda's global network in the immediate post-9/11 years. By 2003, militant webchats were asking whether the network had bitten off more than it could chew in taking on the US. Bin Laden moved on to the internet. Wannabe al-Qaeda groups have continued to mushroom, taking inspiration from bin Laden tapes and bomb-making websites.

However, the loss of even a modicum of central control has meant that bin Laden's overall attempt to lift Islamic militancy to a new level - go for the spectacular terrorist attack, the type that can arouse the ummah - has been lost. Islamic terror is back to what it was in 9/11: random, local, so amateurish that most plots are foiled and most victims are fellow Muslims. Several surveys have shown that admiration for bin Laden has fallen rapidly in the Islamic world in the past few years.

In Pakistan, says a Pew Global Survey, confidence in bin Laden fell from 51 per cent in 2005 to 38 per cent in 2006. Jordan saw a decline from 60 per cent to 24 per cent. Large parts of the Islamic world have been turned off suicide bombing and terrorism in general. What residual support there exists for such tactics is because of its use in Palestinian, Chechen or Kashmiri militancy rather than al-Qaeda's endorsement.

In December 2001, bin Laden had exulted, "My life or death does not matter. The awakening has started." Fat chance. The decline of al-Qaeda tracks a similar decline in approval and trust of the US among Muslims. Post 9/11, the Bush administration concluded, in a curious echo of al-Qaeda, that the present Arab Muslim polity had to be

changed. The rottenness of the Islamic State was the reason why middle-class, educated Arabs were flying aircraft into skyscrapers.

Unfortunately, for lack of any other blueprint, Bush accepted one put forward by the so-called neoconservatives. They argued the solution lay in conquering a bit of the Arab world, paving it over with liberal democracy and having it serve as an example to the rest of the Muslim world. For a number of reasons, including oil and Saddam Hussein's proclivity for weapons of mass destruction, Iraq was the guinea pig. However, the guinea pig is on its back, bloody and bloated, thanks to a US post-war Iraq policy that consisted of a long string of wildly wrong decisions.

Those who argue that the Iraq war has made al-Qaeda stronger are, simply, wrong. Islamic terror groups have never had any problems in local recruitment. Before Iraq, young Muslims bought one-way dynamite tickets because of Palestine, Chechnya or Kashmir. After the US leaves Iraq, they will sign up for the same old reasons. The two Lebanese would-be terrorists caught in Germany wanted revenge for the Danish cartoons of the Prophet. Members of a wounded civilisation find grievances in every MTV video.

Which is why healing that civilisation remains the overall US strategy and, to be fair, the solution advocated by most thinking Arabs. No one really has an alternative. The real debate is over tactics. What is dawning on the world is that the most likely solution, democratisation, will primarily benefit Islamist political movements. Some scholars call them neo-traditional rather than fundamentalist, but the various subspecies include Khomeinism, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hezbollah. They want to create conservative but modern Islamic States, yet have no interest in al-Qaeda's talk of mythological caliphates. They also have a broad measure of popular support and, if allowed, would probably win elections in a stretch of the Arab world running from Egypt to Iraq.

But the Arab polity they would seek to create would be, in Western or even Indian eyes, illiberal. It would be regressive about the rights of women, gays and minorities. It would not be secular in any sense of the word. But it would be wealth-creating and welfare-oriented, representative and legitimate, but uninterested in terrorism and reconquering Moorish Spain. Willy-nilly, a neo-traditionalist Islam is going to be the dominant political discourse in a large swathe of the Arab Muslim world. But this discourse is not the one bin Laden wants. Note how Hezbollah and Hamas make it clear they have no taste for 9/11, al-Qaeda and its works.

So where does this leave the war on terrorism? Crudely speaking, the last five years have seen the collapse of two radical solutions to the Arab world's discontent. Al-Qaeda has lost its way, its message reduced to decapitation videos and ghetto youngsters attacking commuters. The Bush agenda is similarly lost in the woods. 'Amnesty International with bombers' is no longer taken as a serious option when it comes to changing the Arab world. And the terrorist-in-the-neighbourhood fear that provided the domestic support for a pre-emptive foreign policy is waning. This month's Foreign Affairs magazine asks: "Is There Still a Terrorist Threat?"

The two principal antagonists of the war on terrorism have disarmed themselves, at least in the struggle for hearts and minds. Ironically, the damage that each has suffered has been largely self-inflicted. But it has left the door open to plenty of other contenders, each interested in providing the template for 21st century Islam. The leading contender right now is Iran, experiencing a sort of Khomeinist revival under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and thanks to fat oil revenues. It is a sign of the vacuum in Islamic polity that almost anyone can fill the leadership void. Islamic media in Pakistan, for instance, has suddenly taken to hero-worshipping Hezbollah's Sheikh Nasrullah.

The Europeans, led by the French, are trying to position themselves as the West's guide for the Arab world. The point is that no one can claim a sure-shot solution to Arabic angst. Whether it is neocons, Ahmadinejad or Indonesian Sufi singers - they are all experiments in civilisational therapy. This is the new war on terrorism. It is no longer about stopping bombs and paper-cutters. That is still there. But that was there even before 9/11 and was largely a law-enforcement business. The new struggle is about changing the Arab world. It is a search for the means to spark off and spread an Islamic renaissance. And it will be such a protracted and titanic effort that many decades from now, the annual commentative frenzy on 9/11 will be seen as little more than a comical footnote to history.

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Guardian Weekly: Le Monde Diplomatique: Neither-nor is not enough

The Guardian - Final Edition

August 11, 2006 Friday

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Section: LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE; Pg. 16

Length: 1380 words

Byline: JEAN BRICMONT, TRANSLATED BY KRYSTYNA HORKO

Body

THE fall of communism caused much collateral damage, especially to leftwing thought. As long as communism existed it obliged both supporters and opponents to think politically, suggest short and long-term policies, set priorities and gauge the balance of power.

The underlying moral philosophy during that time, whether scientific or materialistic, placed great and small tragedies and crimes in the chain of cause and effect; there was a belief that the human condition would improve if social and economic structures could only be improved. Even social democrats (and in those days, social democrats were just what their name claimed) thought along the same lines, as did most anti-colonial movements. International law and most peacemaking efforts were built around this philosophy.

At the other, "religious" end of the spectrum, good and evil were regarded as existing independently of any historical context. This resonated with the Nouveaux Philosophes (1), as it does now with President George Bush. Evildoers, including Hitler, Stalin, Milosevic and Osama bin Laden, were simply devils that popped out of a box, results without causes. The only way to combat evil was to mobilise good, which had to be shaken out of its lethargy, armed and deployed to attack evil. That, of course, is the philosophy of a perpetual clear conscience and also of a war without end.

The world's reaction to 11 September 2001 and subsequent events illustrates the difference between the two philosophies. The minority in the West who sought to understand "why they hate us" were considered apostates by those who "understood" the reaction of the United States (the invasion of two countries, an interminable war, many dead). These are often the same people who "understand" the Israeli reaction when a single Israeli soldier is captured.

But shouldn't the same understanding be applied to the Soviet Union's need to turn eastern Europe into a buffer zone in 1945, after the deaths of millions of its citizens in the second world war? Or to China's self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world in the Maoist era, after the western incursions of the opium wars, the Japanese invasion and many international humiliations over two centuries? Or to the Arab world's reactions to the Franco-British betrayal after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the West's support of Israel through five Arab-Israeli wars?

All humans have irrational fears that may cause excessive reactions, including a desire for vengeance if attacked. But revolutionary violence is preceded by counter-revolutionary violence (oppression by the dominant classes and foreign invasions), not vice versa. Pro-western intellectuals like to cite the revolutionary violence of the Pol Pot

regime in Cambodia, but that regime could never have come to power without the bombing of Cambodia, the March 1979 coup against Prince Norodom Sihanouk and the destabilisation of the country by the US.

Rather than accept that line of thought, current western foreign policies towards the non-western world (especially the Middle East) continue to combine condemnation and interference. The condemnation is usually of countries' records on democracy, human rights and (in the world of Islam) women's rights. If a country is a dictatorship, the dictator can be blamed for all the ills.

If it's not a dictatorship, then elections are never transparent enough, the press never independent enough, minorities never protected enough, women not equal enough.

That mocks the process of history. Only after a long period of economic growth and cultural development, both accompanied by brutal violence - colonialism, the exploitation of workers, world wars - did western nations begin to respect human rights. It is not realistic to expect countries that were still living under colonial or feudal rule just 60 years ago suddenly to achieve western standards in human rights. (Peacetime standards at that: in war we have the US's behaviour at Guantanamo and Israel's treatment of Palestinian and Lebanese populations.)

There is a more serious objection: the argument always emphasises political and individual rights, but ignores social and economic rights, even though these were as much a part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Economists Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen have come up with a perfect illustration: China and India started out from similar places but followed different paths of development. The difference in their social systems in healthcare results in 3,900,000 more deaths a year in India (2). Similar comparisons can be made between Cuba and the rest of Latin America. So what gives such organisations as Reporters without Borders, whose members generally enjoy political and social freedoms, the authority to prioritise ?

Imagine the US and Europe without a constant flow of raw materials, immigrant labour, or goods manufactured for a pittance; without the South-North flow of capital (repayment of "debt", capital flight) and the brain drain from the non-western world to help patch the West's collapsing systems. What would happen to our successful economies? They are still addicted to imperialism, but that is a drug that might not always be available given current conditions.

Faced with the instrumentalisation of human rights, critical or leftwing thought appears feeble, especially in its opposition to the US wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq, which have all been justified by the defence of minorities, democracy and women. Perhaps this weakness reflects the unease felt by ex-Communists, ex-Trotskyites and ex-Maoists who remember that individual and political rights were indefinitely put on hold during the Leninist period. There is no point in substituting another form of blindness.

A good illustration of the weakness of the left is the neither-nor ideology that has dominated the protests against recent conflicts: neither Milosevic nor Nato, neither Bush nor Saddam, neither Olmert nor Hamas. But these are false symmetries. In all wars there is an aggressor and a victim. To put both on the same level is to abandon any notion of national sovereignty. In each case there is no comparison possible between the two parties' ability to inflict damage, since it is the US and its military might that is the current pillar of the world order. The US is confronted by progressive forces and will continue to be so in most conflicts, and not only in countries we have mentioned. Now that Milosevic is dead and Saddam in prison, what has the neither-nor faction to say about Nato or Bush?

The neither-nor faction behaves as though we are all above the fray and outside time and space, whereas we live in the aggressor countries and allied nations; we work and pay our taxes there. Of course the neither-Bush-nor-Saddam position has a completely different meaning for the Iraqi people, who have had to live under both.

Instead of sharing the western view of the world, the left should try to make westerners understand how the rest of the world sees us and oppose anything that strengthens our feelings of superiority or moral sanctity.

The 20th century was not the century of socialism but of decolonisation, which enabled millions to free themselves from extreme oppression. It might be possible to imagine the 21st century as the century when US hegemony will end. If that happened, another world would really be possible.

Only after our economies have been weaned from the profits they derive from their position in the world order may we talk seriously about socialism again.

TRANSLATED BY KRYSTYNA HORKO

(1) The Nouveaux Philosophes were a group of late 1970s French thinkers who wanted to escape the ivory tower of traditional philosophy because it was too far removed from national and international political realities and incapable of solving the barbarous results of fascism and communism.

(2) Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *Hunger and Public Action*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989.

Kiss goodbye to Marx and Lenin, East Berlin, 1990: the slogan reads 'Next time it will all be better'

Jean Bricmont is professor of physics at the

University of Louvain and author of 'Humanitarian

Imperialism: Using Human Rights to Sell War' (New York University, forthcoming)

Load-Date: August 23, 2006

If this IS World War 3, whose side are we on?

Daily Mail (London)

August 5, 2006 Saturday

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Section: ED IRE; Pg. 15

Length: 1277 words

Byline: EAMON DUNPHY

Body

A SUMMER day in Ireland.

The sun shines (occasionally). Our people enjoy unprecedented prosperity.

The beautiful escapism of the Galway Races, the hurling, football, horse racing and the World Cup.

The young worry about house prices, urban dwellers fret about the traffic and bitch about a government that has been in office long enough to be offensively arrogant.

Our troubles as a nation are few. It is not impossible to conceive of a future generation looking back to 2006 with fondness, claiming that this was a good time to be alive. In this country, at least.

However, unless you are brain dead, a not unknown condition among the Irish nouveau riche, it is impossible to ignore the suffering of millions in the Middle East, the victims of American foreign policy.

The murder of innocent people, many of them children, by the U.S. armed Israeli army is an unmitigated evil.

According to one of the Republican Party's most influential politicians, Newt Gingrich, the Third World War has already begun. During the Clinton presidency, the Republicans gained control of both houses of Congress. The Christian Right formed the base for this success.

Those God-fearing folk hold the key to electoral success in the United States.

They are against abortion and sexual promiscuity. They are for Israel. An estimated 80 million of those fundamentalists believe in The Rapture, a concept you may know little about. At the moment.

With The Rapture will come the end of life as we know it. Some terrible event for example, a mutually destructive nuclear conflict between America and Israel's enemy, Iran will consume the world.

Only those who have been 'saved' by Born Again Christianity will ascend to heaven to find everlasting peace.

NO NEED, therefore, to worry about house prices, traffic on the M50 or the destiny of the next World Cup.

Of rather more concern is the probability that Rapture Man and Woman will determine who governs the United States for the foreseeable future.

If this ISWorld War 3, whose side are we on?

The existence of this Christian Coalition is the reason why no ambitious American politician dissented when Iraq was invaded.

Hillary Clinton approved of Iraq.

She refuses to condemn the evil we are witnessing in the Lebanon.

Mrs Clinton is, for now, the most powerful Democrat in America.

She is unlikely to reach the White House, but she knows that whatever slender hope there is depends on Middle America's Enraptured Believers. The same applies to all Democrats and Republicans. Newt Gingrich fell from grace several years ago, infidelity his crime. But he is back, rehabilitated, a possible runner for the Republicans in the 2008 Presidential election.

So we must consider seriously the Third World War as he defines it.

Who will fight who, and for what?

In Newt's view, the war will be against terror. On BBC's Newsnight last week, he identified the enemy as those who don't share his values. Or Israel's. Or, indeed, the values of America's most powerful electoral constituency, the Christian Coalition.

Every warmonger needs an enemy.

In Newt's case, there are some obvious candidates, the Iranian theocracy being the most visible.

Hezbollah, a relatively small Islamist militia which currently threatens Israel, is also on the list.

Hamas, the Palestinian equivalent of the IRA, is another foe.

Osama Bin Laden and other disparate elements of Al Qaeda are, for obvious reasons, high on Newt's list.

More significant than those on the Gingrich list are those who are not. The totalitarian kleptocracy of China poses no threat to U.S. interests, at the moment.

Maybe the Chinese will fight the coming war on Newt's side.

Russia, where democracy diminishes by the day, is now a U.S. ally and a supplier of energy. So we can safely count Russia out.

Nominally, North Korea is on Newt's hit list, but with a mad leader, nuclear weapons and a famished population, we can assume that no U.S.-led invasion of Korea is imminent.

For Europeans, a serious question arises: whose side will we take in Newt's Third World War?

If the question is serious, the answer is obvious. We have no choice: Newt will have to be our man.

At the core of European despair as we witness the murderous destruction of Lebanon lies the certainty that we can do nothing to influence events.

Like the Pope, who last Sunday pleaded for mercy for those innocent yet dying, we have no battalions. America regards us with contempt.

And without America and the cheap energy that derives from its conquest of the Middle East, the prosperity in which we presently wallow would disappear.

To be fair to the Government and the Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee, the disgust of Irish people has been expressed.

If this ISWorld War 3, whose side are we on?

But expressions of concern provide little comfort for the Lebanese as they watch their country being destroyed - or for the Palestinians caged in Gaza like animals by America's ally, Israel.

Our prison is more comfortable.

Marred only by whatever guilt we feel at our dependence on the country Newt may one day lead.

When Newt or someone of his ilk assumes the leadership of the so-called free world, there will be very little cause for rapture. The War on Terror will continue.

And surely after Iraq and the obscenities of the past three weeks, there will be many more Islamic terrorists to fight.

Tragically, we may well be witnessing the catalyst for a Third World War.

Without a just settlement of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, a prospect now almost inconceivable-Islamic terrorism will grow exponentially.

In this country, we know something about terrorism and the oppression that causes it.

Over the past decade, compromise has led to peace. A peace that is imperfect, but infinitely preferable to the wanton slaughter we knew before.

Intriguingly, the minority in this country who support Israel/ America's brutal oppression of the Palestinian people also deride the historic achievement of all who contributed to Irish peace.

Most disgracefully slandered are the Sinn Féin leaders, who possessed the courage, wisdom and guile to call off their war.

For now, the Middle East, bereft of such leadership, must endure never-ending pain.

A final reflection on Israel and its origins perhaps explains that country's iron fist approach to the present conflict.

Terrorism was introduced to Palestine by Jewish terrorists.

Through the Thirties and Forties, the Irgun terrorists committed the most heinous atrocities in pursuit of a Jewish state.

JUST three weeks ago, as Israel prepared to destroy Lebanon or 'set the clock back 20 years' in the words of an Israeli cabinet minister a small group of surviving Irgun members met to celebrate the 60th anniversary of their decision to blow up Jerusalem's King David Hotel.

This was a defining moment in Irgun's quest for a Jewish home.

Ninety-one people were slaughtered, 28 of them British.

Irgun did not favour suicide bombing. However, the carnage was just as bloody and random.

Buses, marketplaces and cafes were targeted.

In one terrible incident, the Irgun 'freedom fighters' murdered the entire population of a village 251 men, women and children were shot.

Less virile than Newt, the Brits then launched no War on Terror.

Irgun achieved its goal and one of its bravest sons, Menachem Begin, went on to become prime minister.

Two members of the present Israeli cabinet will be familiar with Irgun and its heroic terrorist deeds.

If this ISWorld War 3, whose side are we on?

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert spent the first three years of his life in a terrorist training camp while his parents worked as gunrunners.

Tzipi Livni, Israel's Foreign Minister who greeted Condi Rice last week, is also, as it were, connected.

She is the daughter of Irgun's Director of Military Operations, effectively the brain behind so much civilian killing.

Anyone for World War Three?

Load-Date: August 9, 2006

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The war rages on

University Wire

July 27, 2006 Thursday

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Section: COLUMN

Length: 1271 words

Byline: By Kristen Trotter, The Crimson White; **SOURCE:** U. Alabama

Dateline: TUSCALOOSA, Ala.

Body

I said goodbye to Beirut on Saturday morning through the back of a Chinook helicopter. The helmet and hearing protection a Marine slid on my head right before I boarded blocked out the roar of the helicopter but trapped my thoughts inside my head, where they bounced around and fought for supremacy over my conflicting emotions.

The square gray buildings stacked on the hillside next to the vibrant blue sea were blurred both by my tears and by the exhaust heat from the helicopter, but I could still make out the plumes of smoke rising from the neighborhood that was bombed while I boarded the Chinook.

My time in Beirut had come to a close, and I left far differently than I came. I had expected to bring back suitcases full of sheeshas, carpets and a Turkish coffee pot.

Instead I was evacuated, leaving most of my clothes behind and bringing back only a new understanding of an age-old conflict and a compassion for the people on both sides who are caught in the middle.

I am not a Jew hater. I have never been one.

While I was living in Cairo, I took a trip to Jerusalem. At the border crossing between Taba, Egypt and Eilat, Israel, me and three companions were detained and interrogated for seven hours by Israeli border guards.

One of my friends had two Iranian visas in her passport, reason enough to detain us, and another of our group was Egyptian, though her last name Salib, which means "cross" in Arabic, should have given a clue that she was not a Muslim fanatic.

But I didn't complain. Israel had a right to be suspicious, and I was happy to wait however long it took the guards to figure out we were not a threat.

One of the soldiers was particularly gruff. A far cry from the mustachioed Egyptian soldiers, she had short cropped hair and wore her uniform pants low around her hips in a soldier-chic sort of way. When I asked her not to stamp my passport with the Israeli stamp so I could gain entry to Arab countries, her questioning reached the third degree.

As we were finally leaving, I mentioned her gruffness to my Norwegian friend Hilde, the one with the Iranian visas. She shot me a sharp look.

The war rages on

"Did you know her brother was killed by a **Hamas** suicide bomber?" she asked. Apparently that had come out during Hilde's marathon interrogation session.

And the gruffness made sense. I didn't complain. She had a right to be gruff.

I didn't even complain when they arrested me several days later. I was accustomed to the laxness of Egyptian security, and didn't think twice about buying a souvenir knife in the old city. When I went through security at the bus station, however, I quickly realized that although Israel was only a day's bus ride away from Cairo, it occupied a completely different world.

I was questioned again and searched, and then detained in a small room with two **female** soldiers. I admitted my own stupidity, and we laughed and joked and compared apartment prices from Cairo to Jerusalem to Tuscaloosa. Jerusalem is slightly more expensive than Tuscaloosa, we decided before they took me to the police station.

I didn't resent the tight security. When suicide bombers are a fact of life, you can't afford to relax. I accepted this, and I loved Jerusalem. I loved Israelis and their matter-of-fact approach to life in the face of death. I especially loved their falafel.

But just as I don't hate Israel, I also don't unequivocally support everything the nation does. Just as suicide bombs are a fact of life there, daily Israeli bombing of innocent civilians has become a fact of life in Lebanon, and the suffering there is hard to ignore when you're in the middle of it.

In the newsroom of my newspaper in Beirut, we watched in amazement as the world media distributed pictures of Israelis hiding in bomb shelters from Hezbollah rockets that killed eight people in Haifa. The almost 400 Lebanese civilians killed and 750,000 displaced from the bombings merited only an after mention. The suffering we watched firsthand was not so real, not so close to home to the rest of the world.

And that is understandable, but not easy to handle. It was hard to watch the world cheering for the planes that dropped bombs around us, on our friends and family. It was difficult to listen to my fellow Americans call me naive for reporting what I saw around me. As I left on the helicopter Saturday, I felt as if I was abandoning Lebanon, abandoning the people who had no voice to convey their plight.

What they want to tell the world is simple. They do not support Hezbollah; in fact, most Lebanese hate the organization. Sunni Muslims and Christians would love to see Hezbollah eliminated; they resent Hezbollah for dragging them into this conflict and causing their suffering. While many Americans may see a news video of masked Hezbollah men carrying Kalashnikovs and equate them with all of Lebanon, nothing could be further from the truth. Most Lebanese are just ordinary people who want to go on with their lives, who want to be free of war.

But getting rid of Hezbollah means civil war, something this country has seen too much of. The huge loss of civilian life during the previous 15-year civil war is not something people here want to repeat, so in a sense Hezbollah holds the nation hostage. But while they detest Hezbollah, what the Lebanese detest even more is the heavy-handed Israeli military campaign that has absolutely destroyed their country and swelled Hezbollah's ranks.

People in Lebanon are shocked when the rest of the world tells them that it is reasonable to hold them responsible for a group they cannot control and do not support, that it is fair to kill their families and destroy their homes in retaliation. I shared their amazement when the rest of the world denied Israeli attacks on civilians.

Just two days ago Israel bombed two Red Cross ambulances. Do the huge red and white crosses painted on top of the vehicles look like Hezbollah rocket launchers? Last week a school in Tyre was targeted and tens of children died. Does an elementary school look like a Hezbollah training camp? In south Lebanon, entire villages are cut off and isolated; humanitarian organizations cannot reach them to dig civilians out of the rubble because of Israeli attacks.

Hospitals are running out of medicine; people lack food and water. In Tyre, bodies were left rotting on the bombed roads because those who came to collect them were targeted. The city resorted to mass graves after running out of wood for coffins.

The war rages on

It is true that Hezbollah hides behind civilians. It is true that the militant, fundamental organization has hijacked a nation. It is true that Hezbollah provoked this attack, and it is detestable. I do not support or defend Hezbollah, its grisly tactics, or the suffering it brings to innocent people. But that does not mean that I must unequivocally support an Israeli response that has gone beyond reasonable retaliation, a response that has no regard for human life or suffering.

All the Lebanese want is the world to recognize they are not a nation of terrorists who want to wipe Israel off the map. All they ask for is a reasonable consideration of their plight, one that considers their side and their suffering alongside Israeli suffering. All they want to tell the world is that just because you hate Hezbollah doesn't mean you must ignore the injustice of Israel's response.

All they ask is that you consider their plight.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Kristen Trotter has been in Beirut, Lebanon, for most of the summer working for the Lebanese paper, The Daily Star. This is the second part of her first-person account of her experiences in the war-torn region.

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Load-Date: July 27, 2006

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Crisis in the Middle East, day by day

The Toronto Star
July 22, 2006 Saturday

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Section: NATIONAL REPORT; Pg. F03

Length: 1314 words

Body

June 9

Eight members of a Palestinian family are killed while picnicking on a beach in Gaza in an apparent Israeli shelling. The bloody images of dead Palestinian civilians and wailing survivors on the beach kindle anger against Israel.

June 10

After the beach bombing and Israeli forces' killing of a top Gaza militant, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas declares a three-day mourning period, and Hamas' military wing says it would no longer honour a 16-month cease-fire with Israel.

June 25

Palestinian militants infiltrate into Israel through a tunnel at a Gaza border crossing, kill two Israeli soldiers and capture another, Cpl. Gilad Shalit. The militants

demand the release of detained Palestinian women and children in return for information about Shalit.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert rejects the demands and orders the military to prepare for combat. Israel sends ground troops into Gaza after the assault and warns that militants and their leaders would be killed if the abducted soldier is harmed.

July 12

Hezbollah militants attack Israel, kill seven Israeli soldiers, wound eight and capture two. The group says it captured the soldiers to secure the release of detainees held in Israeli prisons.

Israeli rockets target roads and bridges in southern Lebanon in an apparent attempt to block escape routes, and troops enter the country to search for the abducted soldiers. Eight soldiers are killed and two injured in fighting with Hezbollah.

July 13

Israel's first wave of air strikes cripple and destroy essential infrastructure in Lebanon, including runways and fuel storage tanks at Beirut's international airport, military bases, and the main highway between Beirut and Damascus. About 60 people in Lebanon are killed during the missile strikes.

Crisis in the Middle East, day by day

Hezbollah reacts to the Israeli strikes, launching over 100 Katushya rockets into northern Israel and killing two civilians. A rocket strikes Haifa, Israel's third-largest city.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper calls the Israeli response to Hezbollah's initial attack "measured."

July 14

Israeli air strikes continue to pummel Lebanon. More roads and runways are destroyed and Hezbollah's headquarters in Beirut is hit.

Following the attack, Hezbollah TV airs a recorded audio speech during which Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the group's secretary general, says: "You want an open war, we will go to the open war. We are ready for it. War, war on every level."

It is reported that a Hezbollah rocket launched into the northern Israeli town of Meron kills a woman and 4-year-old girl.

The United Nations Security Council meets in an emergency session to discuss a request by Lebanon to condemn the Israeli attacks. It is unable to agree on a response, but issues a brief statement calling for countries in the region to co-operate with UN efforts to arrange a ceasefire.

July 15

An Israeli air strike in southern Lebanon kills 15 people, including several children, Lebanese police report. Eighteen Lebanese villagers attempting to flee to the southern city of Tyre are killed when missiles hit their vehicles.

Hezbollah volleys rockets at the Israeli city of Tiberias, near the Lebanon-Israel border. Rockets also hit other Israeli cities near the border. No injuries are reported.

July 16

The Israeli military initiates air strikes targeting central Beirut, its suburbs and a key power plant. Eight Canadians are killed, including Ali El-Akhras, his wife Amira, and their four children aged 1, 4, 6 and 8. The extended family from Montreal was on holiday in the village of Aitaroun.

Hezbollah missiles target a rail repair station in Haifa. Eight people are killed.

Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay announces the government intends to evacuate Canadian citizens from Lebanon as soon as possible.

July 17

Israeli air strikes extend to the north, killing at least 15 people in and around Lebanon's second-largest city, Tripoli. Also under attack are Beirut, the eastern city of Baalbek and the port of Abdeh. Ten people are reportedly killed while driving across a bridge south of Beirut as Israeli missiles strike, as are nine Lebanese soldiers in Abdeh and nine Lebanese civilians in a missile attack in the city of Tyre - all were from one family, six of them children. Six Lebanese civilians are killed in an air strike on the village of Aitaroun, witnesses tell Hezbollah TV.

In Israel, Olmert says the attacks will not end until the two captured Israeli soldiers are freed and Hezbollah is no longer a threat.

Hezbollah continues to fire rockets into Israel, destroying an apartment block in Haifa and killing three people. A rocket lands near a hospital in Safed, reportedly injuring six people.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair suggest sending an international force to Lebanon to halt the Hezbollah attacks, but Israel says it is too soon to consider such a move.

Crisis in the Middle East, day by day

Palestinian gunmen in the West Bank city of Nablus ambush Israeli troops, killing one and wounding six.

In Gaza City, Israeli air strikes destroy the Palestinian foreign ministry building.

The international community steps up its evacuation of foreigners from Beirut, as thousands of Lebanese flee their homes. Canada hires seven ships from Cyprus to provide passage to Canadians who wish to evacuate Lebanon.

July 18

Israeli strikes continue for a seventh day, again hitting Beirut and Tyre. Eleven Lebanese soldiers die and 35 are injured in an air attack in the east of Beirut, and six bodies are pulled from the rubble of a building in the town of Aitaroun.

Hezbollah rockets continue to target the Israeli port city of Haifa.

The UN warns of a humanitarian disaster as Lebanese flee their homes, with air strikes on roads and bridges making it difficult for help to reach those in need. Annan calls for an international force to stop the fighting but the U.S. and Israel indicate they're not in agreement with the suggestion.

July 19

About 270 Canadians are evacuated from Beirut, after just one of seven ships shows up, while hundreds of other people are turned away at the city's port.

Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora says 300 people have been killed in the Israeli offensive, including at least 55 Lebanese civilians in air strikes. He appeals for an end to the hostilities and says Lebanon "has been torn to shreds."

Twenty-nine Israelis have died - including 15 civilians killed by rocket attacks - since the Israeli offensive against Hezbollah militants began.

Residents in the southern village of Srifa say at least 12 people are killed, while at least six people die in the southern town of Nabatiyeh.

Scores of Hezbollah rockets are fired into northern Israel, where two children in Nazareth are killed. Rocket fire also hits other cities, including Haifa and Tiberias.

Relief agencies announce that 500,000 people are now displaced within Lebanon and the need for water, food and shelter will soon be dire.

July 20

Nearly 1,400 Canadians are evacuated by ship from Beirut. The Canadian embassy says it could be two weeks before all the Canadians who want out can be evacuated.

Meanwhile, Harper meets the first evacuees in Cyprus, and flies 88 of them home to Canada aboard a government plane.

Israeli army strikes in a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip kill three people, including a 10-year-old girl, according to Palestinian medical personnel.

Annan presses for an "immediate" ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, and unveils a settlement plan involving the early release of two captured Israeli soldiers and the deployment of a stabilization force.

July 21

About 850 Canadians are evacuated by ship out of Beirut.

Crisis in the Middle East, day by day

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice rejects the idea of an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

The death toll: at least 335 people in Lebanon, 34 in Israel.

Israeli tanks mass at the Lebanese border, apparently in preparation for a full-scale land invasion.

Compiled by Victoria Kent

Sources: Star files, Reuters

Graphic

ap photo Canadian nationals in Beirut wait to be evacuated on ships Wednesday. Fewer than 300 people managed to get out that day.

Load-Date: July 22, 2006

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Debate on the crisis in the Middle East

The Irish Times

August 4, 2006 Friday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 17

Length: 1361 words

Body

Madam, - The issuing of a watered-down statement by EU foreign ministers on Tuesday is an appalling indictment of the failings of Western democracy. The West is paralysed by its desire to preserve diplomacy at all costs. The lack of cohesion and the absence of moral conscience on this Middle East crisis is repeatedly demonstrated by the miserable efforts of Condoleezza Rice, Tony Blair and EU foreign ministers.

Meanwhile the innocent citizens of Lebanon are slaughtered. How is it possible to falter before the horror of children's bodies being removed from rubble? Child after child after child. We fail them and we fail ourselves by refusing to challenge US and British support for Israel's war in Lebanon as a severe breach of international humanitarian law. - Yours, etc,

D WATKINS, Clifden, Co Galway.

Madam, - I would like to congratulate Minister for Foreign Affairs Dermot Ahern, who ensured that, along with France and Sweden, Ireland was one of the EU countries calling in the strongest terms for a ceasefire resolution at the EU foreign ministers' meeting on Tuesday.

Now that our Government has rediscovered its conscience on the Middle East, may I urge it to continue along this road, both at an EU and national level? At the EU level there is no excuse any more not to call for the suspension of the Euro-Med agreement which gives Israel favoured trade relations with the EU.

Furthermore, while the plight of Palestinians has been obscured by the equally horrific treatment Lebanon is now receiving from Israel, this plight is only worsened by EU sanctions against the democratically elected government of Palestine; it is past time these sanctions are lifted.

On the national level, delaying the accreditation of a new Israeli ambassador until Israel releases the kidnapped Palestinian parliamentarians and withdraws from Lebanon would send a clear signal as to how unacceptable Israeli behaviour is to Irish people. - Yours, etc,

DAVID LANDY, St Thomas Road, Dublin 8.

Madam, - Vincent Browne (Opinion, August 2nd) pretty much blames Israel for all that is wrong in the Middle East.

He quotes from the Bible and from history but there has to be a point when history is left in the past. The Middle East needs to move on and face the reality of the existence of Israel, existence which is mandated by the United Nations as a sovereign independent state.

Debate on the crisis in the Middle East

Why are there so many women and children among the casualties in southern Lebanon? Where are the men? How do you deal with people who are willing to leave defenceless women and children while they go into hiding? What is the point of having a ceasefire and signing yet another peace agreement when the basic principle of Israel's right to exist in peace is not accepted by those who will be party to such an agreement? Such false agreements solve nothing because they fail to address the issue and just postpone the next crisis for a few more years.

At what point will people realise that a stand needs to be taken against state-sponsored terrorism? The state of Lebanon allowed these terrorists to build a state within a state and never asked for help in controlling them.

The UN as usual sits on its hands for years doing nothing and then appeasers, like Mr Browne, want us to believe that there can be a war without civilian casualties.

It seems we have learnt absolutely nothing from the 20th century. From the comfort and safety of our homes in the West we cast judgment on Israel, but when Iran fires a nuclear weapon will we then finally get the message that we ought to have faced up to Muslim terrorists once and for all? By then it will be far too late. - Yours, etc,

DESMOND FITZGERALD, Canary Wharf, London E14.

Madam, - Vincent Browne has shown great courage in speaking the truth about the root causes of the conflict in Palestine. Watch now as the slur of anti-Semitism is hurled at him. Over the years, this has been a persistent tactic of those who wish to keep hidden the truth of what was done to the Arab people of Palestine at the time of the foundation of the state of Israel. - Yours, etc,

MARTIN LOUGHNAN, Skerries, Co Dublin.

Madam, - On reading Michael D Higgins's latest contribution to your Letters page (August 2nd), you would have to conclude that he could survive as a politician only in somewhere like Ireland. We can sit quite comfortably off the west coast of Europe, safe from any real military threat, pontificating to the rest of the world on the rights and wrongs of their actions. People like Michael D Higgins are of no use at all when faced with violence, because they believe in meaningless UN resolutions, statements of condemnation and anti-war protests, but not action. That's not much use if your neighbours, such as Iran, are striving to wipe you off the map.

Israel, like any other state, is responsible for the defence of its citizens and it has every right to continue its actions against Hizbullah until it is satisfied that any threat to its citizens is removed. If Hizbullah members decide to use residential areas to launch attacks, then it is they, and not the Israelis, who are putting Lebanese civilians at risk. - Yours, etc,

KEVIN WINDLE, Glencairn View, Leopardstown, Dublin 18.

Madam, - On April 18th, 1996 the Israeli defence forces were responsible for the massacre of 106 people in the village of Qana - refugees in a UN compound seeking safety from Israel's third invasion of Lebanon - malignantly named "Operation Grapes of Wrath". More than half the dead were children. This was initially claimed by Ehud Barak to be an "unfortunate mistake" but was subsequently proven to be a fully authorised bombardment of the compound with knowing consequences.

Similar scenarios are being played out again and while Israel has an absolute right to defend itself against terrorist attacks, no right of self-defence can be invoked to justify the recent slaughter at Qana, the killing of the UN observers, the hundreds of civilian deaths and the mass destruction of civilian infrastructure in southern Lebanon. Israel's response to Hizbullah is grossly disproportionate and can objectively be described as state terrorism.

There is an immediate need for a ceasefire and a realisation on the part of Israel that its response to conditions in the Middle East is a vital ingredient that sustains Islamofascist organisations such as Hizbullah and Hamas. The past 20 years have seen both these organisations grow in popularity to a point where they are both represented in governments. A sustainable ceasefire or peace is not one that can be defined exclusively by Israel in its own interests. - Yours, etc,

Debate on the crisis in the Middle East

Cllr JIM O'LEARY, (Fine Gael), Parkvale, Dundrum, Dublin 14.

Madam, - Why should Israel kowtow to the United States, Britain and the EU and call a halt to its military activities in Lebanon? Given that it has been terrorised by the belligerent forces of Islamic fundamentalism, its decision to go to war seems logical and entirely reasonable. Certainly, the conflict in Lebanon is far easier to justify than the US-led invasion of Iraq.

We can at least be grateful that the current, limited IDF attacks have served to flush from cover the inherent anti-Semitism of many Europeans, not least in correspondence to The Irish Times. The stark and unpalatable reality is that disproportionate response is the only way to win a war, otherwise all conflicts would result in stalemate.

All right-minded people should support Israel in its actions, and let the Jewish state know that we stand squarely behind them. - Yours, etc,

JOHN DYLAN O'DONOGHUE, Ard Keale, Rochestown, Cork.

Madam, - Further to the report in your edition of August 2nd that Israel is now issuing telephone warnings before it bombs, I would like to commend it for raising its standard of morality to that of the IRA. - Yours, etc,

FINIAN McCLUSKEY, Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan.

Madam, - Martyn Turner's cartoon in your edition of August 1st is deeply offensive - and not only, I am sure, to believing Christians.

Qana is heartbreaking enough without the addition of such gross irreverence towards Christ.

Shame on you for publishing this tasteless effort. - Yours, etc,

SEÁN MAC CÁRTHAIGH, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.

Load-Date: August 4, 2006

Despite Risks, Freed Reporter Loved Iraq

The New York Times

April 2, 2006 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section 1; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 8; THE REACH OF WAR: THE FORMER HOSTAGE

Length: 1292 words

Byline: By ROBERT F. WORTH

Body

One warm night last fall, Jill Carroll was sitting at a patio table in Baghdad with a group of friends, ticking off the many dangers journalists face in Iraq. Kidnapping was high on the list, along with car bombs and random shootings.

But Ms. Carroll, a 28-year-old freelance reporter who had lost one of her best friends in a suicide bombing a few months earlier, said she could not imagine leaving.

"I've never been as happy as I am here," she said. "It sounds strange and kind of morbid to say it, but I really love this place."

Only a few months later, Ms. Carroll became one of the most lurid items in the story that meant so much to her.

After being kidnapped on a west Baghdad street in January, she was held captive for 82 days by armed militants who twice issued threats to kill her if their demands were not met. They released three videotapes in which she was alternately seen calling for the release of female Iraqi prisoners and sobbing in terror as she pleaded for help.

In the end, her captors freed her for no clear reason, dropping her off on Thursday on a street not far from where she was taken. They also posted a videotape of her praising the Iraqi insurgency and condemning the American presence, adding that she felt "guilty" about being released when Iraqis were still suffering.

She arrived in Germany yesterday morning on her way back to the United States.

In her first comments about that tape, in a statement released yesterday by the newspaper she has written for, The Christian Science Monitor, she said had been coerced.

"During my last night of captivity, my captors forced me to participate in a propaganda video" to secure her release, the statement said. "I was living in a threatening environment, under their control, and I wanted to go home alive. So I agreed."

She said that her comments on the tape were not her own views, and that her kidnappers had threatened her many times. She called them "criminals, at best."

Through her captivity, Ms. Carroll struck a chord in the Arab world as well as in the West, perhaps in part because of her passionate attachment to Iraq and its people. Conservative Islamist politicians in Iraq issued emotional pleas for her release, as did some of the most militant anti-American groups in the Middle East, like Hamas and the

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Muslim Brotherhood. Her earnest face -- usually framed by a traditional Muslim head scarf -- became familiar on television screens across the globe.

In her statement, she said she was "humbled" by so much sympathy and support.

And finally, she asked for privacy. "This has been a taxing 12 weeks for me and for my family," the statement said. "Please allow us some quiet time alone, together."

Even after her release, there were signs that her captors retained some power over her. She was initially reluctant to go to the Green Zone, where the American Embassy is based, because her kidnappers had told her it was "infiltrated by the mujahedeen" and that she might be killed if she cooperated with Americans, The Monitor reported.

Ms. Carroll has yet to say much about her ordeal beyond the bare facts. She was kept in a small room where she was well fed but cut off almost completely from the sounds and sights of everyday life, she told The Monitor. The room had a window that was obscured, and most of the time she sat in silence. She was allowed to watch television and read a newspaper only once.

"If I had to take a shower I walked, you know, two feet, to the next door to take a shower or go to the bathroom and come back," she said. She had occasional contact with Iraqi women and children in the house, and found that comforting.

The reasons for her capture and her release remain mysteries. The little-known group that was holding her, the Revenge Brigade, said the American government had agreed to some of its conditions. But American officials said emphatically that they had "not entered into any arrangements with anyone" to free her. The Monitor also said it had not had any negotiations with her kidnappers.

Some of Ms. Carroll's friends said they suspected that her love for Iraq helped her survive through the months of fear and isolation, and may have helped win her release.

"I think she had to bank on the fact that she could connect in some way with her captors," said Jackie Spinner, a reporter for The Washington Post who was based in Baghdad until recently, and who has been a friend of Ms. Carroll. "Unlike most Western journalists, she spoke good Arabic. And if you look at her work, she comes across as compassionate, as balanced."

Ms. Carroll went to Iraq in 2003 after spending a few months learning Arabic in Jordan. A freelancer, she belonged to a small and daring group of reporters who work without the protections afforded by big news organizations.

Writing about her experience last year in The American Journalism Review, she made clear that she understood the risks and relished the adventure. She even said she believed her low-budget, low-profile status made her safer.

"All I ever wanted to be was a foreign correspondent, so when I was laid off from my reporting assistant job at The Wall Street Journal in August 2002, it seemed the right time to make it happen," she wrote of her decision to try to cover the war in Iraq.

Ms. Carroll was close to Marla Ruzicka, a young American aid worker who was killed in a suicide bombing in Baghdad in April 2005. She helped organize a memorial service for Ms. Ruzicka days afterward, collecting a vivid collage of impressions from other reporters and reading them aloud at the service.

Afterward, Ms. Carroll took a long vacation in Bali, to try to overcome her grief and exhaustion. She had always sought solace in the water, swimming regularly in the pool at the Hamra Hotel compound in Baghdad, and organizing raucous water polo games. In Bali, she tried to learn to surf.

She did not shy away from risky assignments after she returned to Iraq. In November, she traveled by car to Najaf to report on tensions within Iraq's Shiite community, a dangerous journey that few reporters were willing to undertake at that time.

Despite Risks, Freed Reporter Loved Iraq

Her kidnapping, on Jan. 7, electrified the dwindling Baghdad press corps. American reporters had been abducted before, but the circumstances in Ms. Carroll's case were especially worrying. She was taken in western Baghdad, an area rife with Sunni Arab insurgents, and her translator, Allan Enwiyah, was shot and killed.

After fevered talks among reporters -- mostly people who knew her well -- a decision was made to not report the kidnapping immediately, in the hope that without publicity, her captors would release her quickly.

But within a few days, the reporters, and The Monitor, decided that there was nothing to be gained in hiding the story. Her family and The Monitor also began working with American officials in Baghdad in a long, tortuous effort to secure her release.

Over the following weeks, various people approached the family or The Monitor claiming they could help, including some who demanded large ransoms, The Monitor reported. None of the trails led anywhere.

Meanwhile, an unusual campaign began in Iraq, in which several Iraqi newspapers and television stations editorialized for her freedom. Some donated public-service announcements designed by The Monitor asking for her release.

Ms. Carroll's friends in Baghdad never gave up hope. They often thought of a word she had coined, "feeh" (pronounced "fee," apparently derived purely from her imagination), which she used when saying goodbye to friends, Ms. Spinner said.

"It was a kind of code word, meaning love and respect," Ms. Spinner said. "But it also meant, 'I'm going to see you again.' "

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photo: Jill Carroll, who was released Thursday, was welcomed by Col. Kurt Lohide yesterday in Ramstein, Germany. (Photo by Michael Probst/Associated Press)

Load-Date: April 2, 2006

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Enemy soldiers gather - to strive for peace

Christian Science Monitor

April 6, 2006, Thursday

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Section: FEATURES, CURRENTS; Pg. 13

Length: 1315 words

Byline: Amelia Thomas Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: ARRAM, WEST BANK

Highlight: Shunned by their respective governments, former Israeli and Palestinian fighters have been meeting in secret, seeking common ground.

Body

The stark white room buzzes with Arabic and Hebrew conversation as a group of about 50 men jovially shake hands and arrange themselves in seats around its perimeter. The men range in age from 20 to 60. Some wear suits and polished shoes; others are dressed casually in sweat pants and T-shirts.

They have one thing in common: All are former combatants who struggled to defend their state - but half of them are former Israeli soldiers or pilots, while the other half are former Palestinian "freedom fighters," many of whom served time in Israeli jails.

These men once fought against each other. Together they form a new organization called Combatants for Peace, which - after being kept secret for a year - will make its public debut in Jerusalem on April 10. The date coincides with the Jewish holiday of Passover and Palestinian Prisoners Day, which is devoted to those detained in Israeli prisons.

Combatants for Peace brings together these ex-fighters to encourage dialogue, peace, and an end to conflict in the region.

Former commander Zohar Shapira, an elite Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldier for 15 years, started the ball rolling when he left the army because he felt its actions and incursions in Palestinian territories were "immoral." He contacted a group of former Palestinian Fatah fighters from around Bethlehem. In their first meeting, Mr. Shapira says, all were stunned to find so much common ground, and they decided to formalize an alliance.

"Our members are fighters from all ranks of Israeli military and Palestinian militant factions," says Bassam Aramin, one of the Palestinian cocreators of the group. They "know the meaning of freedom, and the price of war."

The group's monthly meetings are charged with emotion, says Yonatan Shapira, Zohar's brother and another cofounder. For new Palestinian members, it may be the first time they have seen an unarmed Israeli soldier, Yonatan says. "For Israelis," he continues, "they're often at first afraid of talking in front of Palestinians about what they did during combat. For every new member, it's a frightening experience, but it's also exhilarating."

Mr. Aramin, who served seven years in an Israeli jail for "acts of defiance" against Israeli soldiers, agrees.

Enemy soldiers gather - to strive for peace

"It's a paradox," he says. "You hear a man talking about how he shot, killed, damaged your neighbor's house. But you feel empathy for him. You realize that we are all from the same background, but just from different sides. The soldier wanted to protect his people, and so did we. But we've all discovered we were wrong in how we did it."

On this particular night, eight new Israeli and Palestinian members attend, bringing the total membership to roughly 90, evenly divided between both sides. After a brief introduction from two chairmen, a new Israeli member stands up and nervously greets the group. The new member remains anonymous - there is no pressure for attendees to reveal their names.

The room becomes quiet. At first he is hesitant, but then he opens up, describing the turning point that made him decide to refuse army orders in Palestinian territories.

"I was a soldier in Nablus," he explains, "and was told to fire 'light bombs' [powerful exploding flares] to illuminate the sky one night during a military operation. I fired seven, but the eighth had a problem. I knew it would explode somewhere on the ground if I fired it."

His commanding officer, however, ordered him to fire the bomb regardless of possible civilian casualties.

"When I fired," he recalls, "I asked myself how I could be doing something that could kill innocent people."

This is not an uncommon experience in this group. Another member, a former Israeli Air Force pilot, was ordered to bomb a building in Gaza in order to assassinate an alleged terrorist. It was only when he returned home and turned on the television that he realized 15 innocent women and children had been killed in the attack.

"At first I asked him," says Aramin, "how he could live, how he could look at his wife and children. But this is his way of making amends."

Raed, a Palestinian father of two from Hebron, stands up next. He relates how, after an Israeli soldier killed his best friend, he engaged in "activities against soldiers," including throwing Molotov cocktails at Israeli troops. He was a fugitive for a year before he was caught and put in jail. His time there, however, only made him more committed to his cause, and he began planning a "large attack" against Israel.

"But then, my cousin was killed, and something changed," he says. "I suddenly started thinking there must be another way. First I lost my friend, then my cousin. I didn't want to lose more. There had to be a way out of this violent circle. I hope," he says, adding, "this group will become an important part of both our societies, and an example to the world of how peace is possible, even among fighters."

The leaders of Combatants for Peace felt it was important to keep their group secret until they had established clear goals. Their aim: To press for an end to Israeli settlements and military incursions, and for the creation of clear frontiers between independent Israeli and Palestinian states.

So far, the group's low-key approach has confined it to speaking at smaller public events, to Jewish groups in the United States and young Palestinians and Israelis. Following their official public launch on Monday, though, they will start addressing larger international audiences, promoting their vision of a "road to peace."

That road is not without obstacles.

First, it's difficult for the group to find a meeting location. It is illegal for Israelis to enter most of the West Bank. For most Palestinians, procuring entry permits into Israel is time-consuming and often fruitless. But the group has been able to meet in Arram, an area just north of Jerusalem that is part of the Palestinian Territories, surrounded by security checkpoints and roadblocks administered by Israel.

Members say it will become even more difficult to meet as the "security wall" goes up. Half-finished sections of wall currently slice through a main road in the center of town.

Enemy soldiers gather - to strive for peace

Despite its efforts to promote peace and understanding, the group has opponents on both sides of the conflict. Group member Elazar Elchanan says they are "staunchly opposed by the Israeli government." Aramin says Hamas, too, sees the group as part of the opposition.

"We may be putting our lives in danger just by meeting," says Yonatan Shapira, "but we need to do this for the sake of everyone. Palestinians have tried for years to oppose the occupation, and everything they've done has just made the response more brutal. So we want to create an alternative to the military, so that young people on both sides can join us instead of army or militia groups."

Yonatan knows, though, that the group's decision to go public will have repercussions for its members. He was an instrumental figure in the creation of the September 2003 "Pilots' Letter" signed by 27 Israeli Air Force pilots that stated, "We, who were raised to love the state of Israel ... refuse to take part in Air Force attacks on civilian population centers."

"I was at the center of a storm," he says. "It was a real crisis in my life when that letter went public."

Nevertheless, he says, as the new members' introductions come to an end and the group divides up to discuss strategies for the upcoming launch, these former fighters are willing to face another storm in order to "truly serve their families, to finish the occupation and be able to live in peace together."

"It doesn't cease to be hard," says Aramin with a smile and sighing deeply. "You must listen to what each person has to say, even though he might be the one who once hit you, or killed a member of your family. But you must listen, and you must forgive, even for the most difficult things."

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Load-Date: April 5, 2006

In Wake of Bombings, Egyptian Resort Confronts Its Fear

The New York Times

April 26, 2006 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 3; Foreign Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 1270 words

Byline: By MICHAEL SLACKMAN; Mona el-Naggar contributed reporting from Dahab for this article, and Abeer Allam from Sharm el Sheik.

Dateline: DAHAB, Egypt, April 25

Body

As the police began to round up suspects on Tuesday in the triple bombing of this small seaside resort the day before, Dr. Muhammad Hussein was cataloging body parts at the local hospital, and hundreds of Egyptians, some marching in protest, expressed fear that the attack would destroy the tourist industry, and with it their chance to earn a living.

This community, a refuge for scuba divers and backpackers, pressed up against the sea by the soaring bare cliffs of the Sinai, is so close-knit that it took almost half the day on Tuesday for the shock to subside enough for anyone to wash the blood from the pedestrian walk, to board up shattered store fronts or even to remove the plates of food left on restaurant tables.

There were conflicting reports on the number of fatalities, with some officials saying 18 had died and others saying the toll had reached 24. (In the first confused hours, officials had put the toll at 30.)

The bombing was condemned by two leading Islamist groups, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and **Hamas**, the militant Palestinian faction that recently came to power in the West Bank and Gaza.

Many of the most critically injured were flown by military planes to Cairo, where some may have died, accounting for the discrepancy in the figures. Dozens of the less seriously injured were taken to a hospital at Sharm el Sheik, a larger town on the southern tip of the Sinai peninsula.

"It is hard to explain how I felt at that moment," said Muhammad Yousri, 22, who works in a scuba store very close to the blasts. "I felt loss, people dying and destruction everywhere, and at that moment I knew what it meant to be safe. It is very difficult when someone loses this sense of safety. Feeling safe is a blessing."

Some voiced more concrete fears.

"I came here for my sisters -- to help them get married -- and to help me have some kind of future," said Maged Eissa, 20, of Mansoura, a city in the Nile delta, whose right leg was badly burned. "We came here to work, but we now have nothing."

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Egyptian security officials said they had begun picking up dozens of people believed to have connections to, sympathy for or information about those involved in the bombing.

Scuba divers continued to troll the turquoise waters of the Gulf of Aqaba looking for body parts. Security men in dark glasses and freshly pressed suits zoomed in and out of town in big S.U.V.'s.

This was the third bombing attack on a Sinai town in less than two years, and the third to come at the time of a national holiday.

Egyptians were celebrating the end of the Coptic observance of Easter and the national spring holiday of Sham el Nessim, and were planning for Sinai Day on Tuesday, the anniversary of the final withdrawal of Israeli troops from the area in 1982.

The celebrations were canceled in many places.

While investigators and government officials said it was far too soon to draw any firm conclusions, some said they believed that the profile of this attack was so close to that of the other two, in Taba in 2004 and Sharm el Sheik in 2005, that they would prove to be connected. And that only served to underscore a reality that has already unnerved the authorities: that the Sinai, a place that historically has not bred radical thinking, may have become an incubator for terrorism.

"What happened actually has all the markings of a local group," said a high-ranking government official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly. He cited the fact that the suspects obviously knew the area very well.

The attack began at 7:15 p.m. on Monday, when the center of this quaint village was packed with Egyptians and foreigners, young and old. Three bombs detonated, maybe 15 seconds apart, witnesses said.

The first exploded in the middle of a pedestrian walkway near the Lantern, a restaurant with tables on the beach. The second went off just north of there, over a small wooden bridge, beside the outdoor Al Capone Restaurant. The third hit seconds later, on the south end of the walkway, near the Ghazala Supermarket.

In an instant, a stretch no larger than a soccer field was splattered with flesh and blood, and littered with shattered glass.

"Everything was pleasant, and there was nothing shady looming," said Galal Rabee, 30, who was working at a shop near the first explosion. "Then suddenly, it all changed. We found dead people and injured people bleeding."

Government officials said Tuesday that the bombs were small crude devices and appeared to have been detonated by timers -- though suicide bombers had not absolutely been ruled out. No matter how small the devices, the devastation was considerable. The blasts were set off in the middle of a crowded walkway, which would be like placing three bombs in the Faneuil Hall market in Boston or South Street Seaport in New York on a holiday weekend.

Dr. Hussein was working at Dahab Hospital, a small, single-story first aid center about a mile from the beach. The hospital keeps only a few supplies on hand, he said, accustomed as it is to dealing with diving injuries, not wounds more common to a war zone. He said he was eating dinner when he heard the three blasts, and immediately dispatched his three ambulances to pick up the wounded.

The little hospital was quickly overwhelmed.

"We were all trying to do anything we could," he said.

As his staff worked Tuesday to clean the blood off the floors, he read off a grisly inventory of body parts he was storing in a freezer for identification: "Two heads, right arm, left arm, three right legs, three left legs."

In Wake of Bombings, Egyptian Resort Confronts Its Fear

Officials said a small number of foreigners were killed, perhaps four. The primary target seemed to be Egypt, its tourist industry and its citizens: mainly the men who leave their homes in Cairo and small towns along the Nile, where jobs are scarce, to earn a living along the Gulf of Aqaba. Tourists generate jobs, they tip fairly well and they thus allow thoughts of a future, workers here said.

Muhammad Abdel Azim moved here from Cairo and had been saving for nine years to get married. John Samir moved from Sharqiya, and Fayez Tolba moved from Minya. They were working in the Da Vinci Bazaar at a busy corner when the third blast detonated, near the front of the shop. People standing guard inside the shattered remains of the shop said all three men were killed.

They said that Mr. Abdel Azim was to be married, finally, next month.

But keep walking down the street, called Mashaya, and it is clear who will suffer the reverberations.

Ibrahim Ahmed, 19, moved from Cairo a year ago to make a living at the Ghazala Supermarket. Osama Ramsis, 34, moved from Cairo 16 years ago and worked in the Santa Clause Jewellery store. (English spellings are sometimes unconventional.) In Mona Lisa, another jewelry store, was Ahmed Tabakh, 23, who moved from Banha five years ago. In the spice shop was Abdullah Hassan, 21, who moved from Qena a year ago. In the Carpet Center was Ahmed Melihah, 20, who moved from Kafr el Sheik.

From all corners they came to Dahab on Tuesday, after the shards of glass had largely been cleared and the police had taken down the yellow tape that had closed off the small bridge in the middle of town. Dozens of Egyptians, men, women and children, marched up and down the main street, condemning terrorism and praising God.

"We want peace, we want to be able to live," they chanted as they waved hastily made signs condemning the killing.

When 9-year-old Faisal Samir was asked why he was marching, he said, "We want to eat and drink."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: Off the beach at Dahab, Egypt, yesterday, divers found what they thought were human remains from the waterfront attacks on Monday.

Egyptian police investigators searched for evidence yesterday along a bridge that was a terrorist target. (Photographs by Shawn Baldwin for The New York Times)

Load-Date: April 26, 2006

Will Paris be my perfect match?

The Times (London)

March 17, 2006, Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Bricks and Mortar; Pg. 6

Length: 1181 words

Byline: Janine di Giovanni

Body

Janine di Giovanni has exchanged the world's war zones for family life in France. Her latest battle is where to put the plasma TV.

EVER SINCE I was a child I have had a fascination with property. What would Freud say about this? I think I already know. My parents moved my large, strange family into a spanking new home when I was six months old. It was one of those 1960s faux-Frank Lloyd Wright homes that were springing up all over the East Coast of America, with streets named after war heroes.

My parents were obsessed with property and one of their great pastimes was going for a Sunday drive -to look enviously at other houses, of course. So I am obsessed, too. An early memory is of riding my red tricycle up the hill to watch builders pour cement into the foundation of other new homes being built.

In my later incarnation as a war correspondent, I never ceased to stop looking at property. I have examined lovely, high-ceilinged Ottoman buildings in east Jerusalem. I once considered buying an abandoned theatre in Gaza, long before Hamas took over. I saw many chalet-style "weekend" houses in the mountains of Bosnia that were for sale at a few thousand dollars (Paddy Ashdown bought one). I remember entering a sniper's nest in Sarajevo and taking the time to explore the large Habsburg-style rooms while the soldiers were busy taking aim at someone. The present focus of my attention is a property in a more peaceful spot.

It's a typical Haussmann Paris flat at Notre Dame des Champs in the sixth arrondissement, in front of the Luxembourg Gardens. Hemingway used to live in this street, and Gertrude Stein across the way. But more importantly there is the best school in Paris, l'Alsacienne, close by. Around the corner are those great brasseries, La Coupole and Le Select.

After much drama -mortgages turned down, frantic scrambling as my husband, Bruno, and I emptied our accounts of cash in three currencies -we signed the papers last month. Afterwards, we went to Le Select, our new local, and the waiter brought us two glasses of a disgusting sweet party drink to celebrate. We ate steak frites, and my husband took my hand and started to speak poetically about how wonderful it was to build a family life together.

All I did was worry. Because now the tough part begins. The flat has not been rewired or the plumbing done since 1936, which is around the time Nancy Mitford was wandering around Paris with a broken heart. To put it simply -it needs a lot of travaux. Like most property in a good Parisian neighbourhood, it was expensive, although not by London standards. It cost Euro 880,000 (£ 600,000) roughly the same sum that my 1-bedroom Notting Hill flat is

Will Paris be my perfect match?

under offer at -before the hefty notaire fees, which bumped it up by Euro 100,000. Added to that is the travaux, which will cost another Euro 100,000.

By French standards it is spacious: 113 sq m (1,216 sq ft) plus a chambre de bonne, a minute but precious room two floors up that will be transformed into my study or a guest room. It is laid out in a typical French manner: small, cosy rooms and huge hallways. Our plan is to knock through everything, making it light and airy and spacious and totally un-French.

We are at the mercy of Bob and Gerd. Gerd is a German architect, blond and stunningly handsome. Bob is a Pole. He comes from the mountains of Poland and understands wood; that is important to us because we both like something of a country feel.

Gerd is what you would expect of a German architect. His designs are modern and clean, his expertise is making space out of small places. He originally arrived with his partner, a Croatian builder by the curious name of "E", who was even more handsome than Gerd.

But looks are not everything, and for someone like me, who worked in the Balkans for nearly a decade, a German-Croat alliance is not a good thing. Apart from that, "E" was super-expensive. We found Bob through my Argentinian friend, Maria Laura, and he gave us a far lower quotation for the work. When we put Bob together with Gerd, the Pole and the German eyed each other as though they were opposing armies.

But the Second World War was a long time ago, and now they have no choice but to get on with things.

Now Gerd has given us three plans of action. All of them involve knocking every wall down, rebuilding every corner and adding cupboards throughout. This is a strange French architectural feature: there are never any cupboards. I have no idea where they put their clothes.

Yesterday was a breakthrough. After two weeks of looking helplessly at Gerd's designs over glasses of Ricard and bowls of olives, Bruno and I -the two most indecisive people in history -made a decision.

We go with option two, which means one enormous sitting room with a cuisine americaine in the corner, and a bathroom off that. Then we will have a combined library and office in the next room, where our son, Luca, can also play, then a wing with our two bedrooms and our own bathroom.

But today the war begins. Did I mention that my husband and I are also the two most stubborn people in Christendom? Today's battle is about the laundry room.

"I insist on having a place for the laundry to be hung to dry," I say. Bruno looks startled. "We have a dryer in the kitchen."

This is such a quintessential male-female argument that it seems as though we are in a Woody Allen movie. We argue for five minutes. Then Bruno changes the subject abruptly and talks of the second bathroom, off the kitchen. He wants a small shower. I say that a bath is more practical for Luca.

"Children don't take showers," I point out, "they take baths."

"He will take a shower in a few years. When he is four."

Then phase two of the battle begins. Bruno pulls out Gerd's plans, pointing to the fireplace in the main room. He says something that chills my heart. "We can get a flat-screen plasma TV over the fireplace," he says. I resist the urge to hit him.

"Are you mad?" I say. "You put paintings above a fireplace, or a mirror. Not a TV screen! I don't even watch TV!"

"I do," he says. "All the time. And it's the perfect place for the TV. Otherwise, the light is not good. We can put my Bose speakers here...and my Buddha heads here..."

Will Paris be my perfect match?

He starts to draw up an elaborate plan to turn what I thought would be a lovely, elegant Parisian sitting room into a Boy's Own fantasy.

"I will not live with a plasma screen above the fireplace!" I say shrilly.

On that note, he takes his helmet and speeds off on his motorcycle, shouting back over his shoulder *Arrete tes betises!* (Stop this nonsense). We call a truce to go to look at kitchens. I want Aga, he wants Ikea. We avoid the topic of TVs. But next week, he tells me sternly, the walls begin coming down ...

Janine di Giovanni will be reporting regularly from her bricks and mortar battlefield.

FOR SALE

This two-bed apartment is on the 4th floor of a traditional Parisian building near Saint Augustin in the 8th arrondissement. It has a large reception room and dining room, and each bedroom has its own bathroom.

Price: £ 1.07 million. Contact: Emile Garcin, 020-7590 3130, www.emilegarcin.co.uk

Load-Date: March 17, 2006

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Letters

Guardian Weekly

March 3, 2006 Friday

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TheGuardianWeekly

Section: Pg. 4

Length: 1361 words

Byline: Dominic Simler, Rafael Bloom, Karl Sabbagh, Renate Peters, Xavier Romero-Frias, Patrick Lewis, Philip Machanick, Paul Barber, Bor West

Body

Israel and Palestine

As a South African-born British citizen who has lived in London for more than 26 years, I take great offence at your inaccurate comparison of Israel and South Africa (A world apart, February 17). The two countries' problems are entirely different. As a Jew, I am doubly ended by the bias that infects any objectivity this piece could have had, given its faulty premise. It leads me to the conclusion that in Britain attacking Israel is an acceptable proxy for anti-semitism. It should not be forgotten that South African Jews were among the most prominent champions of Nelson Mandela and the ANC, and that Israel was formed on land that was bought and paid for from the Arabs. The sad plight of the Palestinians is a failure of their own leadership and more widely of the Arab world, which regards their situation as Israel's problem rather than its own.

Dominic Simler

London, UK

As a Zionist, South African-born Jew, I must applaud Chris McGreal's article. Among Nelson Mandela's first utterances upon release was a plea to put down the gun. What a pity, then, for the Palestinian nation that instead of leaders of the calibre of Walter Sisulu and Mr Mandela they have been consistently betrayed and robbed by their own leadership. So long as two-state solution is deemed the answer, Israelis and Palestinians do not share the promise of the new South Africa. I do not see my own Zionism as a reason to deny self-determination to another nation. In turn, **Hamas**, and other anti-Zionist groups, owe it to the Palestinian people not to make their raison d'être the denial of another nation's rights.

Rafael Bloom

London, UK

Chris McGreal is to be commended for his comprehensive survey of the similarities between Israel today and South Africa under apartheid. But his report merely details the institutionalisation of an anti-Arab racism that pervades Israeli society. The most insidious aspect of this is that ordinary Israelis see nothing wrong with it. On my recent visit to Israel, I was interviewed by a young immigration officer who asked where I would be staying. When I

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Letters

said the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem she said: iBut that is an Arab hotel. Why do you stay there? What's wrong with all the Jewish hotels in Jerusalem?i il stay there because I like it,i I said. iYou like Arabs?i she said, a note of disgust in her voice.

Karl Sabbagh

Newbold on Stour, Warks, UK

Guilty by association

Jonathan Freedland is not the fi rst to criticise Muslims for not attending Holocaust commemorations (Shoah casts a long shadow, February 3). But why does he expect that they should? Does Freedland also expect followers of Shintoism or Buddhism to attend? And do representatives of the Jewish community attend commemorations of the atrocities perpetrated in Cambodia and Rwanda, among others? His implication is that the Muslims

are in some way complicit in the Holocaust, which is a subtle form of guilt by association. The Holocaust should never be used as a stick to punish the Muslims.

Renate Peters

Silver Spring, Maryland, US

Spanish practices

The relationship between Catalonia and the central Spanish government is complex (Catalonia wants to go its own way, February 10). Perhaps the best way to portray it is as a dysfunctional marriage, an unhealthy relationship where one partner (the government in Madrid) is used to abusing his partner (Catalonia), who is full of doubts and insecurities about herself since the lack of consideration and the brutalities of the Franco era. The sad truth is that Franco's shadow still looms large over the Iberian peninsula. Thus the easiest way to get votes for any politician in central and southern Spain is not by promising jobs or development, but by abusing Catalonia and the Catalans as ibad Spaniardsi. No party

programme is sure to draw Spanish crowds in greater numbers than the insults against people who, technically at least, are fellow Spaniards. The blindness of Spanish politicians, especially from the rightwing PP party, to the fact that their technique of sowing hatred is potentially harmful to a united Spain, is staggering. Logically, a country where Catalans would feel that they are valued as citizens, and that their rights and their language are respected, would have less incentives for separatist tendencies. But by routinely portraying the Catalans and their aspirations as iSpain's worst enemyi, the neo-Franquistas are undermining the very foundation of the Spanish kingdom. Even politicians who seem friendly to the Catalan cause, such as Zapatero, have been lukewarm at best in their support of Catalan issues. Their silence about the abuse of the image of Catalonia by Spanish

politicians, and about the lies that have been told on the language issue, are meaningful. The socialists' need to derive some benefi t from the pervading anti-Catalan mood that has been whipped up by a nostalgic and unimaginative right wing is at best a sign of weakness. Catalans are often easily portrayed as bigoted and intolerant people because they stick to their language, deemed obsolete and jejune by the Spanish state. But nothing could be further from the truth: Catalonia absorbed many Spanish-speaking immigrants during Franco's time and the Catalans have done a good job in making them feel welcome. My father, who had migrated to Catalonia from a Spanish-speaking region before I was born, used to say: iCatalonia is not only its landscape, you have to get to love its people.i

Xavier Romero-Frias

Ambalamukku, India

Scientific evidence

With regard to George Monbiot's column on the funding of medical research (Just follow the money, February 17), it should be pointed out that the vast majority of scientific academic journals have, and have had for some years, a policy of printing both the source of funding for research and any conflicts of interest that may impact on a scientist's impartiality. Of course, should human nature prove fallible and someone deliberately try to hide a potential source of bias, this would not be highlighted. As the recent retraction of Dr Hwang Woo-suk's work on cloned human stem cells exemplifies, scientists are as human as anyone.

Patrick Lewis

Washington DC, US

George Monbiot's column illustrates that the University of Reading is not a real university, otherwise they would not be so keen to condone academic fraud. For Reading to portray this as an issue of academic freedom is absurd. Many funders do insist that they be acknowledged. Is that a denial of academic freedom? It is usual in academia that funders expect to be acknowledged, so it would not be hard to insist that funders be named in any case where academic judgment is in question. Anyone wishing to fund academia anonymously has many outlets that do not influence academic outcomes, such as sponsoring a general-purpose building or paying for the toilets to be cleaned. The latter is the most recognition the tobacco industry deserves.

Philip Machanick

University of Queensland, Australia

Papuan fears

It is a terrible irony that a week or so before scientists announced the discovery of rare wildlife in West Papua (Lost world found, February 17), the UN reported that the territory's indigenous population is at risk of extinction. In January 43 Papuan men, women and children were forced

to flee to Australia to seek asylum from persecution by the Indonesian authorities. The human rights abuses suffered by the Papuans at the hands of the Indonesian security forces are gross and widespread; tens of thousands have died since Indonesia took control of the territory in 1963.

Paul Barber

Tapol, the Indonesia Human Rights

Campaign

eWar is always corrupt'

Why is the story, Britain's image tarnished by video of troops beating Iraqis, headline news (February 17)? I thought the Blair government went to war to beat the Iraqis and in this postmodern world one would surely expect a video, a T-shirt and a soap opera of moral outrage like the

one in your leader column. The British at war are no more dignified than another nation in the act of conquest. War is always a corrupt and dirty business. So, let's drop the pretence of moral frameworks being transgressed.

(Dr) Bor West

MEzeilles, France

Load-Date: June 19, 2006

**Price of free nation may well be blood;
Emerging democracies likely to go to war as they have weak political
institutions**

The Business Times Singapore

January 17, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: VIEWS AND OPINIONS; BT Comment Others

Length: 1332 words

Byline: Leon Hadar Washington Correspondent

Body

IF YOU'VE been listening to the recent 'democracy is the way to go' sermons by US President George W Bush and his advisers, you'll have to conclude that embracing 'democracy' - a concept that is open to different interpretations - is the cure for most of humanity's ills, ranging from political violence and economic under-development to male baldness and erectile dysfunction.

Even in the more modest version, the global democratic crusade launched by the White House and inspired by the Wilsonian neoconservative ideologues adopts what the neocons consider to be an axiom of international relations, that democracies rarely, if ever, wage war against one another.

Translating that maxim into policy terms means that Washington has the obligation based not only on moral considerations but also on pure self-interest to promote democracy worldwide as the most effective way to establish international peace and stability.

Indeed, Mr Bush has proclaimed that 'the survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands; the best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world'.

He and his foreign policy aides have argued that one of the main rationales for ousting Saddam Hussein and occupying Iraq - especially since no weapons of mass destruction were discovered there - was the need to rid Mesopotamia of a tyrant and establish a democratic system and pursue similar regime changes and advance freedom in the rest of the Arab Middle East.

The Bushies argue that democracy would not only respond to the legitimate demands of those living under authoritarian systems, but also reduce the chances for domestic instability and international wars, and in that context, would retard the spread of terrorism. Not surprisingly, the Pentagon and the State Department have become major instruments for nation building and democracy promotion, as most members of the policy community in Washington seem to subscribe to a catchy slogan: 'Make Democracy, Not War'.

The debate hasn't been on whether the spread of democracy helps to strengthen the foundation for international peace, but on the most cost-effective way to promote political freedom.

But two academics are challenging this conventional wisdom. In a new book, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (The MIT Press, 2005), Edward D Mansfield of the University of Pennsylvania and Jack

Price of free nation may well be blood; Emerging democracies likely to go to war as they have weak political institutions

Snyder of Columbia University seem to pull the intellectual rug from under the rationale presented by the Bush administration for what it's doing in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East - arguing that states in the early phases of transition to democracy are actually more likely than other states to become involved in war.

Prof Mansfield and Prof Snyder say that emerging democracies tend to have weak political institutions. Leaders of these countries attempt to rally support by invoking external threats and resorting to belligerent, nationalist rhetoric and slogans. They point to this pattern in cases ranging from revolutionary France to contemporary Russia. One of the most interesting case studies is the collapse of the former Yugoslavia.

Bloody chapter

As the mostly peaceful and relatively prosperous communist Yugoslavia started transitioning into democracy, the leaders of all the major ethnic groups in that country, like Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and Franjo Tudjman in Croatia, succeeded in exploiting nationalist sentiments as a way of getting to power and mobilising public support through an open democratic process, including free elections, creating the conditions for a civil war that has turned out to be the bloodiest chapter in European history since the end of World War II.

The thesis is backed by complex statistical models but is in its essence quite simple: Be afraid, very afraid of new democracies as they are more likely than not to be unstable and warlike. It provides a mostly 'institutional' explanation for that phenomenon, noting that such countries often lack the rule of law, organised political parties and professional news media and other political and legal institutions that can place constraints on the political leaders. In a period of sweeping political changes and uncertainty that characterises the transition to democracy, many voters aspire for a sense of identity and security and elects populists and demagogues who promote bellicose nationalism that lead to civil and inter-state wars.

Pointing to the Bush administration's campaign to build up democracy in Iraq and spread it to Palestine, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the authors warn that 'unleashing Islamic mass opinion through a sudden democratisation could only raise the likelihood of war'.

In a way, the political changes in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East have become a political science laboratory to test the author's theories, and it seems that they have been corroborated by what has been happening in these countries.

In Iraq, the recent parliamentary elections helped to consolidate the power of the leaders of radical Shiite parties and those who represent the Kurdish separatist national movement; not surprisingly, the Arab-Sunnis also voted in support of their sectarian representatives. If anything, the ousting of Saddam Hussein and the free elections has led to more political instability and ethnic and religious violence and is creating the conditions for a Yugoslavia-like civil war.

In Egypt, the members of the anti-western Moslem Brotherhood movement have strengthened their position in the last elections, while in Palestine, most observers expect the radical Islamic Hamas to gain more power in the coming parliamentary vote there.

Unstable states

And let's not forget that last year's presidential election in Iran - which is clearly more open than in, say, Saudi Arabia - has ended with the victory of the most radical anti-American figure in the race. In short, as the authors suggest, the collapse of the old authoritarian regimes in the Middle East has given birth to weak and unstable states and to the rise to power - through free elections - of warlike ultranationalist politicians.

Prof Mansfield and Prof Snyder focus most of their discussion in their book on emerging democracies and suggest that mature democracies tend to be peaceful.

Price of free nation may well be blood; Emerging democracies likely to go to war as they have weak political institutions

Hence, their implication is that Washington and other western powers have an interest to help create the foundations of functioning political, economic and legal institutions in emerging democracies before moving to hold elections there.

But they don't explain why would, say, Iraqis or Palestinians accept such an arrangement, that is, postponing free election until their country would be ready for democracy?

Who will make that decision and who will take control of the country's security until a democratic elected government comes to power sometime in the future? Moreover, it seems to me that you don't need to apply complex statistical models to figure out that the main cause of wars in the modern age, since the time of the French Revolution, has been nationalism, and that democracy is the most loyal ally of nationalism in a sense that it indeed empowers the people to rally behind their nation, ethnicity, religion and tribe and help drive into power populist figures that thrive during times of civil wars and wars between nation-states.

If anything, the history of Europe in the 19th century suggests that authoritarian governments were more successful in maintaining a relative peace in the continent for close to a century.

Similarly, the most peaceful European states during World War II and the ones that avoided entering into the war were Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, and Turkey, three non-democratic regimes, and Switzerland that granted women the right to vote only in 1971(!).

Perhaps the time has come for an innovative political scientist to conduct a research to determine whether - and I know that's not very PC - non-democracies are actually more peaceful than democratic states.

Load-Date: January 16, 2006

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Drawing the ire of Islam

The Irish Times

February 4, 2006 Saturday

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Section: NEWS FEATURES; Pg. 3

Length: 1424 words

Body

Cartoons in European newspapers depicting Muhammad as a terrorist have met with fury from the Muslim world, writes Lara Marlowe

In Jakarta in Indonesia, 300 men ransacked the Danish embassy. In Pakistan, they burned the Danish prime minister in effigy, along with Danish and French flags, to cries of "Death to Denmark". Palestinian gunmen twice seized the European Union office in the Gaza Strip, and warned citizens of Denmark, Norway and France to leave their territory or die. Demonstrators marched in Yemen and Mauritania. In Europe, newspaper offices received repeated bomb threats.

Saudi Arabia, Syria and Libya recalled their ambassadors from Copenhagen, where satirical drawings of the Prophet Muhammad were first published last September. Residents of the Iraqi city of Falluja burned Danish goods. The Danish-Swedish dairy group Arla, which sells EUR 402 mn-worth of products in the Middle East annually, watched helplessly as its sales collapsed. Swiss company Nestlé was so eager to dissociate itself from Denmark's "sin" it published a front-page advertisement in the Saudi newspaper Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat noting that its Nido powdered milk is "neither produced in nor imported from Denmark".

In Copenhagen, the Danish prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen met Muslim ambassadors yesterday in the hope of defusing the crisis, but his gesture was too little too late. Last October, when the Muslim ambassadors wanted to see him, Rasmussen refused. Denmark has a free press, he said. If the ambassadors were unhappy about the newspaper cartoons, they could file a lawsuit. They took Rasmussen's refusal as an affront.

Ironically, "the Muhammad affair", as it is known in Denmark, started with a plea against self-censorship by the author Kåre Bluitgen. He wrote to Jyllands-Posten newspaper complaining that he could not find an illustrator for his book about Muhammad following the assassination of the Dutch film-maker Theo Van Gogh. Twelve artists responded to the newspaper's challenge. Their drawings were published on September 30th under the title "The Faces of Muhammad".

Muslims find two of the 12 drawings particularly offensive: the Prophet wearing a turban with a Koranic inscription, wrapped around a bomb; and a blind-folded, snarling Prophet, flanked by two women in Islamic dress, clutching a sword.

In Copenhagen, local Muslim leaders demanded an apology, which was not forthcoming. On October 12th, Carsten Juste, the newspaper's editor-in-chief, received death threats. Two days later, 5,000 Muslims marched in protest.

In late December, 20 Danish-Muslim groups sent a delegation to Lebanon and Egypt. Danish officials believe the delegation carried out a disinformation campaign which caused the issue to blow up again in January. Arab

Drawing the ire of Islam

newspapers alleged that Danes had burned the Koran, and falsely claimed that Jyllands-Posten was a government newspaper.

On December 29th, Arab League foreign ministers condemned the drawings. In early January, a prosecutor in Copenhagen ruled against 11 Muslim groups who tried to sue Jyllands-Posten for blasphemy and racial discrimination.

Then Magazinet, a small Protestant publication in Norway, re-published the 12 drawings on January 10th. The International Union of Muslim Ulemas called on all Muslims in the world to boycott Danish and Norwegian products.

Last Monday, Jyllands-Posten issued a feeble apology on its website. "We are sorry the matter has reached these proportions and repeat that we had no intention to offend anyone, and that we . . . respect freedom of religion," Carsten Juste said in an editorial.

Magazinet followed suit, expressing its "regrets" on Tuesday. But the genie was out of the bottle. Arab interior ministers meeting in Tunis demanded that the authors of the cartoons be punished. The Arab League secretary general Amr Musa, by no means a radical, accused the European press of employing double standards. "They are afraid of being accused of anti-Semitism, but when they caricature Islam they invoke freedom of expression," Musa said.

PUBLICATION OF THE cartoons offended Muslims for three reasons: Muslim tradition forbids images of the Prophet; the founder of Islam was portrayed as a terrorist; like George W Bush's "war on terror", the drawings were viewed as deliberate incitement of hatred against Muslims. The Koran does not mention images, but strict Muslims sometimes equate human likenesses with idols. "Wine, games of chance and idols are abominations invented by Satan. Abstain from them," the Koran says.

On the other hand, the Hadith, or sayings of the Prophet, gleaned from his followers after his death, forbid human images. "Angels do not enter a house which shelters a dog or an effigy," goes one Hadith. Those who produce images of God purport to be his "equals" and "will be punished on the day of the last Judgment", goes another.

DURING THE MIDDLE Ages, Persian miniaturists nonetheless painted the Prophet's face. By contrast, under the Sunni Ottomans, the Prophet was portrayed with his face blanked out, or a flame over it, often with sleeves covering his hands entirely.

The nuance continues to this day, with Sunni Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia seeking out and destroying images, while portraits of the Prophet are tolerated among poor, uneducated Shias in Iran.

The Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad nonetheless joined the outcry over the drawings, demanding an explanation from the Danish ambassador to Tehran for "insults which have hurt more than a billion Muslims" and calling King Abadallah of Saudi Arabia on the telephone. On Thursday, the Iranian foreign ministry summoned the Austrian ambassador (who represents the EU) to protest against the publication of the cartoons by newspapers across Europe.

For centuries, Europeans have portrayed the Prophet in paintings, engravings and more recently on magazine and book covers - without complaints by Muslims. The Muslim intellectual Ghaleb Bencheikh says the problem with the Danish cartoons is elsewhere, "in the base insinuation that the message of the Koran is fundamentally violent".

Malek Chebel, the author of *Islam and Reason*, agrees. "The problem with the Danish caricatures is that they intentionally represent the Prophet as a terrorist or as someone who professes terrorist violence," he told the Catholic newspaper *La Croix*. "For Muslims, the Prophet is someone who works for peace, in the service of all mankind. Would Christians accept Mary, mother of Christ, being drawn as a prostitute? Or Jesus with a knife between his teeth, or as a homosexual?"

MUSLIM RULERS, EVEN those with close ties to the West, such as Afghan president Hamid Karzai, were unanimous in condemning what the French newspaper *Libération* calls "the Satanic drawings". "Any insult to the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) is an insult to more than one billion Muslims and an act like this must never be

Drawing the ire of Islam

allowed to be repeated," said a statement issued by Karzai. Leaders in pro-Western Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt made similar statements. In the Palestinian territories, armed groups associated with Fatah vented their rage at having lost parliamentary elections to Hamas by threatening Europeans.

By week's end, a slew of European newspapers had published some or all of the cartoons: France-Soir and Libération in France; Die Welt in Germany; ABC, El Periodico and El Mundo in Spain; La Stampa and Il Corriere della Sera in Italy; Blick and La Tribune de Genève in Switzerland; De Volkskrant, De Telegraaf and NRC Handelsblad in Holland. Freedom of expression and a high news value were the arguments given. Most British newspapers refrained from printing the drawings, on the grounds it would create unnecessary offence.

Only one Arab newspaper, Shihan in Jordan, published three of the caricatures of Muhammad, under the title "Muslims of the World, Be Reasonable". "What hurts Islam more?" the editor-in-chief Jihad Momani wrote: "These drawings, or images of a kidnapper slashing his victim's throat in front of the camera, or a suicide-bomber blowing himself up in the midst of a wedding in Amman?" Like his counterpart at France-Soir in Paris, Momani was sacked for publishing the drawings. Shihan was taken off news-stands.

Jyllands-Posten editor-in-chief Carsten Juste, when asked would he do it again, knowing that Danish soldiers in Iraq and civilians elsewhere in the Middle East would be threatened, told the New York Times: "As my finger hovered one centimetre above the send button for publishing the drawings, would I have hit it? No. No responsible editor-in-chief would have."

Load-Date: February 4, 2006

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The Lebanonization of Europe

New York Sun (Archive)

February 23, 2006 Thursday

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Section: ARTS & LETTERS; Pg. 15

Length: 1431 words

Byline: By FRED SIEGEL

Body

The storm over the Danish cartoons has been mistakenly described as a debate over the limits of free speech. One of the milder posters carried during a Londonistan anti-cartoon protest read "FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IS WESTERN TERRORISM." The coverage in the mainstream American press has ranged from the banal to the bizarre, depicting broad-minded Danes and Dutchmen as raving xenophobes for refusing to tolerate Muslim intolerance.

But the controversy is actually about a struggle for power involving Muslim intimidation and the mandatory multiculturalism of the European political class. Flemming Rose, the Jyllands-Posten editor who published the cartoons in response to ongoing self-censorship by a cowed European press, has explained that what the rioters and their politically correct apologists are demanding is not "respect" but "my submission."

Judging by the craven response of the British government and most of the European political class, they are succeeding. The Islamist leadership across Europe seems now to have largely achieved veto power over the press - except in Denmark - while in the name of multiculturalism, Muslims are subject to no such restraints.

"They think they have won the debate," a British researcher and a convert to Christianity who attended a madrassa as a child in his native Guyana, Patrick Sookhdeo, said. "They believe that the British Government has capitulated to them, because it feared the consequences if it did not." The lesson for Europe's Muslims, he said, is that violence and the threat of violence work. What will follow, according to ICM Research, well-respected pollsters of British Muslims, is a demand in England (and elsewhere) for Islamic extraterritoriality, granting official government recognition to Shariah law in predominantly Muslim areas.

In practice, Shariah has already been partly imposed by Islamic thugs in sections of the British Midlands, as well as the suburbs of Paris and Stockholm. Since women walking in these neighborhoods are subject to stoning and rape, even non-Muslim women have donned the chador as a way of protecting themselves. And in the Netherlands, the upper-middle-class response to aggressive Islamism has been migration to the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Fortunately, two new commanding and readable books illuminate the landscape of Europe's constricting future. Bruce Bawer's "While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam Is Destroying the West From Within" (Doubleday, 256 pages, \$23.95) and Claire Berlinski's "Menace in Europe: Why the Continent's Crisis Is America's, Too" (Crown Forum, 288 pages, \$25.95) are remarkably complementary. Mr. Bawer, who is an American from Queens, and fluent in both Dutch and Norwegian, is best on Scandinavia and Denmark. Ms. Berlinski, an American who now makes her home in Paris and Istanbul, covers Britain, France, and Germany.

The Lebanonization of Europe

They both make it clear that part of the problem of the European welfare states is not so much that Muslim integration has failed but that it has never really been tried. Immigrants to Britain, notes Ms. Berlinski, don't need to learn English. Social-service pamphlets are translated into their languages by an already large and growing social-service bureaucracy that lives well off the failure to incorporate the newcomers. For his part, Mr. Bawer describes the numerous methods by which Muslims have actively resisted integration. There is the practice known as "dumping," in which Muslim parents send their children back to the home country to be "educated" at schools where the Koran is virtually the only text. Similarly, women accused of leading a "European life" are sent back by their families or clans to their native lands for re-education. In their place, brides steeped in Islamic tradition are imported from the old country. The effect is that growing populations are in Europe but not of it. To

make matters worse, the rigid structures of the European economies make it difficult to get work while an easy access to welfare makes it unnecessary, so that the newcomers aren't even integrated into the workplace.

Still, despite Europe's slow growth and generous benefits for not working, many thousands of dark-skinned Hindus in England, Armenians in France, and Poles in Germany are climbing the European ladder. But Muslims are different, notes Mr. Bawer: They see themselves as having a God-given authority that has "made them superior to infidels."

The job of turning Muslims in the Netherlands into Dutch Muslims, both Mr. Bawer and Ms. Berlinski argue, is made all the more difficult by the European loss of identity. First nationalism replaced Christianity, notes Ms. Berlinski, and now, in reaction to the memories of the two world wars, the European Union has, with some success, hollowed out the idea of distinct national characters. Today, for the European political class, nationalism, or any form of populism, carries a distinctly fascist odor. But membership in the European Union is not an identity with any emotional resonance.

Even more significant is the sense, which both authors discuss at length, of European self-loathing. The "spice" of multiculturalism is seen as a welcome addition to the bland European stew. When a Swedish integration official was asked, "Is Swedish culture worth saving?" she replied, "What is Swedish culture?" Her assumption and that of the E.U. political class is that Europeans have to adapt to Muslims, not the other way around. And indeed Sweden, in the wake of the Danish cartoon affair, now seems to have given its imams veto power over what's said about Islam in the Swedish press. Behind the selfloathing is the sense that after World War I, totalitarianism, and World War II, there is only a botched civilization that can provide the security of the welfare state but not much more than a bureaucratic identity.

Still, there is one part of what was once the West that Europeans loathe more than their own: the United States. Europe's largely unaccountable political class and the Islamists are brought together by a shared hostility to the United States. In fact, they tend to fear America far more than Al Qaeda. Western Europe's left-wing lumpen-intellectuals, Mr. Bawer notes, are "half in love with tyranny." The British House of Commons even gave a minute of silence for the memory of the slain Hamas leader Sheik Yassin. Anti-Americanism, Mr. Bawer and Ms. Berlinski note, is increasingly the political glue that holds Europe together, if only to repudiate the American cowboys who had the bad taste not only to liberate the Continent repeatedly but to surpass it in the process. Thus Europeans invariably defend antiquated labor practices that restrain job creation as an alternative to "the American [read: savage] condition."

Worse yet, criticism of Muslims - even when they engage in female genital mutilation, honor killings, or attacks on gays and Jews - is almost invariably defined as "Islamophobic." This has led the Danish journalist Helle Brix to comment bitterly, "If at some time in the not-too distant future fundamentalist Muslims began rounding up Jews, it would be racism to resist."

But then again the Danes are different. They were the one who saved their Jews in World War II, and it was the Danes, remembering Sweden's collaboration with the Nazis, who quipped, "What is a Swede? But a German in human form." The question for self-destructive Europe now is whether Danish courage will spread or remain merely an anomaly.

The Lebanonization of Europe

It's hard to do full justice to the rich material in these two books. Ms. Berlinski, for instance, has a fascinating chapter on the Nazi aesthetic of Rammstein, Germany's most popular band. But if the books have any weaknesses it is the lack of a historical framework. In 1979, the combination of Khomeinei's revolution in Iran, the second oil shock, which gave Saudi Arabia even more money to fund Wahhabi mosques in Europe, and the victory of mujahedeen in Afghanistan changed the way European Muslims defined themselves. Their sense that Islam was once again on the march is the essential backdrop to these books.

Europe, smug in its certainty that its vast sophistication - as opposed to American "militarism" - would pave the way to the future, has been slow to react to the problems posed by Muslim immigration. When there is rioting, the answer is always more dialogue. But then again, Europe's insistence on dialogue as the solution to all problems is often difficult to distinguish from appeasement.

Mr. Siegel is the author of "Prince of the City: Giuliani, New York and the Genius of American Life" from Encounter Books.

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

The Guardian - Final Edition

January 11, 2006 Wednesday

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Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES ; Pg. 25

Length: 1216 words

Byline: Jonathan Freedland

Body

With death at least, there are rules. All campaigning has to be suspended, journalists wear black ties, and politicians pretend to come together in a spirit of national unity. But with a medical situation that hovers close to death without ever quite touching it - a prime minister struck down but still alive - the rules are less clear. Like a man unsure whether to dress for a funeral, Israel has found itself unsure of its footing.

Accordingly, Israelis have spent the near-week since Ariel Sharon's massive stroke engaging in a quintessential Jewish pastime: second-guessing the doctors, filling up newspaper columns and television airtime with a national debate on the quality of Sharon's treatment. The politicians, meanwhile, have been politicking.

After a decent interval of a few hours, they started assessing the new, transformed landscape. Before the stroke, most assumed the March 28 elections would be a walkover for Sharon and his newly-formed Kadima party. With him gone, it should be a genuine three-way contest, but that's not quite how it looks.

In the red corner stands Labour's new leader, Amir Peretz. A lifelong campaigner for workers' rights and a committed peacenik, he generated enormous enthusiasm when he took over in November. But his campaign stalled, damaged by the defection of the seemingly immortal Shimon Peres to Kadima. His enemies say Peretz is simply not prime ministerial timbre, that he is a trade unionist rabble rouser: Bob Crow with a Hebrew accent. Even his fellow Mizrahim, Middle Eastern Jews, who should have been his natural constituency, have not rallied. "He's not one of the ones they can be proud of," says a Likud official acidly. His focus on domestic issues and lack of experience in the security sphere mean few see him as a serious contender for the top job. Labour hopes to turn that around in the next two months, but it won't be easy.

Back from the margins, returned as Likud leader, is Binyamin Netanyahu, who had looked set to be wiped out by Sharon. Now he is the sole former prime minister in the contest. "He has experience - the trouble is, it was not a good one," Yuli Tamir, a Labour Knesset member and close Peretz adviser, told me as she fidgeted with an anti-Sharon leaflet that will now have to be pulped. She reckons Israelis have not forgotten Bibi's last spell at the helm in the late 1990s, or his recent stint as Sharon's uber-Thatcherite finance minister, imposing a series of "cruel" cuts on the most vulnerable.

That leaves Sharon's deputy, the acting prime minister, Ehud Olmert. Widely disliked personally and with little security background, few would ever have tipped him for the top in normal circumstances. But suddenly the

Comment & Debate: The next phase of Sharonism might have defeated Sharon himself: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater me....

premiership is his to lose. So far he has played it well, acting humbly, continuing to work out of his own office rather than the PM's. If he runs a smart campaign - using Sharon's face on Kadima posters, keeping his own in the background - he could come through.

None of these men will win an outright majority; Israel's election system allows for no such thing. Instead, two of them will end up as coalition partners. What then?

Sharon had not exactly spelled out his next move. Indeed, that was part of his political strategy. He kept his ideas vague and secret, giving the electorate little to disagree with. He discovered his personal standing was so great, Israeli voters were ready to give him a blank cheque. Don't bother us with the details, they said; if you think it's right, that's good enough.

Nevertheless, few doubted that Sharon was planning more of the policy that had come to define him: he would follow August's disengagement from the Gaza strip with further unilateral withdrawals from the West Bank. Why else would he have formed a new party at the age of 77 unless he planned a major initiative, one that could not be thwarted by the dogmatists of the Likud?

The outlines were clear too. Whatever he said publicly, Sharon saw the security barrier, or wall, as the putative border for Israel. That way the major settlement blocks on the West Bank would stay under Israeli rule, while the Palestinians would get the rest. This would, of course, be hugely imperfect. Israel would be formally annexing territory that, officially speaking, it occupies only temporarily (albeit a temporary period of 39 years). And it's a real question whether the terrain Sharon left on the Palestinian side of the wall would, combined with Gaza, be enough to constitute a viable state. Nevertheless, his next move would have represented greater progress - the partial ending of the occupation and the dismantling of illegal settlements - than at any time for four decades. Now that prospect, near certain if Sharon had stayed on, is in peril. Optimists will note that Olmert shares the Sharon vision; indeed, he had a big hand in forming it. (Privately, Olmert would speak of Israel eventually withdrawing from all but 6-8% of the West Bank.) They will also argue that there is a genuine constituency in Israel for a party that sits between the zealous nationalism of Likud and the dovish instincts of Labour, with its call for a negotiated peace with the Palestinians, a project too many Israelis regard as a lost cause - and which they will see as even more hopeless if Hamas triumphs in this month's Palestinian elections. "Sharon did not create Kadima in a vacuum," the former Likud cabinet minister Dan Meridor told me. Its support will not melt away just because Sharon has gone; it represents a national consensus.

Pessimists will see something else. Olmert has none of his mentor's strongman credentials, essential for driving through a second round of territorial withdrawals. He would need the public approval of the military brass, a group that could never outrank Sharon. Olmert will have to argue for his every move.

More depressing, the next phase of Sharonism might have defeated Sharon himself. The most striking conversation I had in Jerusalem was with a key player in religious Zionism, a man with a keen ear for rightist politics. He reports a new mood among the settlers. "There is tremendous criticism of the leadership, that they were too moderate over Gaza." Hardliners felt the Gaza Jews rolled over too easily, refusing to raise a hand to the soldiers who came to remove them. The West Bank settlers will not go so quietly. "They are planning armed confrontations with the army, even mass suicides," he says. It will be the Masada manoeuvre: the shock of finding men, women and children dead by their own hand would stun Israel into calling a halt to the disengagement.

If Sharon would have struggled to withstand such an event, what chance Olmert? Withdrawing from Gaza - a place of next to no biblical significance to Jewish literalists - will be nothing alongside a pullout from the West Bank lands revered as Judea and Samaria. And these are not easy people to take on: witness the hardcore settlers whooping and cheering at Sharon's stroke, convinced it was the "finger of God" punishing him for the crime of disengagement.

So Olmert faces a year of great challenge: if he wins in March, he has to perform a political deed that has proved too hard for men both stronger and greater. Whether the occupation deepens or shrinks now depends on him.

Comment & Debate: The next phase of Sharonism might have defeated Sharon himself: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater me....

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A Man Called Hitler Runs For a Seat He May Not Fill

The New York Times

January 22, 2006 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section 1; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 1225 words

Byline: By GREG MYRE

Dateline: JENIN, West Bank, Jan. 18

Body

The candidate's name is Jamal Abu Roub, but everyone here calls him Hitler because, well, that is the name he has answered to quite comfortably since he was a teenager.

Mr. Roub, 40, is a leader of the militant Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades in this turbulent corner of the West Bank, and has spent the past five years leading his ragtag band of gunmen in frequent clashes with the Israeli military. Mr. Roub's deeds include hauling a Palestinian suspected of collaborating with Israel and of molesting his own daughters into a town square, where the man was shot to death.

Now Mr. Roub is a candidate for the Palestinian Parliament and is virtually assured of winning a seat in elections next Wednesday. He is wanted by Israel, and therefore does not appear at rallies, yet that seems only to have bolstered his reputation.

In an interview in Jenin, Mr. Roub said with a crooked smile that it was his first campaign appearance, and probably his last.

"I leave the campaigning to my brother and my supporters, but this is not a problem because people here know me and trust me," Mr. Roub said. His eyes are bloodshot and his hair is tousled, giving him the look of a man pursued. He chain-smokes Marlboros and gulps his coffee. His face features several days worth of stubble, and he does not look like someone who has slept in his own bed recently.

He is the rare fugitive who likes to see posters of himself. Mr. Roub and other candidates for the Fatah movement appear in campaign advertisements that vie for space among the thousands of posters plastered on every flat surface in town.

Yet his candidacy is more than an oddity involving a man with a provocative nickname and a history of violence.

The Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas, is seeking to co-opt the militants who have been fighting Israel, and the election is sure to bring at least a few of them into Parliament. It is not clear how they will participate, though, since Israel has said it will not grant them immunity if they are elected.

The Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades, which is made up of members of Mr. Abbas's Fatah party, emerged soon after the latest Palestinian uprising began in 2000.

A Man Called Hitler Runs For a Seat He May Not Fill

Mr. Abbas has repeatedly called on Al Aksa to lay down its weapons, but the various Al Aksa factions have largely ignored his call and have been responsible for much of the internal Palestinian chaos, like taking over government offices and election centers to demand jobs. At Mr. Abbas's urging, a large number of militants have been incorporated into the Palestinian security forces in the past year, and the Islamic faction Hamas is taking part in national elections for the first time.

Mr. Abbas hopes that these steps will persuade the militants to join his effort to restore order in the Palestinian areas and revive peace talks with Israel, but it remains far from clear whether his plan will work.

Indeed, Israelis often argue that Mr. Abbas, who came to power after the death of Yasir Arafat in 2004, is rewarding men he should be jailing.

While Palestinians generally support Mr. Abbas's effort, they tend to describe the results as mixed.

"We are in the post-Arafat era, and we can no longer be governed by the same old, impotent cardinals of Fatah," said Mahdi Abdul Hadi, a moderate who heads Passia, a Palestinian research center in Jerusalem. "Fatah is very much divided and fragmented, and Abbas is trying to bring it together."

Mr. Roub contends the election offers him a better way to continue his struggle with Israel, which has consumed his whole life.

Mr. Roub said he has always been adamant about his beliefs, so much so that when he was 16 a high school friend began calling him Hitler, and it stuck. Mr. Roub said Hitler's slaughter of the Jews was wrong, yet he seems quite willing to keep the nickname.

When Mr. Roub was leaving after an interview, a group of Palestinian women spotted him and a buzz swept through the room. "It's Hitler; it's Hitler," they said, one after another. Mr. Roub could not resist speaking to them for 15 minutes.

One of the few men present asked Mr. Roub if it was time to put guns aside.

"Some groups have misused their weapons," he said. "If it's necessary to keep them, with the agreement of the political leadership, then we will. But if it's not necessary, then we can hand them in."

But the questioner persisted. "What are you doing now?" he asked.

"I'm carrying my gun, but just for protection," Mr. Roub said.

In a July 2004 episode captured on camera, Mr. Roub and his Al Aksa gunmen dragged a Palestinian man into the central square of Qabatiya, Mr. Roub's hometown, a few miles south of Jenin.

The suspect was accused of collaborating with Israel and sexually abusing his own daughters, and the Al Aksa men asked the crowd what should be done. When the crowd replied, "Kill him immediately," the gunmen riddled the man with bullets.

Mr. Roub has been arrested by Israel six times, starting when he was 17, and has been imprisoned for a total of more than seven years. He also has a degree in banking, and reels off the dates of his arrests and releases with a banker's precision.

The oldest of his five children, Khaled, was born the day after Mr. Roub was arrested in 1989. Khaled, now 16, was himself detained by Israeli troops two months ago.

"I'd love to live a normal life," Mr. Roub said. "It's not my hobby to live like this. But we will not have a normal life until we have a state."

A Man Called Hitler Runs For a Seat He May Not Fill

His first foray into politics was the Fatah primary election in November, and Mr. Roub drew the largest number of votes out of more than 40 candidates in the Jenin region. As a result, he was given the No. 12 position on Fatah's list of parliamentary candidates.

Fatah is expected to get at least 35 percent of the vote, the most recent polls indicate. As long as it gets at least 20 percent, Mr. Roub will make the cut for a seat in Parliament.

Actually taking his seat could be a problem, however, because Israel has its own ideas about where Mr. Roub should be sitting.

"No person involved in terrorism can use the election campaign as a way to receive immunity," said Mark Regev, a spokesman for Israel's Foreign Ministry.

As an example, Mr. Regev cited Marwan Barghouti, a hugely popular figure among young Palestinians who is at the top of the Fatah election list.

Mr. Barghouti was already a member of the Palestinian Parliament in 2002 when he was arrested by Israel and subsequently convicted of orchestrating the killings of five civilians. He is now serving five life sentences, and Mr. Regev said the election would not change his status.

During the past few years of fighting, Israeli travel restrictions have often made it impossible for Palestinian legislators in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to gather in the same place.

On several occasions, Gaza legislators met in Gaza City, while their West Bank counterparts convened in Ramallah in a session linked by videoconference.

The sessions could become even more complicated if Mr. Roub and others sought by Israel join the legislature.

Mr. Roub would risk arrest at an Israeli checkpoint if he traveled the main roads from his home area to Ramallah. Asked how he planned to reach Parliament, Mr. Roub said: "Initially, we will try to get official permission. If that doesn't happen, then we have our own ways."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photo: Jamal Abu Roub, seen at left through a bullet hole in a house window in Jenin, West Bank, is considered a shoo-in for the Palestinian Parliament. (Photo by Rina Castelnovo for The New York Times)

Load-Date: January 22, 2006

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

The Guardian - Final Edition

January 6, 2006 Friday

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Section: GUARDIAN FEATURES PAGES; Pg. 8

Length: 1195 words

Byline: Karma Nabulsi

Body

Everybody knows that Ariel Sharon had a dark past. For us Palestinians, for me as a Palestinian, he is our dark present. The entire destruction of the fabric of our civic and political society over the past five years has had the looming presence of Sharon at its black heart. That single moment when in the year 2000 Sharon went to the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount) to light the chaotic, atavistic fuse of his return to political power - the moment that sparked our revolt against everything that he represented, and which began his rise to power - that single moment was the essence of his persona, the uniquely ruthless, relentless dynamic of his role as conqueror.

With the return of this man, we were lost, again, and one could not let his return be witnessed without an active daily resistance to it, and the fate he had in store for us. It was this single fact that mobilised me to work again in the political realm. Having lived in Beirut with my family and friends, and having worked, and fought, and stayed alive throughout the Israeli invasion of Lebanon that Sharon engineered in the spring and summer of 1982, I had no doubt what he had in store for us when he began his final climb back to power. And just so: in February of 2001, within three days of being elected prime minister, he was replaying across the West Bank and Gaza his dark arts, a mad echo of his practices of 20 years before in Lebanon: the assassination and destruction of the fighters, the local defence committees, the refugee camps. Women and children and young men killed, our buildings demolished, our institutional infrastructure, our records, our art, broken, gone. And, of course, our leadership encircled and besieged.

If he destroyed our leader, he believed, he would destroy our collective aspirations for freedom and for an independent Palestine. His vision of our destiny was quite simply one of apocalyptic proportions, he was no politician, nor elder statesman. To us, he was always the classic military conqueror and adventurer - we never found him "controversial", nor his motives opaque. He never left us guessing. His practices, his aims, his intentions were made clear through his policies. Every Palestinian man, woman and child witnessed, lived, or died under that vision, and they each understood it well.

But during the new war launched by Sharon against our people, the generation of 1982 that I was part of were more scattered, further flung to the four corners of the world, farther away from being able to do anything to help, even

G2: The strong man: For years he was a man of war, idolised and demonised in equal measure. But in recent years, Ariel Sharon has seemed the man most likely to

more powerless than before. So to those of us who had fought in those earlier battles and were still living, his return did something more cruel than simply bring back haunting reminders of those days, and how many of friends had died. It changed the look of what we did, our luck, our motives, how we had failed to stop him when we were younger.

Sharon has shaped everything for us: young, or old, in exile, or at home in an Israeli prison under occupation. He is emblematic of our condition; worse than emblematic, it is his very fist we feel. To this day I have not been able to watch him on television, but must avert my eyes at the immense presence of this avatar - there is no one else who evokes this terrible reaction.

I know this is shared by Palestinians everywhere, especially the survivors of the Sabra and Shatila massacres, for which, let us not forget, he was culpable, according even to an Israeli tribunal, the Kahane Commission. They recommended that he never be allowed to return to public office.

To us, to me, his mission had always been thus: to kill our resistance, our organisations, our solidarity, our institutions, and above all our national liberation movement. He did not want us to have a national framework, his desire was to reduce us to small quarrelling groups and factions trapped under his prison rule, disorganised, disintegrated, or co-opted; he planned actively and provocatively (and carefully) to create such an impoverishment of our people's public and private life.

This he did through the iron tools of military rule: assassination, imprisonment, violent military invasion. His fate for us was a Hobbesian vision of an anarchic society: truncated, violent, powerless, destroyed, cowed, ruled by disparate militias, gangs, religious ideologues and extremists, broken up into ethnic and religious tribalism, and co-opted collaborationists. Look to the Iraq of today: that is what he had in store for us, and he has nearly achieved it.

His great skill was breaking ceasefires whenever he felt cornered to make a political concession towards peace, he sought to provoke an inevitable response, which could then be used to advance his military aims, and free his hands to expand settlements, expropriate land in Arab East Jerusalem and the West Bank. He never cared for Gaza, it was a military asset. Indeed he won internationally uncontested control of the West Bank (which was always his goal), by returning it.

We Palestinians saw how well he understood the west, how far he could push it - he had an almost magical ability to measure how craven the response could be to his violations of common decency and international law, how much he could get away with. He would test, and test the limits of his actions, would he get a red light? Would the Americans stop him?

I watched him at this, day after day, during the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, from besieged Beirut, which was in flames. Every time he would break the ceasefire, break his word to the Americans. We, on the other side of this equation, were waiting, hearts in mouths, for international protection, intervention, help of any kind not to be left at his mercy. How many times in these last years did he break the ceasefire in Gaza through a provocative assassination, an aerial assault, a military raid killing dozens of civilians to provoke **Hamas** to attack Israel? His pattern was set in stone, a stone around our necks.

Two summers ago, I went back to Shatila Camp where I had lived and worked for so many years, the first time since 1982, and I have returned many times in the past two-and-a-half years. Twenty-three years ago we had been evacuated from the city, with the rest of the PLO, at the end of the siege of Beirut, and only two weeks before the massacres. But we only agreed to leave with international guarantees that the civilian refugee camps would be protected from the fascist Lebanese militias. Instead Sharon invaded Beirut (that he could not take while we were there), surrounded the refugee camps, and had his forces light up the night sky with flares, while the Lebanese militia did their work with knives and axes and guns, day after day. He let busloads of them in, no Palestinians allowed out.

G2: The strong man: For years he was a man of war, idolised and demonised in equal measure. But in recent years, Ariel Sharon has seemed the man most likely to

I have talked a lot about those days with old friends who survived the camps, exiles now living far away in snowy northern Europe. What it meant to have left under orders, what it meant to have been trapped behind. For the ones who had to stay behind when the fighters left, you see, already understood Sharon well *

Karma Nabulsi is a politics fellow at St Edmund Hall, Oxford and a former PLO representative.

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The conqueror

Hindustan Times

January 8, 2006 Sunday 10:40 AM EST

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Length: 1237 words

Byline: Hindustan Times

Dateline: NEW DELHI, India

Body

NEW DELHI, India, Jan 8 -- Everybody knows that Ariel Sharon had a dark past. For us Palestinians, for me as a Palestinian, he is our dark present. The entire destruction of the fabric of our civic and political society over the past five years has had the looming presence of Sharon at its black heart.

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The conqueror

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We, Palestinians, saw how well he understood the West, how far he could push it - he had an almost magical ability to measure how craven the response could be to his violations of common decency and international law, how much he could get away with. He would test, and test the limits of his actions, would he get a red light? Would the Americans stop him? I watched him at this, day after day, during the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, from besieged Beirut, which was in flames. Every time he would break the ceasefire, break his word to the Americans.

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Two summers ago, I went back to Shatila Camp where I had lived and worked for so many years, the first time since 1982, and I have returned many times in the past two-and-a-half years. Twenty-three years ago we had been evacuated from the city, with the rest of the PLO, at the end of the siege of Beirut, and only two weeks before the massacres.

But we only agreed to leave with international guarantees that the civilian refugee camps would be protected from the fascist Lebanese militias. Instead Sharon invaded Beirut (that he could not take while we were there), surrounded the refugee camps, and had his forces light up the night sky with flares, while the Lebanese militia did their work with knives and axes and guns, day after day. He let busloads of them in, no Palestinians allowed out.

I have talked a lot about those days with old friends who survived the camps, exiles now living far away in snowy northern Europe. What it meant to have left under orders, what it meant to have been trapped behind. For the ones who had to stay behind when the fighters left, you see, already understood Sharon well.

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The conqueror

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**A beach scene that hides waves of despair; THE WAR OF IDEAS - SEPT 11 -
FIVE YEARS ON**

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

September 2, 2006 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; International News; Pg. 17

Length: 1319 words

Byline: Paul McGeough

Body

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict creates a deep, daily bitterness, writes Paul McGeough in Gaza City.

IT COULD be anywhere in the world. Colourful umbrellas, flags taut in the breeze and the life-saver's shrill whistle. It's late on a hot, humid day and no one wants to leave the beach.

School holidays are almost done and small boys squeal in delight as they dart away from languid family picnics - off again to conquer the foaming surf with all the fearlessness of youth.

It is picture-postcard perfect. But this is Gaza City, and it's too good to be true.

Beneath this veneer, more than 1.3 million Palestinians are trapped in deep misery. For six months now, they have been squeezed in a global vice of collective punishment.

First, the US and the European Union cut virtually all aid funding because the Palestinians elected a government that refuses to explicitly recognise Israel and to eschew violence. More recently, Israel launched a campaign of Lebanon-style destruction because the local militias captured an Israeli soldier in a cross-border raid.

If all of that is not cause enough for anxiety, sour-grapes infighting between the Palestinian factions since the surprise election in January of the Islamist party ***Hamas*** threatens to erupt into what many fear will be a cruel civil war. This is the context that makes the Gaza beach scene so surreal.

There is not a bikini to be seen. Some mothers move their plastic chairs to the water's edge - revealing only their naked toes. In the 40-plus heat, there is great hilarity when a few plunge right in - still dressed head-to-toe in swathes of black cloth as white water washes over them.

But a comment by the Herald on the size of the crowd elicits an early explanation of the grim reality of civilian life in a tiny strip of territory that has become an Israeli shooting gallery.

Over coffee on the terrace at the Beach Hotel, the chef, Abu Omar, explains: "Most families come here now because they are frightened of Israeli shelling on the other beaches".

A beach scene that hides waves of despair THE WAR OF IDEAS - SEPT 11 - FIVE YEARS ON

"Now" began in June, when pictures flashed around the world of a distraught 10-year-old, Huda Ghalia, as she fell weeping beside the body of her dead father on one of Gaza's popular northern beaches. Nearby lay the mangled remains of the girl's step-mother and five of her brothers and sisters.

The Israelis admit their tanks were in action at the time, but they deny firing the killer shell. Eyewitnesses, foreign reporters and Marc Garlasco, a former Pentagon battlefield analyst now working for the New York-based Human Rights Watch, disagree.

"My three-year-old saw the images on TV and now she freaks out at the suggestion of any of us going to the beach," says Abu Omar.

Apart from their toes, the women on the beach also reveal their hands - and paler-skin reminders of wedding bands that have been sold, either to feed their families or to buy clothes and books for children, who started the new school year yesterday.

It's a measure of the intractable nature of this conflict that the United Nations' Relief and Works Agency is now in its 56th year of caring for Palestinians who became refugees when the state of Israel was established. So the agency's director, John Ging, draws on officials records when he declares: "It's dangerous and miserable. This is the largest, most enduring crisis of modern times."

Since the West cut funding to the Palestinian Authority, as many as 170,000 families are without an income and there is little else to prime the local economy. About 90 per cent live below the poverty line, as many as 85 per cent are said to be jobless, and close to 1 million individuals depend on UN handouts of oil, flour, beans, rice, sugar and milk.

The shelling has driven hundreds from their homes and forced farmers to abandon crops in the fields.

When the Herald takes a wrong turn in traffic we are caught amid stone-throwing and wild gunfire as police try to break up a mob of protesters who are breaking up one of the city's main banks.

They are government workers venting their anger at a decision by the banks to unilaterally deduct loan arrears from a one-off, partial salary payment that the Palestinian Authority has deposited in their accounts. The Jordan Bank caves in, leaving the loan repayments for another day.

Elsewhere, housewives such as Um Fatima complain they can no longer save by cooking in bulk because they cannot rely on refrigeration - an Israeli attack on the main power station has reduced them to a few erratic hours of power each day. And no power means no domestic pumps, which means no water. One hand instinctively covers the other when Um Fatima catches the Herald observing her band-less wedding finger. But this woman still has dignity and she declines to discuss her last visit to the Gaza gold market.

Plying their trade against the stone walls of the seventh-century Great Omari Mosque, the 25 gold traders are idle after a surge in business in April and May, when they each were buying as much as 15 kilograms of gold a day when families first began to feel the pinch.

No customers are buying gold these days. Traditionally, Arab women hold as much solid gold as they can afford, which they sell in bad times - but when they come offering their light wedding rings for sale, the traders know their families have hit bottom.

The gold trader Hamdi Basal says: "Usually, summer is a time for weddings and brides buying their first gold in great excitement. Now the women only come to sell."

Back at the beach, there is more excitement as children rush in to help six men haul in their nets, but it's a mistake to conclude the fishermen are spared from the hardship.

Abu Omar explains: "They net from the beach because the Israelis enforce a navy blockade along the coast - the fishermen get shot at if they take their boats into deep water. There's not a lot of fish in the shallows."

A beach scene that hides waves of despair THE WAR OF IDEAS - SEPT 11 - FIVE YEARS ON

As if on cue, there is a combat chorus to prove that Israel has this place covered. A destroyer heaves into view, the thump of its turbines pulsing through the water as it carves a south-bound course. A series of thuds signals more artillery in the north of Gaza, and overhead there are twin sounds - the lawnmower squawk of a surveillance drone and, much higher, a growling fighter jet. Such is the level of infrastructure bombing now that European aid officials have concluded that rebuilding any of Gaza in the absence of a viable peace process is a waste of good money - the roads, bridges and buildings will only be bombed again, they say.

One of the fishermen says he has been too scared to venture out since the June 25 capture of the Israeli soldier. But when other boats pull in, three of them take their combined haul to market on the back of a bicycle.

Darwesh Abu Mustafa still ventures out - despite three past incidents in which he says his small boat was confiscated for months at a time by the Israeli Navy. His friend Ahmad, who has just returned from five hours of casting his nets in the shallows, fumes because his haul of sardines does not even fill a plastic bucket and when he sells them at the dockside, he gets only 30 shekels (\$9).

"How does he feed a family on that?" Darwesh demands. "It's God who feeds our children. But we can't forget the martyrs, so this is the tax we all have to pay for the resistance."

The ability of the Palestinian people to keep paying that "resistance tax" is being tested yet again. And Raji Sourani, head of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, warns that Israel should take account of what he calls the locals' "camel" psychology.

Mindful of a UN estimate that about 9000 Israeli artillery shells have been lobbed into Gaza in the last year, he explains: "You can make the camel so thirsty and hungry and you can make it carry too great a load, you can beat it and insult it, but watch out when the animal revolts - it will kill you."

Part 2 of Paul McGeough's account of life in Gaza will appear in the Herald next week.

Graphic

PHOTO: Under the surface ... Palestinians try to enjoy a warm day at the beach of Gaza City, but in reality they are trapped in deep misery. Photo: Khalil Hamra

Load-Date: July 17, 2007

Chill Karo, Masti Karo

The Nation (AsiaNet)

July 27, 2006 Thursday

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Section: NATIONWIDE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Length: 1460 words

Body

By M. A. NIAZI: Chill Karo-Mango Masti Karo. Its author, presumably a copywriter in an advertising agency, did not intend this slogan to send any sort of political message. It has been designed solely to promote the sales of a mango ice-cream confection, which a multinational fast-food franchise has added to its menu. However, it encapsulates the message that the Bush administration would love to send to the Third World in general, and the Muslim world in particular. In addition, it would delight the Musharraf government if Pakistanis were also to follow this slogan.

'Chill' is the new 'cool'. A previous generation told each other to 'cool it', whenever someone seemed to get impassioned about something else, whether it be a perceived insult from a fellow collegian, or the plight of the world. Now, they are telling one another to 'chill.' Coolness is the result of sitting under a fan; chilliness comes only in an air-conditioned room. Coolness might be taken as keeping things in perspective; chilling means total indifference. To be cool, youngsters used to smoke; to chill, they need charas in their cigarettes. Remember, their parents were cool (or thought they were), so to be different, they have to chill.

In addition, which meaning of masti are we to follow? Masti has two meanings. One is the masti of a bull elephant, which is its state when in heat. This applies to the behaviour of young people, who might not be in heat in the technical sense, but whose behaviour is driven more by hormones rampaging through the blood rather than rational thought. This is the time when loud music, energetic physical movement (dancing, jogging, fighting, swimming) and general letting off of high spirits, helps deal with the masti, to the extent of becoming a new meaning of the word.

Then there is the masti of the Sufi, which is supposed to be for the select few a state of spiritual enhancement, but which for too many is drug-induced. The true Sufi's masti is achieved only by a highly disciplined spiritual progression, attained after much prolonged effort. The shortcut, or instant version, is licence to do anything. Those who think that head banging to Pappu Sain's dhol or Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's qawalis are spiritual experiences have lost the plot.

That is emotional self-indulgence. However, both the higher Sufi experience and its ersatz version both lead to the same practical result: the practitioner detaches himself from the evils of this world, and is absolved of the responsibility to do anything about what the unenlightened are doing.

It is interesting that chilling and masti (of the second type) both involve acceptance of everything and indifference to the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune', even if that requires the use of drugs. At one level, this is attractive. It means that the individual accepts with calmness whatever is happening, and does not get into a bother about anything.

Chill Karo, Masti Karo

The message of the slogan is therefore twofold in its strength, multiple in its application for the target of the communication. (My congratulations, by the way, to the copywriter: it is a very communicative jingle, not just in its meaning, but in its euphony, both spoken and sung.) It says that you should turn away from the mess around you, the heat and dust, the problems and the issues, and just have fun ('chill'). It also says that you should let loose, get moving, burn off some energy ('masti').

The positive parts of the message is that instead of achieving this effect by doing drugs and attending a rave, do it by having their mango ice-cream confection, at one of their restaurants. As a teenager, I could not think of anything duller or more boring, but as a middleaged parent, it sounds like positive and healthy activity for my offspring, much more than many publicly available activities that come to mind.

I am sure the copywriter and the multinational behind the slogan did not think of it that way, but this is the message: Chill Karo, and forget about the dead babies in Lebanon. Masti Karo, and forget about how the USA is backing Israel in killing them. Chill Karo, and ignore the hypocrisy that lets the USA send Israel precision-guided bombs to 'defend itself against Hezbollah's Cold-War vintage Katyusha rockets. Masti Karo, and don't bother about the massive disparity in casualties, 10 Lebanese for every Israeli.

Chill Karo, and remember that this isn't Pakistan, which is being bombed. Masti Karo, and if you can be bothered to think about any country, think of Pakistan First. Chill Karo, and stop getting emotional about the ummah and such outmoded concepts. Masti, Karo and concentrate on getting ahead in life, making money, building up property and living the good life as defined by Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous. Chill Karo, and don't worry about anything except yourself. Masti Karo, and you will still go to heaven, because you at least are a good person who hasn't killed any Israeli babies (or was it Palestinian old women? Whoever. Whatever.)

Chill Karo, and don't bother about what Pakistan is doing at this juncture. Masti Karo, and pay no attention to how the national interest is being promoted. Chill Karo, because we know what is the national interest, and you don't. (Why don't you? Because you're too busy doing masti, which is actually OK, because you're not asking too many questions.)

Chill Karo, and don't think about what is happening in Balochistan or Waziristan. Hey, but isn't it Pakistan First, and aren't these parts of Pakistan? Masti Karo, and don't ask stupid questions like that. Chill Karo, and don't pay any attention to how Pakistan is being governed, how its Constitution is being undermined, how its President is also a serving general, and the Chief of Army Staff to boot. Masti Karo, and leave these issues to those who are better than you, more intelligent, more mature, wiser, better trained. In addition, they don't chill, nor do they do masti.

Guantanamo: chill. Abu Ghuraib: Masti. Iraq's 100,000 dead: chill. Afghanistan's tens of thousands killed: Masti. Hamas: chill. Occupation of sovereign states: Masti. Double standards on democracy: chill. Kashmir: chill. Palestine: Masti. Chill. Masti. I am being so unfair to this slogan that at this point I should perhaps apologise, but I am about to place yet another burden on it. Here goes: this slogan actually stands for the method by which the capitalist corporate elite rules its workforce, for it is all a work force.

Remember, those 3000 American servicemen who have died doing their duty in Afghanistan and Iraq is like a factory workforce for the chicken hawks in the bush administration. They too are being fooled into behaving inhumanly, for inhuman ends, fighting wars which will not bring their people prosperity or security, but which will fatten the treasuries of many corporations.

Corporations are no longer sub-national entities. They can be supra national, and are certainly extra-national. The fast food franchise I have been talking about is seen as a symbol of the USA the world over. Yet, in Pakistan, it is staffed by Pakistanis, and is owned by Pakistanis. This corporation, which is powerful in the USA as a taxpayer, if nothing else, has branches in 61 markets worldwide, making it an international entity.

A senior executive of this corporation, sitting in its US HQ, has more common interests (as an executive) with a Russian executive of the same corporation, than with his own government, and vice versa. This is replicated in corporations all over the capitalist system (which has achieved 100 percent coverage of the globe, except perhaps parts of Myanmar and Cuba).

Chill Karo, Masti Karo

They desire to pursue their supra-national interests worldwide to maximize profits. The only restraints on them are the guardians of the people's interests. However, if one realizes how easily such organizations can influence, and even control, elected legislatures and office bearers, through the power of capital, then this safeguard becomes fragile and porous. It is marginally better than dictatorships or monarchies, because there is less need to pay attention to public opinion, and instead of a majority of legislators, the corporation needs only buy one or two members of the ruler's inner circle. However, this is faint praise for democracy.

Are there any alternatives? Is there a better way of doing things, which is more humane, less suspect to the power of capital? We could look to our Islamic roots to find much that is different, much that is definite, and much that is never discussed by Maulvi or moderate, Jihadi or Islamist, fundo or liberal, almost as if there is a conspiracy of silence. However, who is bothered? Chill Karo, Masti Karo. E-mail queries and comments to: maniazi@nation.Com. Pk

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Crisis in the Middle East

The Irish Times

August 10, 2006 Thursday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 17

Length: 1425 words

Body

Madam, - Labour councillor John McManus (August 1st) is right when he says "there is confusion and some plain bad politics being propagated by some on the left" with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the threat posed by growing Islamic fundamentalists. His colleague, Cllr Aidan Culhane (August 3rd) is also right to acknowledge that "the left is too ambiguous" about those who want to bring the Middle East back to the Middle Ages and that it has failed to come to terms with Islamic fanaticism. However, in fairness, this criticism is not exclusively a malaise of the left. It also applies to some politicians within all of our political parties and to a number of independent TDs and senators.

Trevor Sargent TD, as leader of the Green Party, lumbered into the tragic Israeli-Lebanese conflict with a call last Friday for both diplomatic and trade sanctions against Israel "given the country's refusal to date to call a ceasefire." No such call was made for sanctions on either Iran or Syria for using Hizbullah to provoke the conflict or for funding and arming that organisation's fundamentalist militants.

Mr Sargent's statement was made on a day when more than 230 rockets provided by Iran were fired indiscriminately by Hizbullah fanatics into Israeli cities and towns. The Greens and, apparently, the Joint Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee - whose members are supposed to understand the history and complexities of the conflicts in the Middle East - have adopted the politically unique and disgraceful position of proposing that sanctions be imposed on Israel for defending itself against attack by a fanatical terrorist group committed to its destruction and which to date is responsible for the death of over 100 Israelis and for injuring over 700. Too many members of the Oireachtas are ensnared in Michael D Higgins's world of knee-jerk anti-Americanism and dewy-eyed sentimentality and appeasement when confronted by Islamic fundamentalism.

Joschka Fischer, former German foreign minister and leader of the German Greens for over 20 years got it right in The Irish Times of July 28th when he wrote that "the current war in Lebanon is not a war by the Arab world against Israel: rather it is a war of the region's radical forces - *Hamas*, Islamic Jihad among the Palestinians, Hizbullah together with Syria and Iran - that fundamentally reject any settlement with Israel". Politicians on this island will have something relevant to contribute to the resolution of the current conflict only when they wake up to this reality.

What we need is better politics. In particular, we need our elected politicians to address the role Iran has played over the past 15 years in sabotaging the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and to understand that the Iranian president's call to wipe Israel off the map is not mere fanciful rhetoric. Perhaps this is something members of the Joint Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee are presently loath to do for fear that if they criticise the Iranian regime that committee's current open invitation for a junket to Tehran might be withdrawn.

Crisis in the Middle East

For now, Iran is apparently a four letter word that members of that Committee dare not utter in criticism. Is it too much to hope that they will have the courage during their autumn visit to Tehran to ask the hard questions and advocate a radical change in Iranian policy? - Yours, etc,

ALAN SHATTER, Upper Ely Place, Dublin 2.

Madam, - As residents of Beirut, we have read your paper's coverage of the situation in Lebanon with both interest and dismay. Allow us to ask some questions that we feel have not been addressed by your coverage and analysis. Where were the Israeli soldiers captured - in Israel or on Lebanese soil? Is the capture and exchange of soldiers an unprecedented outrage or a common practice in the region? Does Hizbullah want to capture soldiers merely because it can or because it wants to free Lebanese men, women, and children who are in Israeli prisons?

How did those first four Israeli soldiers die - in a Hizbullah attack or by hitting a mine? Which came first - the rocket barrage from Hizbullah or the Israeli bombardment? Was the Israeli invasion a legitimate defence of its territory or a plan hatched long before in the infamous "Clean Break" document and in visits to the US in May (Olmert) and June (Netanyahu at the American Enterprise Institute in Colorado)? Does Hizbullah deny the right of Israel to exist or deny the legitimacy of the state of Israel and its apartheid system?

Does Israel believe that the Lebanese army can really take over in the South when any Beiruti knows that Lebanese soldiers are little more than traffic cops with guns? Can the Lebanese army defend Lebanon or, as Noam Chomsky notes, is Hizbullah the only protection it has? What does Israel want more: a 20-mile security zone or precious water from the Litani River? Is Israel a helpless victim of terrorism or a perpetrator of state terrorism? The utter calumny of accusing Hizbullah of using women and children as human shields does not deserve formulation into a rhetorical question.

We look forward to reading your answers. - Yours, etc,

COLLEEN MacDONELL and DOMINIC LARKIN, Beirut, Lebanon (currently in Cork).

Madam, - Further to various letters and columns on Israel's relationship with the US, one might bear in mind that in the short term it may suit US governments' regional strategic goals to support Israel. However, in the medium and long term this is not assured. If access to oil and/or closer links with stridently Islamic, anti-Israel states become the priority, then whither Israel?

The present and future difficulties concerning the continued existence of Israel should not be underestimated. - Yours, etc,

SEAN CASSIDY, Gardiner Street, Dublin 1.

Madam, - The suggestion that I am at odds with my party over Lebanon is not fully correct. I fully support Michael D Higgins's long-standing call for an immediate cessation of violence. The military action being undertaken by Israel is ill-conceived and counter-productive, even taking into account its right to defend itself.

The civilian deaths are an outrage.

Yet Israel's capacity to wage this war seems more than matched by Hizbullah's capacity to fire rockets into Israel. One side, Hizbullah, seems to have done its strategic thinking. The other, Israel, has not. I suspect that had Ariel Sharon remained healthy this war would not be taking place.

That Hizbullah is delighted by the response it has drawn forth from Israel shows its indifference both to Lebanon and to ordinary citizens who want to get on with their day-to-day lives. That the West seems more intent on holding Israel responsible for this particular catastrophe is to ignore those who orchestrated it. Again, it needs to be restated: Israel's over-reaction cannot be allowed to obscure the actions and motives of a group whose world view is fundamentally hostile to all that progressives believe.

Crisis in the Middle East

Finally, Michael D Higgins rails against the charge of anti-Americanism against those who hold his position. I understand his frustration. But when the deputy lord mayor of Dublin, a member of our party, was heard recently on the airwaves telling the elected governor of Florida to go home, is it any wonder that the charge is levelled against us? - Yours, etc,

Cllr AIDAN CULHANE, Meadow Grove, Dundrum, Dublin 16.

Madam, - Stiofán Ó Cléirigh (August 7th) has completely misunderstood my grounds for criticising Martyn Turner's cartoon about the tragedy of Qana (August 4th).

I agree with Mr Ó Cléirigh that the cartoon tried to contrast Christ's gentle kindness to an embarrassed young couple on the occasion of their wedding with the brutality of the Israeli bombing of civilians in Qana. In this Martyn Turner's intentions were good and acceptable, however clumsy his attempt to express them.

The point of my objection was quite a different matter: the irreverent and near-blasphemous depiction of Christ as a figure of fun, gesturing in some kind of silly mumbo-jumbo over the water jars. - Yours, etc,

SEÁN MAC CÁRTHAIGH, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.

Madam, - Louis Lentin (August 5th) castigates the Irish Film Institute for rejecting sponsorship from the Israeli embassy. I applaud the IFI.

Is Mr Lentin seriously suggesting that State-sponsored bodies should not make any moral judgment on their potential sponsors? Is he suggesting also that these bodies should not take into account the overwhelming views of their paymasters, namely the taxpayers of Ireland? - Yours, etc,

ALAN McPARTLAND, Grange Court, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16.

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Conflict Polarizes the Mideast, Leaving Little Middle Ground

The New York Times

August 9, 2006 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1; HOSTILITIES IN THE MIDEAST: BACKLASH

Length: 1443 words

Byline: By NEIL MacFARQUHAR; Mona el-Naggar contributing reporting from Cairo for this article.

Dateline: DAMASCUS, Syria, Aug. 8

Body

Moderate reformers across the Arab world say American support for Israel's battle with Hezbollah has put them on the defensive, tarring them by association and boosting Islamist parties.

The very people whom the United States wanted to encourage to promote democracy from Bahrain to Casablanca instead feel trapped by a policy that they now ridicule more or less as "destroying the region in order to save it."

Indeed, many of those reformers who have been working for change in their own societies -- often isolated, harassed by state security, or marginalized to begin with -- say American policy either strangles nascent reform movements or props up repressive governments that remain Washington's best allies in the region.

"We are really afraid of this 'new Middle East,' " said Ali Abdulemam, a 28-year-old computer engineer who founded the most popular political Web site in Bahrain. He was referring to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's statement last month that the situation in Lebanon represented the birth pangs of a "new Middle East."

"They talk about how they will reorganize the region in a different way, but they never talk about the people," Mr. Abdulemam said. "They never mention what the people want. They are just giving more power to the systems that exist already."

His plight is shared by reformers across the Arab world.

Fawaziah al-Bakr, who promotes educational change and women's rights in Saudi Arabia, helped organize women to protest the Israeli attacks. "Nobody is talking about reform in Saudi Arabia," she said. "All we talk about is the war, what to do about the war. There is no question that the U.S. has lost morally because of the war. Even if you like the people and the culture of the United States, you can't defend it."

The statement by Ms. Rice -- during a fleeting stopover in Beirut last month -- is being juxtaposed with the mounting carnage to rally popular opposition against all things American.

In Lebanon, Israel continues bombing despite the fact that the violence could destabilize the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, elected last year in a vote that the United States hailed as a democratic example for the Middle East. Iraq was the previous such example, reformers note bitterly.

Conflict Polarizes the Mideast, Leaving Little Middle Ground

In Bahrain, Mr. Abdulemam fears that a proposed new anti-terrorism law could severely curb the freewheeling discussions on BahrainOnline.org, his Web site, perhaps even shutting it down, because among other things the law bans attacking the Constitution. Recently, the government cut off access to Google Earth, he said, probably because too many citizens were zeroing in on royal palaces.

Members of Islamist political organizations, in particular, consider American actions a godsend, putting their own repressive governments under pressure and distancing their capitals from Washington, reformers say.

The Americans "wanted to tarnish the Islamic resistance and opposition movements, but in reality they only served them," said Sobhe Salih, a 53-year-old lawyer in the Muslim Brotherhood, which was swept into the Egyptian Parliament in an election last fall after capturing an unprecedented 20 percent of the seats. "They made them more appealing to the public, made them a beacon of hope for everyone who hates American policies."

Glance at any television screen -- they are everywhere -- and chances are that the screen will be showing mayhem in Lebanon, Baghdad or Gaza. It usually takes a minute or so to decipher which Arab city is burning. Popular satellite news channels like Al Jazeera say repeatedly that the carnage arrives via American policy and American weapons.

Before 2003, the hardest step for any Islamist movement was recruitment, noted Mohamed Salah, an expert on Islamic extremist movements who writes for the pan-Arab daily Al Hayat from Cairo. Moving someone from being merely devout to being an extremist took a long time. No longer, he said. Moderate Arab governments, which have pursued peace with Israel for nearly 30 years, have seen that policy undermined among their publics by Hezbollah's ability to strike at Israel.

"Recruitment has become the easiest stage because the people have already been psychologically predisposed against the Americans, the West and against Israel," Mr. Salah said.

Moderate reformers say they are driven to despair by what they see as inconsistencies in Washington's Middle East policy. For example, in Lebanon lives a black-turbaned Shiite cleric who runs a secretive militia close to Iran. His name is Sheik Hassan Nasrallah and Washington approves of Israel's bombing campaign to stamp out his organization, Hezbollah.

There is another black-turbaned Shiite cleric who runs a different secretive militia close to Iran. His name is Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, and he lives in Iraq. He is an American friend.

"In Iraq the same kind of group is an ally of the United States, while in Lebanon they are an enemy whom they are fighting," said Samir al-Qudah, a Jordanian civil engineer. "It has nothing to do with reform, but where America's interests lie."

The overwhelming conclusion drawn by Arabs is that Washington's interests lie with Israel, no matter what the cost.

"Those calling for democratic reform in Egypt have discovered that once Israeli interests are in conflict with political reform in the Middle East, then the United States will immediately favor Israel's interests," said Ibrahim Issa, the editor of the weekly Al Dustour, who faces a jail sentence on charges of insulting President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

Reformers invariably add that a credible effort to solve the issue of Arab land occupied by Israel, which they believe is the taproot of extremism, does not even seem to be on Washington's radar.

Sheik Nasrallah is particularly adept at exploiting public anger at civilian deaths in Lebanon by talking about how fickle the United States can be as a friend.

"I want you never to forget that this is the U.S. administration, Lebanon's friend, ally and lover," he mocked in a speech on Thursday. He also issued a pointed warning to other Arab leaders that if they spend more time defending their thrones than the people of Lebanon, they might find themselves pushed off those thrones.

Conflict Polarizes the Mideast, Leaving Little Middle Ground

Reformers also worry that the chaos in Iraq has fueled public perception that a despot can at least keep violence and sectarian differences at bay. In Syria, war news drowned out dismay over the jailing of activists in a crackdown by the Syrian government this spring.

Omar Amiralay, a Syrian documentary filmmaker, was in a taxi recently when the radio broadcast a news bulletin about a suicide bombing in Baghdad that killed some 35 people.

"The Americans should just let Saddam out of jail for a week," he quoted the driver as saying, only half joking. The dictator would slay one million Iraqis and "everything would be peaceful again."

Mr. Amiralay is convinced that change will come only with an eruption from within, but people have no time to think about that now. "Uncertainty has become the order of the day," he said.

There is a general sense in the region that the Bush administration soured on pushing democracy because of the successes of Islamist parties in the most recent Egyptian and Palestinian elections -- the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Hamas, an offshoot of the Brotherhood, in the Palestinian territories.

For the first time in a while, political analysts are again comparing governments like that of Mr. Mubarak of Egypt to that of the late Shah of Iran -- an isolated despot who ignored the broad wishes of the population while currying favor with the American administration. Some rulers are clearly nervous.

King Abdullah of Jordan initially criticized Hezbollah when the fighting erupted nearly a month ago, but in an interview with the BBC on Tuesday he was dismissive of American plans for a "new Middle East." The monarch said he could "no longer read the political map" of the region because of black clouds gathering from Somalia to Lebanon.

That kind of attitude may prove beneficial, reformers say, allowing more breathing space for public debate as leaders try to quiet public anger. But they doubt moderates will find much of a platform.

"There is no room on the street for a moderate like me," said Mr. Qudah, the civil engineer in Jordan. "We are all against Israel attacking Lebanon, but I am also against hitting cities in Israel where there are civilians. If I tried to say the things in public that I am telling you on the phone, I might be beaten. In a war like this, the extremists alone own the streets."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: The Hezbollah station was on at a restaurant in Damascus. Moderate voices are being drowned out by a rising tide of anti-American sentiment. (Photo by James Hill for The New York Times)(pg. A1)

A soldier cleaned portraits of Syria's leaders, past and present, in Damascus. War news has trumped worries over the recent jailing of activists. (Photo by James Hill for the New York Times)(pg. A10)

Load-Date: August 9, 2006

For Muslims and West, antipathy and mistrust; In global survey, both see each other as violent and disrespectful of women

The International Herald Tribune

June 23, 2006 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1470 words

Byline: Meg Bortin

Dateline: PARIS

Body

Westerners and Muslims around the world have radically different views of world events, and each group tends to view the other as violent, intolerant, and lacking respect for women, according to a new international survey of more than 14,000 people in 13 nations.

In what the Pew Global Attitudes Project called one of the survey's most striking findings, majorities in Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, and Turkey Muslims countries with fairly strong ties to the United States said, for example, that they did not believe that Arabs carried out the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.

This was just one finding illustrating the chasm in beliefs between the two groups following another year of violence and tension centered around that divide. The past 12 months saw terrorist bombings in London, riots in France by unemployed youths, many of them Muslim, a global uproar over Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, and no letup to the war in Iraq.

This led majorities in the United States and in countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East to describe relations as generally bad, Pew found.

Muslims worldwide, including the large Islamic communities in Britain, France, Germany and Spain, broadly blamed the West, while Westerners tended to blame Muslims. Muslims in the Middle East and Asia depicted Westerners as immoral and selfish, while Westerners saw Muslims as fanatical.

The results were not uniform, however, and delivered some surprises:

Support for terrorism declined in some Muslim countries surveyed, dropping dramatically in Jordan, where terrorist bombings killed more than 50 people in Amman in November.

Two-thirds of the French public expressed positive views of Muslims, and even larger majorities of French Muslims felt favorable to Christians and Jews.

Muslims in Europe are less inclined to see a "clash of civilizations" than general publics in Europe and Muslims elsewhere.

For Muslims and West, antipathy and mistrust In global survey, both see each other as violent and disrespectful of women

Pew conducted the survey, part of Pew's Global Attitude Project for 2006, in April and May in Britain, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Spain, Turkey and the United States.

Pew, which interviewed Muslims in Europe as a group for the first time this year, said their views represented "a bridge" between the widely divergent views of other Europeans and Muslims in Asia and the Middle East.

The overall results, said Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center, show that "even though relations are not good, there hasn't been a spike in outright hostility between the two groups over the past year." While both sides see relations as bad, he said, "at least it's not getting worse."

Nonetheless, majorities in every country surveyed except Pakistan expressed pessimism about Muslim-Western relations, with Germany most strongly viewing the situation as bad (70 percent), followed by France (66 percent), Turkey (64 percent), Spain and Britain (61 percent), and Egypt (58 percent).

Of those who saw relations as bad, four-fifths in Turkey blamed the West, as did majorities in Indonesia, Jordan, and Egypt. In Nigeria, divisions between Christians and Muslims were sharp on this question, as on others: While 69 percent of Nigerian Christians blamed Muslims for the poor state of relations, 83 percent of Nigerian Muslims blamed Westerners.

In follow-up interviews by the International Herald Tribune, Muslims attributed the poor relations to everything from differing values to the media. But many pointed to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as the main cause and accused the West of double standards on terrorism.

"Whenever the Israelis strike the Palestinians, the international community and the UN turn a blind eye or keep quiet," said Saleh Bayeri, a politician and Muslim community leader in Jos, Nigeria. "But when the Palestinians launch a counterattack, it is condemned by America, the U.K. and other friends of Israel as a terror attack. That is the problem. It shows that the West is biased in dealing with Muslims."

Pew asked respondents to give their opinions of Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and it found anti-Jewish sentiment to be "overwhelming" in the Muslim countries surveyed. It reached 98 percent in Jordan and 97 percent in Egypt.

In the follow-up interviews, some respondents indicated that Muslims saw Jews and Israel as identical. "You see, Muslims generally see Westerners as supporters of the Jews Israel," Bayeri said. "As a friend of the Jews, you are automatically an enemy in the eyes of most Muslims."

Majorities in the Muslim world, Pew said, also expressed the opinion that the victory of Hamas in Palestinian elections in January would "be helpful to a fair settlement between Israel and the Palestinians a view that is roundly rejected by non-Muslim publics."

In the follow-up interviews, the U.S.-led war in Iraq, now in its fourth year, was cited by Muslims and Westerners alike as another primary cause of bad relations. Muslims, in comments reflecting historic tensions with Christianity, described Iraq and the Bush administration's war on terrorism as a "crusade" against Islam, while in the West people said that terrorist attacks by Muslims had undermined trust.

European Muslims lined up with European general publics on some issues, indicating that integration might be moving ahead better than recent events would suggest. While Muslims outside Europe generally saw Westerners as violent and immoral, for example, this view was not shared by Muslims in France, Germany and Spain. But British Muslims were highly critical of Westerners, the survey found, holding negative views resembling those of Muslims in Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, and Nigeria.

In Turkey, negative opinions of the West have increased in tandem with opposition across Europe to Turkish admission to the European Union. Only 16 percent of those surveyed in Turkey now hold a positive view of Christians, down from 31 percent in 2004.

For Muslims and West, antipathy and mistrust In global survey, both see each other as violent and disrespectful of women

Turkey also stood out because of the high percentage now saying they do not believe that Arabs carried out the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Fifty-nine percent express disbelief, up from 43 percent in a Gallup survey in 2002.

Disbelief was equally strong in Egypt, and stronger still in Indonesia (65 percent). Even in Britain, 56 percent of the Muslims surveyed did not believe that Arabs carried out the attacks; only 17 percent said they believed it.

The results, Kohut said, show that "many Muslims are still in denial" about something that even Osama bin Laden has acknowledged.

As for suicide bombings, however, Pew found that support declined over the past year in Pakistan, Indonesia and especially Jordan, where 29 percent now say violence against civilian targets can often or sometimes be justified, down from 57 percent in 2005. Support remained sizable in Turkey, at 17 percent, and even higher in Egypt, at 28 percent.

In Pakistan, where 69 percent now say suicide bombings can never be justified, up from 46 percent last spring, those seeing relations as generally good (30 percent) outnumbered those viewing relations as bad (25 percent), although 39 percent were undecided. In follow-up interviews, people cited the Pakistani government's support of the U.S. war on terror as one reason for the mixed view.

"Many perceive this bond with the West, and America especially, as not just important but necessary," said Reem Khan, a magazine editor based in Lahore. Pakistanis, she said, feel "the alternatives are all much worse and that an alliance with America can yield important economic and societal benefits."

Among Western publics, despite the events of the past year the London bombings in July, the French riots in November, the cartoon controversy that erupted in January overall opinions of Muslims remained favorable in Britain, France and the United States, Pew found. In Russia, where the government has claimed successes over rebels in Chechnya, favorable views of Muslims increased over the last two years.

But distrust grew in Germany, where 54 percent now hold unfavorable views of Muslims, and skyrocketed in Spain, with 62 percent holding negative opinions, up from 37 percent last year.

Spanish opinions of Jews also declined sharply, with 45 percent of the public expressing a favorable view, down from 58 percent last spring.

France stood out because of the harmonious views of Muslims and non-Muslims on a range of topics.

Publics in both the West and the Muslim world agreed that Muslim countries should be more prosperous, Pew found, though their views on the reasons for the current situation differed widely. Many in the Muslim world blamed the policies of the West, but others cited corruption among their own governments. In the West, people cited Islamic fundamentalism, inadequate education and lack of democracy.

Load-Date: June 27, 2006

Nadia's wedding

The Irish Times

June 3, 2006 Saturday

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Section: WORLD; Under the Crescent; Pg. 13

Length: 1490 words

Body

When a female suicide bomber tried to blow up another Muslim woman's wedding, for many it epitomised the tensions in modern Islam, Mary Fitzgerald

The call of the muezzin sounds different in Amman. In this city built on seven hills the Muslim summons to prayer bounces and echoes through the deep valleys that cleave Jordan's sprawling capital. It's a sound that Nadia al-Alami has found comforting since childhood, a sound she says reinforces her sense of faith.

In many ways, Nadia is a typical modern Muslim woman. She prays. She fasts at Ramadan. She watches the younger generation of Muslim preachers on TV because she likes the way they apply Islam to contemporary life. Although she doesn't wear hijab - the Muslim headscarf - many of her friends do. She felt offended by the Danish cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad but abhorred the violent protests that followed. At ease with her faith, the 24-year-old graduate describes Islam as her compass - "It's the deepest, most basic thing I depend on. It's my connection with God. It's what gives me directions for the map of my life."

Faith is also important to Sajida Mubarak al-Rishawi, an Iraqi woman whose brother died fighting US troops in Falluja. Last November Sajida and her husband stood among guests at Nadia's wedding reception in an Amman hotel, explosives belts strapped around their waists. Her husband detonated his belt but Sajida failed to set off hers. The bombing claimed the lives of 27 wedding guests, including Nadia's parents and her husband Ashraf's father.

Admitting responsibility, Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his organisation al-Qaeda in Iraq employed language echoing that used to justify similar attacks in New York, London, Madrid, Bali, Turkey, Egypt and Morocco. The intention was not to kill Muslims, they insisted, rather to target "the dens of evil that were established on Muslim soil in Amman, in order to protect the faith and raise the banner of tawhid [monotheism]".

Sajida later appeared on Jordanian state TV, wearing a white headscarf and the explosives belt she failed to detonate. With a calm voice, she explained how she and her husband had carried out the attack. "He took a corner, and I took a corner," she said. "There was a wedding in the hotel, children, women and men. My husband detonated his belt. I tried to detonate mine, but it did not explode. I went out. The people started running and I ran away with them."

At the opening of her trial last month, where she appeared veiled and chained at the ankles, Sajida was defiant. "I have God to defend me," she said.

Nadia and Sajida frame what many have described as a battle for the soul of Islam, an ideological struggle that has taken on a new urgency in the wake of the September 11th attacks.

Nadia's wedding

Repelled by those who use violence in the name of Islam, ordinary Muslims throughout the world are refusing to allow their religion to be hijacked by an intolerant minority fuelled by what they see as obscurantist ideology.

"Using the name of Islam to justify this violence is making the world see us Muslims as terrorists," Nadia says, shaking her head. She says her faith has grown stronger since the bombings and she plans to start wearing hijab later this year.

"The people who do this kind of thing are terrorists. They do not have any relationship with Islam. When I saw Sajida wearing hijab on TV, I was shocked. How dare she? The people who killed my parents have nothing to do with my religion.

"The message of Islam is peace. Peace with ourselves, peace with others, peace with the whole universe."

The debate within the Islamic world is not just limited to combating extremism. Nor is it something new - the Muslim faith has always included different schools of thought and varying interpretations. What makes it different this time is the increasing sense of urgency.

Fourteen centuries after the Prophet Muhammad received the divine revelations that would form its core, Islam stands at a critical juncture. The world's fastest growing religion is caught in an existential dilemma, experiencing one of the most dynamic revivals in its history while trying to establish what it means to be Muslim in a globalised world dominated by a secular West that appears to many omnipotent, even predatory, in its politics, economy and culture.

As Sally (36), an Egyptian Muslim whose British husband converted to Islam, puts it: "We are different. That doesn't mean that we hate the West and what it stands for. It just means that we are different and we don't necessarily want to be like you. We want that difference respected."

The debate about the meaning and message of Islam in the 21st century takes place every day in mosques, study groups and televised sermons across the Muslim world from Cairo to Jakarta, as traditionalists and those who see themselves as reformers try to mesh Islamic principles and precepts with the realities of modern life.

In a faith with no central authority and no formal clergy, it is no easy task. The result is a cacophony of competing voices - from the moderate to the extreme - all claiming to hold the only true version of Islam. The spectrum of this debate reflects the immense diversity of the Muslim world, divided as it is by geography, language, culture and often turbulent histories.

Far from being homogenous, Islam is practised and observed differently across countries and cultures. Embracing some 1.4 billion people, ranging from the taxi driver in Indonesia who unfurls his prayer mat at the side of the road when he hears the muezzin, to the Egyptian student who wears her sequined headscarf with the latest boho chic fashion, its vast territory stretches eastward from the west coast of Africa to Indonesia.

Muslims form the majority in some 45 countries, with the largest number concentrated in Asia. Among them are members of three main groups - Sunni, Shia, and Sufi - all of which splinter into various subdivisions and sects.

Muslims talk of an Islamic reawakening that has been building for decades, powered by a groundswell in personal piety that is not limited just to the poor and disadvantaged. Whether it's more women choosing to wear hijab or more men shunning alcohol, many Muslim countries have witnessed a surge in devotion matched by strict observance of Islamic rituals.

It is not all confined to the personal. Financial institutions have sprung up offering a range of alternatives for saving, lending and investment that respect Islam's strict prohibition on interest. Technology has helped too - through the internet, satellite TV and telecommunications, the core idea of umma (community of believers) has taken on a whole new meaning, particularly for young Muslims eager to carve out a distinct faith-based identity.

They use Muslim matchmaking websites to find husbands or wives and use online fatwa services for advice on how to live their lives. They prefer to watch young TV preachers instead of the bearded sheikhs of the past and listen to

Nadia's wedding

modern reworkings of nasheed, Islamic devotional singing. Their mobile phones are as likely to ring with an exhortation to Allah as the latest hit.

For some Muslims, this revitalised sense of faith has crossed over to the ballot box. In recent years Islamist political parties of all hues, from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, **Hamas** in the Palestinian territories, Hizbullah in Lebanon and the Justice and Development party in Turkey, have made electoral gains by espousing democracy within a frame based on and protective of Islamic values. Underpinning all this is the idea that Islam is not merely a faith but an all-encompassing social system.

Many in Europe and the US have viewed these developments with dismay or fear, equating the rise of political Islam in particular with extremism and militancy. They question Islamist politicians' commitment to democracy and their position on the role of **women** and minorities.

In return, many Muslims accuse the West of being hostile towards Islam and Muslims. They cite US foreign policy and the publication of newspaper cartoons lampooning the Prophet Muhammad to support the sense that theirs is an embattled faith.

Amr Khaled, one of the Muslim world's most popular and influential TV preachers, believes there are misunderstandings on both sides. He recently attended a conference in Denmark to discuss the impact of the cartoon controversy.

"Many people in the West believe all Muslims are extremists and that Islam leads people to become extremists. That's just not true. Muslims have to accept part of the responsibility for this image but so do some people in the West," he says.

"There is a lack of justice, freedom and rights in many Muslim countries and in a lot of cases this is backed up by the West. These conditions encourage extremist thinking and terrorism.

"I believe there is extremism on both sides but we must not allow their voices to become louder than ours."

maryfitzgerald@irish-times.ie

Load-Date: June 3, 2006

Tamil tigers blacklisting lauded - Correction Appended

Ottawa Citizen

April 12, 2006 Wednesday

Final Edition

Correction Appended

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Section: CITY; Pg. C5; Jennifer Campbell

Length: 1109 words

Byline: Jennifer Campbell, Citizen Special

Body

The Conservative government's move to add the Tamil Tigers military organization to Canada's list of known terrorists shows a "pattern of consistency" and a hard line against terrorists, said Elliot Tepper, a professor who specializes in Asian studies in Carleton University's department of political science.

"There was a pattern of consistency in regards to the Conservative party policy," Mr. Tepper said. "While in opposition, the party took the principled position in regards to terrorism in general. Now in power, they're following through on that position."

Mr. Tepper pointed out that one can see the pattern in terms of Canada's role in Afghanistan, as well as the party's position on sending aid to the **Hamas** regime in Palestine and now, the listing of the Tamil Tigers as a terrorist organization.

The fact that this position aligns Canada and the U.S. is also helpful, Mr. Tepper said.

The move by the Conservatives last week, ushered by Minister of Public Safety Stockwell Day, comes with an edict that it is now illegal for the controversial Tamil Tigers to raise money in Canada. It is also illegal for individuals to donate to the group. Those caught doing so could face up to 10 years in jail.

According to Human Rights Watch, the Tamil Tigers have used intimidation, threats, extortion and violence in Canada to finance operations in Sri Lanka. Mr. Tepper said that report was probably also a factor in the announcement.

"In terms of timing, the fact that the government announcement comes so soon after the release of the Human Rights Watch report on the extortion of Canadians of Tamil descent undoubtedly also played a role," he said.

A. J. Pathiraja, Sri Lanka's acting high commissioner, did not return calls when asked to comment on the move.

The Ottawa mission has been without a high commissioner since Geetha de Silva returned to Sri Lanka to take a senior position in the ministry of foreign affairs more than a year ago.

Tamil tigers blacklisting lauded

A high-profile Russian delegation was in Ottawa this week to discuss the priorities for Russia's G-8 presidency and the upcoming summit in St. Petersburg.

Igor Shuvalov, a top aide of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is also known as a "Russian G8 sherpa", led the delegation hosted by Russian Ambassador Georgiy Mamedov. The delegation's meetings in Ottawa were also scheduled to look at relations between Canada and Russia.

Russia's priorities for the G-8, which it hosts for the first time in July, are international issues of energy security, education and health care.

As the giant country's officials point out, securing a reliable energy supply "is crucial for sustainable economic development and political stability in the world." The leaders must look at energy security in the context of global climate change and the fact that many of the world's poorest countries can't access "pure and affordable energy," the embassy noted in a release.

When it comes to education, the Russian embassy officials said expert knowledge and access to information are crucial to the growth of national economies and the quality of life of their citizens. Even G-8 countries have problems with education, particularly in linking educational systems and labour markets, the Russians explained, adding that there's also a disconnect between education and required fields of expertise.

Meanwhile, poor countries' inability to adopt new technology that would enable them to compete in unskilled-labour fields internationally may seriously obstruct the progress of the global economy and social prosperity, the Russians contended.

On the health care front, they want G-8 members to take a serious look at the threat infectious diseases pose to humanity.

"That such diseases spread at a different rate and take a different toll in various regions and communities is a litmus test of aggravating hardship, discrimination, social injustice, and a widening gap and strengthening tension between developed and developing nations," the embassy notes. "Such diseases as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and new ones like avian flu grossly impede nations economically and socially and are a threat to sustainable development."

Helping the Community

Diplomats and representatives from Taiwan's government are getting on board to help the Shirley E. Greenberg Women's Health Centre.

A luncheon series begins April 25 with Kuwaiti Ambassador Musaed Al-Haroun hosting. Karen Fung Kee Fung, medical director of obstetrics and gynecology at the Ottawa Hospital, will be the special guest. On May 9, Thomas Chen, representative for the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, hosts a luncheon featuring speaker Deborah Hannah, of the "Look Good Feel Better" program for women living with cancer.

Finally, on June 1, Roshan Reddaway, wife of British High Commissioner David Reddaway, hosts a luncheon with two guest speakers: Maureen McTeer, the patron of Osteoporosis Canada, and Dan Beamish, a personal trainer.

Tickets cost \$125 and can be purchased by calling 569-7100.

The Women's Health Centre, Ottawa's first, is dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of disease and the promotion of good health in women of all ages. Proceeds from the luncheons will go toward buying equipment.

Jennifer Campbell is a freelance writer and editor in Ottawa.

Reach her at Diplomatica@sympatico.ca.

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Tamil tigers blacklisting lauded

Insight Into Japanese Art

Kyoko Numata, wife of Japanese Ambassador Sadaaki Numata, hosted a gathering of the Friends of the National Gallery Thursday. Ms. Numata offered a tour of her Rockcliffe residence and described its art, including some from her personal collection.

Jazz, Danish Style

Danish Ambassador Poul Kristensen hosted a jazz evening with the Danish group PET Douglas at his Rockcliffe residence Monday.

Friendship Between Canada and Bangladesh

The Canada-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group held its founding meeting in Ottawa last week.

A Sri Lankan Dance Experience

The Sri Lankan High Commission hosted a cultural dance show at the Bronson Centre Sunday evening. The Channa-Upuli Dance Group presented a fusion of modern ballet and Sri Lankan traditional dance, accompanied by traditional drum and contemporary east-west jazz, blended with traditional drum patterns.

Introduction to Yemeni Cinema

Yemen Ambassador Abdulla Nasher presented the award-winning feature film *A New Day in Old Sana'a* by Yemeni-British director Bader Ben Hirsi Friday at the World Exchange Plaza theatre.

Some Irish Eyes are Smiling

Irish Ambassador Martin Burke and British High Commissioner David Reddaway hosted a reception at Mr. Burke's Rockcliffe residence in support of the annual Emerald Ball of the Ireland Fund of Canada. The ball takes place April 22.

Correction

A Sri Lankan dance show at the Bronson Centre was hosted by the Beatrice Sevana Community House. Incorrect information appeared April 12 in a photo caption on the Diplomatica page.

Correction-Date: April 21, 2006

Graphic

Colour Photo: Tara Walton, The Ottawa Citizen; (1. Ms. Numata displaying kimonos from her personal wardrobe.);
Colour

Photo: Tara Walton, The Ottawa Citizen; (2. Ms. Numata in the dining room of her home describing the place settings of a formal dinner.);

Colour Photo: Tara Walton, The Ottawa Citizen; (3. From left to right: Tor Berntin Naess, ambassador of Norway, Poul Kristensen, ambassador of Denmark, Else Philipp, wife the the Danish ambassador, and Bob Mills, MP for Red Deer.);

Tamil tigers blacklisting lauded

Colour Photo: Tara Walton, The Ottawa Citizen; (4. From left: Arif Lalani (director, Foreign Affairs), Reaz Rahman (foreign affairs adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh), Deepak Obhrai MP (parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs), Bangladesh High Commissioner Rafiq Ahmed Khan, his wife Juyena Khan, and Japanese Ambassador Sadaaki Numata.);

Colour Photo: Aaron Lynett, The Ottawa Citizen; (5. The Sri Lankan High Commission hosted a cultural dance show at the Bronson Centre Sunday evening. The Channa-Upuli Dance Group presented a fusion of modern ballet and Sri Lankan traditional dance, accompanied by traditional drum and contemporary east-west jazz, blended with traditional drum patterns.);

Colour Photo: Aaron Lynett, The Ottawa Citizen; (6. The Sri Lankan High Commission hosted a cultural dance show at the Bronson Centre Sunday evening. The Channa-Upuli Dance Group presented a fusion of modern ballet and Sri Lankan traditional dance, accompanied by traditional drum and contemporary east-west jazz, blended with traditional drum patterns.);

Colour Photo: Aaron Lynett, The Ottawa Citizen; (7. The Sri Lankan High Commission hosted a cultural dance show at the Bronson Centre Sunday evening. The Channa-Upuli Dance Group presented a fusion of modern ballet and Sri Lankan traditional dance, accompanied by traditional drum and contemporary east-west jazz, blended with traditional drum patterns.);

Colour Photo: Bruno Schlumberger, The Ottawa Citizen; (8. Mr. Ben Hirsi with Dr. Nasher.);

Colour Photo: Tara Walton, The Ottawa Citizen; (9. From left: Julian Evans (deputy British high commissioner), Shawn Murphy (MP Charlottetown), Mary Burke (wife of Mr. Burke), Patrick Murray (ball chairman), and Jason Kenney (MP Calgary Southeast).)

Load-Date: April 12, 2006

What did Tessa Jowell know?

Guardian.com

February 28, 2006

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theguardian

Length: 1432 words

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

Body

PRESSURE ON JOWELL INCREASES

Steve Bell's Magritte pastiche aptly sums up the mood of the press. "Ceci n'est pas un bung," runs the caption underneath a picture of a grinning David Mills surmounting a free-floating cork. In other words: Come off it.

The difficulty of Mr Mills's position - and now that of his wife, Tessa Jowell - was neatly summarised in an Economist article on Friday, which concluded that the lawyer was "either a knave or a fool". Mr Mills's explanations, the Independent says today, "have seemed bizarre and implausible in the extreme".

The Times's editorial describes it as "at best embarrassing" for the culture secretary, who signed a mortgage application that acted as a conduit for a large sum of money from abroad - allegedly a bribe from Silvio Berlusconi after Mr Mills had testified to the Italian prime minister's advantage in a trial.

"Ms Jowell may have reason to gripe at the way that her household accounts are being tied suggestively to the murky Berlusconi business empire," says the paper. "But she provided the link with her own hand. ... The question for Ms Jowell, no less comfortable for being familiar, has thus become: what did she know, and when did she know it?"

True, the Times says, she appears to have done nothing that undermined her role as culture secretary. But the ministerial code of conduct is rather more demanding. It requires ministers "to behave according to the highest standards of constitutional and personal conduct in the performance of their duties" and also to provide a list of their spouse or partner's business interests. "Did she do so?" asks the paper. "When?"

The irony of Miss Jowell's position - she is currently launching a government report on women's work and pay - is not lost in the Independent, whose cartoonist depicts her urging women to "demand the right not to bother your pretty heads about money ... just let your hubbies manage the finances!"

The Mail heaps further suspicion on the Jowell-Mills financial affairs by revealing that the couple have had eight mortgages on their two homes, and that the one allegedly paid off with a bribe was not the only loan to have been repaid within weeks.

* Jowell fails to quell bribe claims

What did Tessa Jowell know?

* Times: On the dotted line* Mail: Speculation munts over Jowell's finances

CAMERON SETS OUT TORY GOALS

Newly returned from paternity leave, David Cameron throws down the gauntlet to his rightwing critics with the publication of a new Conservative mission statement today. It will be put to a vote by the party's membership this summer.

The document - which the Mail describes as "an early draft of the manifesto he will present to voters" and a "move away from Thatcherism" - sets out eight aims the party is "fighting for".

Tomorrow's papers will doubtless pore over its wording, but the pledges include: "It is our moral obligation to make poverty history," "The more we trust people, the stronger they and society become," "The right test for our policies is how they help the most disadvantaged in society, not the rich" and, in a deliberate reworking of Baroness Thatcher's infamous phrase, "There is such a thing as society; it's just not the same thing as the state."

* Cameron redefines Tory goals

FLABBY APPROACH TO TACKLING OBESITY

The Times splashes with one of those now-familiar pictures of an obese juvenile belly enclosed by a tape measure. Accompanying the flab is a jumble of boxes and interconnecting arrows showing the "delivery chain" for tackling childhood obesity. The implication - simple problem, over-complex solution - is clear.

"It has already taken 31 experts 18 months simply to agree how obesity should be measured, the National Audit Office, the Healthcare Commission and the Audit Commission found," says the paper. "That delay means it is likely to be 2007 before children are routinely weighed and measured for obesity, just three years before the target [to reduce their number] is due to be met."

* Times: Children fatter, experts dither

GAZ DE FRANCE MERGER 'IS PROTECTIONISM'

There are loud grumbles from the FT and the Telegraph at what the French PM calls "economic patriotism" and the papers call protectionism. The French PM, Dominique de Villepin, has engineered a merger between Gaz de France and Suez, a Franco-Belgian power and water company, to thwart a possible hostile bid from Italy's Enel.

"In his eight months in the Hotel Matignon, Mr de Villepin has systematically erected barriers against foreign capital as the core of his bid for the presidency in 2007," complains the Telegraph.

"The prime minister is leading his country down a blind alley. At the European level, he and his imitators should be pursued by the commission. At home, it is [Nicolas] Sarkozy's job to prevent him from ever holding elected office."

The FT says holding on to national energy firms is tempting in an era of rising fuel prices, but warns that the eurozone will never prosper unless capital is allowed to flow freely within it.

* FT: Suez and Gaz de France set to merge

* Telegraph: The single market and Gallic delusions

HAMZA'S SON RAPS OUT MESSAGE

"I was born to be a soldier, Kalashnikov in my shoulder, peace to Hamas and Hezbollah, that's the way of the lord Allah . . . we're jihad through, defend my religion with the holy sword." Not, perhaps, the top-selling download on iTunes, but the Sun reveals that the Islamic rap group Lionz of Da Dezert is fronted by Mohammed Kamel Mostafa, the son of the jailed cleric Abu Hamza.

What did Tessa Jowell know?

The paper can't resist using the headline "Son of a preacher man" for its editorial: "His rap lyrics spurt bile and export terror." Odd, then, that the paper invites readers to "watch vile Hamza's rap at www.thesun.co.uk from 10am." Wasn't it just this kind of religious hatred that the Sun deplored when Hamza senior broadcast sermons online?

* Sun: Chip off the old hook

FLINTOFF TO MISS BIRTH OF CHILD

Should a cricketer on tour fly home for the birth of his child? No, if half the rest of the team are crocked and you've been appointed as the stand-in captain. That was Freddie Flintoff's decision, and the Mail ("Would Botham have missed a Test for a birth?") approves.

Flintoff said his wife, Rachael - whose baby is due during the third Test in India - supported him.

"The dashes back home have always dismayed old-timers," says the Telegraph. "They used to set off by ocean liner for Australia with no more than a wave of a well-laundered handkerchief, returning six months later to any number of new children."

Michael Vaughan has already flown home with a knee injury, Marcus Trescothick returned for "personal reasons", and the Guardian pictures Simon Jones - his face twisted in agony - as he suffered a knee injury in the nets yesterday. He, too, is on his way back to England for tests.

* Jones leaves England in disarray

* Telegraph: Country before family

DA VINCI CODE COURT BATTLE BEGINS

Your Wrap writer is one of the eight people in Britain who have never read The Da Vinci Code, so please forgive her if this item has been given less prominence than it deserves.

Briefly, the authors of a 1982 book called The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail allege that the Da Vinci Code author, Dan Brown, stole their "Jesus theory" for the plot of his own novel.

This theory posits that Jesus did not die on the cross but married Mary Magdalene, had a child by her and emigrated to the south of France, where they founded a dynasty that enjoyed the protection of the Knights Templar. (If that has, by any chance, spoiled it for you, take comfort from the Times's initial review, reprinted today - "the silliest, most inaccurate, ill-informed, stereotype-driven, cloth-eared, cardboard-cutout-populated piece of pulp fiction that I have read".)

Brown says the similarity is incidental.

The Guardian's Maev Kennedy files the most entertaining report from the copyright action in the high court. "Every now and then, in a day of tortuous legal argument about what constitutes "the architecture" of a book, of how plagiarism can be proved in the era of instant information, and of whether a single phrase about the Emperor Constantine being baptised on his deathbed could have copyright, the softly-spoken judge, Mr Justice Peter Smith, threw a remark or question into the proceedings that fell like the clonk of a concrete boot."

* New twist in Da Vinci code tale

COMING UP ON GUARDIAN UNLIMITED TODAY

Details of the government's flagship education reforms will become clearer today with the long-awaited publication of the schools bill.

David Cameron will set out his blueprint for modernising the Conservatives with an official "statement of values".

What did Tessa Jowell know?

Load-Date: February 28, 2006

End of Document

Firebrand politics of Iranian leader resonate on the streets

The International Herald Tribune

January 30, 2006 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1481 words

Byline: Michael Slackman

Dateline: TEHRAN

Body

Since he took office as Iran's president nearly six months ago, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been the subject of many jokes sent via text messages on cellphones across Iran. He has been spoofed on television and radio, here and abroad, as a bumpkin and a bigot for declaring the Holocaust a myth and causing international outrage over Iran's nuclear program.

One joke has the president combing his hair in a mirror and saying, "O.K., male lice to the left, female lice to the right," ridiculing him as a religious extremist who wants to separate the sexes in public places.

But that is just part of the picture.

Leave the prosperous tree-lined hills of north Tehran and Ahmadinejad appears to be solidifying his support. He has traveled around the country, doling out promises of economic aid in some of the poorest regions, sticking with humble clothing and religion-infused language that attracted his voters in the first place.

"He is leading a simple life," said Zabiollah Baderlou, 18, as he worked in a bakery in the city. "TV showed us his house. It was very simple. He is making these efforts for the people and all he wants is Iran's dignity."

Most of all, despite the limited powers of Iran's presidency, Ahmadinejad, an ultraconservative former militia member, has used Western opposition to Iran's nuclear program to generate national unity and purpose. Those dynamics have compelled even people who oppose him to give him room to maneuver. Stop Iranians on any street in any neighborhood and they are likely to demand that Iran be allowed to pursue a nuclear energy program, a sentiment that has served as a launching pad for Ahmadinejad's firebrand politics.

"You get the feeling that Iran, under the present leadership, is looking for isolation and to go it alone," said a Western diplomat based in Tehran who spoke on the condition of anonymity so as to be able to continue working here. "They want to show their way is the right way, and the former guys were wrong."

While the top leadership had decided to take a more confrontational approach to the West even before Ahmadinejad was elected, the new president began with such a harsh style that many officials were initially unnerved. But when the West failed to stop Iran from defiantly starting its nuclear program, or to punish it, some opponents reluctantly accepted that the president was right and they were wrong.

Firebrand politics of Iranian leader resonate on the streets

"First, we thought he is not right," said a senior government official who consults frequently with the ruling clergy. "Now we understand he is right. You need us more than we need you," he said of the West.

The nuclear issue has provided fertile ground for the president to try to cultivate a new political class, one that is ideologically driven to provide a new, and at the same time reactionary, face to Iran. After years of reformers controlling the government, Ahmadinejad is doing exactly what he promised, resurrecting the priorities of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini founder of Iran's Islamic revolution, who called for Israel "to be wiped off the map" chastising the West at every turn, and striving to forge a distinctly anti-Western national identity while re-establishing Iran's revolutionary influence across the Muslim world.

At a conference in October titled "The World Without Zionism," he effectively called for wiping not just Israel, but America, too, off the map.

"Many have tried to disperse disappointment in this struggle between the Islamic world and the infidels," he said. "They say it is not possible to have a world without the United States and Zionism. But you know that this is a possible goal and slogan."

While sprinkling like-minded people into positions of power across the country, Ahmadinejad and his allies have demonstrated that they are undeterred by complaints of the establishment, whether liberal or conservative. They have instead taken their appeal directly to the poor and middle class masses generally disgusted with a system widely viewed as corrupt and uncaring.

For the time being, they also have the quiet support of the nation's ultimate ruler, the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Even those members of Parliament who charge that the president's foreign and domestic policies are sending the nation hurtling toward disaster find there is little to do but watch from the sidelines.

"Right now, Ahmadinejad is an individual representing a new body in the whole Iranian political system that had been marginalized and disorganized," said a political professor who has close ties to many people in government and feared retaliation if identified. "They are in the process of making their identity and making history."

Ahmadinejad was largely unknown when he ran for office in June. He was the mayor of Tehran, the son of a blacksmith who had served in the hard-line Basiji militia and the Revolutionary Guard, and he was not expected to win. When he was elected, he was expected to fall into lock step with the conservative forces that controlled every other institution of government.

Instead, he has charted his own course. From the start he alienated many hard-liners by ignoring their nominees for important cabinet posts, turning to people he knew well but who were largely unknown. Most of his choices had backgrounds in the military, the Basiji or the security services.

With his team around him, Ahmadinejad has become the public face of Iran: aggressive, provocative and heatedly anti-American. He has adopted the phrase "World Oppressor," in place of "Great Satan," and his speeches are laced with religious references including an emphasis on one of the central principles of the Shiite sect of Islam: an appeal for justice.

Since ultimate power here is vested in the hands of appointed clergy, Ahmadinejad does not exert direct control over foreign affairs or nuclear policy. But his ascension came at a time when the region was in turmoil, with Iraq bogged down in a bloody insurgency, Islamic groups like Hamas in Gaza and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt emerging as powerful political forces, and Iran itself determined to develop a nuclear program which it says is peaceful and the West charges is aimed at developing weapons. And that insulates him from criticism.

"If it wasn't for the foreign pressures, perhaps Mr. Ahmadinejad, and his ministers, would have been called to the Majlis many times to explain themselves," said Akbar Alami, a member of the foreign affairs committee of the Majlis, or Parliament, and an outspoken critic of the president. "As the pressure has increased, the safety margins for him to operate have widened."

Firebrand politics of Iranian leader resonate on the streets

It is still very early in the president's term, and there is ample evidence that many powerful people within the establishment are still worried by the tone and direction Ahmadinejad has taken. And some people speculated that the Supreme Leader might in the end muzzle him, should consequences turn out to be too dire. But for now, hampered by nationalist reaction to the West's pressure on Iran, even some of his harshest critics are treading lightly.

From the sidelines, reformers are now trying to regroup. Many of them say that the best factor in their favor is the president himself. The feeling is that the president cannot, ultimately, meet all his economic promises, and that his policy of confrontation will undermine, rather than improve, people's lives.

Abdullah Momenie, a leader within the student movement that called for a boycott of the presidential election, said: "We see the sensitivity of the world community as a positive thing. Although we think it is an unwise action of power which may take the country to destruction, this might produce an opportunity for a democratic movement."

But so far the president has the upper hand. Ahmadinejad's comments at an Islamic conference in Mecca about wiping out Israel brought him international condemnation and applause from his target audience.

"He raised the question in Mecca and he received a huge amount of praise," said Mehdi Chamran, head of the Tehran City Council and a close adviser to the president who often travels with him. "The people living in these countries, within their hearts, they are happy to hear these statements. If we can strengthen ties with the people that is most important. When we hear the Egyptians take him as a role model this is a real sign he has reached the people."

In practical terms, the management of Iran has begun to change since the new government came to power. The Parliament has been fighting with the executive branch over a budget proposal, saying that its generous spending could threaten inflation. But the budget seems to reflect the president's campaign promise to spend more money on people's immediate needs. The president has taken a few swipes at tightening up some social freedoms, banning Western music, for example, but that edict has hardly been enforced.

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Undefeated despair

The Irish Times

December 17, 2005 Saturday

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Body

What is happening to the Palestinians is simply this: the careful destruction of a people and a promised nation, writes novelist John Berger

How is it I am still alive? I'll tell you I'm alive because there's a temporary shortage of death. This is said with a grin, which is on the far side of a longing for normalcy, for an ordinary life.

Everywhere one goes in Palestine - even in rural areas - one finds oneself amongst rubble, picking a way through, round and over it. At a checkpoint, around some greenhouses which lorries can no longer reach, along any street, going to any rendezvous.

The rubble is of houses, roads and the debris of daily lives. There's scarcely a Palestinian family that has not been forced during the last half century to flee from somewhere, just as there's scarcely a town in which buildings are not regularly bulldozed by the occupying army.

There's also the rubble of words - the rubble of words that house nothing any more, whose sense has been destroyed. Notoriously, the IDF - the Israeli Defence Force, as the Israeli army is called - has become, de facto, an army of conquest. As Sergio Yahni, one of the inspiringly courageous Israeli Refusniks (they refuse to serve in the army) writes: "This army does not exist to bring security to the citizens of Israel: it exists to guarantee the continuation of the theft of Palestinian land."

There is the rubble too of sober and principled words which are being ignored. UN resolutions and the International Court of Justice in the Hague have condemned the building of Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory (there are now nearly half a million such "settlers") and the construction of the "separation fence" which is an eight metre-high concrete wall, as illegal. The occupation and wall nevertheless continue. Every month the IDF's stranglehold across the territories is tightened. The stranglehold is geographic, economic, civic and military.

All this is clear; it is not happening in some remote, war-locked corner of the globe, every foreign office of every rich nation is watching and not one takes measures to discourage the illegalities. "For us," a Palestinian mother says at a checkpoint after an IDF soldier has lobbed a tear gas bomb behind her, "for us the silence of the West is worse" - she nods towards the armoured car - "than their bullets."

A gap between declared principles and realpolitik may be a constant throughout the history. Often the declarations are grandiloquent. Here, however, it's the opposite. The words are far smaller than the events. What is happening is the careful destruction of a people and a promised nation. And around this destruction there are small words and evasive silence.

Undeclared despair

For the Palestinians one word remains undiminished: Nakbah, meaning catastrophe and referring to the forced exodus of 700,000 Palestinians in 1948. "Ours is a country of words. Talk. Talk. Let me rest my road against a stone," wrote the poet Mahmoud Darwish. Nakbah has become a name that four generations share, and it endures so persistently because the operation of "ethnic cleansing" it names, is still largely unacknowledged by Israel and the West. The brave work of the upstanding (and persecuted) new Israeli historians - like Ilan Pappé - is of the utmost importance in this context, for it may lead eventually to such an official acknowledgement, and this would change the fatal name back into a word however tragic that word.

A familiarity here with every sort of rubble, including the rubble of words.

ONE TENDS TO forget the geographical scale of the tragedy in question; its scale has become part of the tragedy. The whole of the West Bank plus the Gaza Strip is smaller than Crete (the island from which Palestinians may have originally come in prehistory). Three and a half million people, six times as many as in Crete, live here. And systematically each day the area is being rendered smaller. The towns becoming more and more overcrowded, the countryside more fenced in and inaccessible.

The settlements extend or new ones begin. Special highways for settlers, forbidden to Palestinians, transform old roads into dead ends. The checkpoints and tortuous ID controls have seriously reduced for most Palestinians the possibility of travelling or even planning to travel within what remains of their own territories. Many can go no further than 20km in any direction.

The wall enclaves, cuts off corners (when finished it will have filched nearly 10 per cent of what remains of Palestinian land), fragments the countryside and separates Palestinians from Palestinians. Its aim is to break up Crete into a dozen little islands. The aim of a sledgehammer carried out by bulldozers.

"There is nothing left of us in the wilderness save what the wilderness kept for itself," wrote Mahmoud Darwish.

Despair without fear, without resignation, without a sense of defeat, makes for a stance towards the world here, such as I have never seen before. It may be expressed in one way by a young man joining the Islamic Jihad, in another by an old woman remembering and murmuring through the gaps between her few teeth, and in yet another by a smiling 11-year-old girl who wraps up a promise to hide it in the despair . . .

This stance, as you call it, how does it work?

Listen . . .

Three boys squatting and playing marbles in the corner of an alley in a refugee camp. In this camp many of the refugees originally came from Haifa. The dexterity with which the boys flick a marble with one thumb, the rest of the body motionless, is not unconnected with the familiarity of very cramped spaces.

Three metres down the alleyway, which is narrower than any hotel corridor, is a shop selling second-hand bicycle parts. All the handlebars are arranged on one hanger, all the back wheels on another, the saddles on a third. If it wasn't for their arrangement, the pieces would look like unsellable scrap. As it is, they sell.

On the wall of a low building with a metal door, opposite the shop, is written: "From the womb of the camp a revolution is born every day." A school teacher lives with his sister in the two rooms behind the metal door. He indicates the floor of another room which was the size of two bath tubs. The ceiling and walls have fallen down. "That's the room where I was born," he says.

Return to his present livingroom. He points to a photo in a gilded frame which is hanging on the wall beside an official portrait of Arafat wearing his keffiyeh. "The framed photo there is my father as a young man, it was taken in Haifa! A colleague told me once he looks like Pasternak, the Russian poet, what do you think?" (He does.) "He had a heart complaint and the Nakbah killed him. He died in this very room when I was 12."

At the far end of the building with the metal door, opposite the shop of bicycle parts, eight paces away from where the boys are playing marbles in the corner, there's a square metre of open earth where a jasmine bush is growing.

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It has only two white flowers, for it's November. Around its root, chucked there from the alley, are a dozen empty plastic mineral water bottles. At least 60 per cent of the camp inhabitants are unemployed. The camps are shanty towns.

When somebody has the opportunity to leave a camp and cross the rubble to slightly better accommodation, it can happen that they turn it down and choose to stay. In the camp they are a member, like a finger, of an endless body. Moving out would be an amputation. The stance of undeclared despair works like this.

Listen . . .

The olive trees on the topmost terrace look tousled; the silver undersides of their leaves are far more visible than usual. This is because yesterday their olives were picked. Last year the crop was poor, the trees tired. This year is better. According to their girth, the trees must be around three or four centuries old. The terraces of dry limestone are probably older.

A couple of kilometres away to the west and south are two recently built settlements. Regular, compact, urban (the settlers commute each day to work in Israel), impenetrable. Neither looks like a village, more like a huge jeep, large enough on the ground to house comfortably 200 settlers with guns. Both are illegal, both are built on hills, both have lookout towers slender as a mosque's minaret. Their virtual message to the surrounding countryside is: Hands above the head, above the head I told you, and walk slowly backwards.

Building the settlement towards the west, and the road leading to it, involved the cutting down of several hundred olive trees. The men working on the site were mostly out-of-work Palestinians. The stance of undeclared despair works like this.

The families, who picked their olives yesterday, come from the straggling village in the valley between the two settlements, with a population of about 3,000. Twenty men from the village are in Israeli prisons. One was released two days ago. Several of the young have recently joined Hamas. Many more will vote for Hamas next January. All the kids have toy pistols. All the young grandmothers, whilst wondering what became of the promises they once wrapped, nod in approval at their sons, daughters-in-law, nephews, and worry every night. The stance of undeclared despair works like this.

THE MUQATA, ARAFAT'S headquarters in the Palestinian capital of Ramallah, was a gigantic heap of rubble three years ago when he was held hostage there by the IDF's tanks and artillery. Now, one year after his death, the Palestinians have cleared the rubble - some argued that it should have been left as a historic monument - and the inner quadrangle today is as bare as a drilling square. On its western side at ground level an austere plinth marks Arafat's grave. Above it, a roof like the roof above the platform of a small railway station.

Anybody can find their way there, passing by scarred walls and under garlands of barbed wire. Two sentinels stand guard over the plinth. Apart from them, no head of a (promised) state has a more reticent last resting place - it simply declares itself to be there against all odds!

If you happen to be standing by his feet when the sun sets, its radiance is that of a silence. He was nicknamed the Walking Catastrophe. Are loved leaders ever pure? Aren't they always full of faults, not weaknesses, flagrant faults? Is this maybe a condition for being a loved leader? Under his leadership the Palestinian Liberation Organisation also contributed, on occasions, to the rubble of words. Yet into Arafat's faults were stuffed, like notes into a pocket, the daily wrongs his country suffered. Like this he assumed and carried those wrongs and their pain found a home, a painful home, in his faults. It's neither purity nor strength that wins such undying loyalty, but something flawed - as each one of us is flawed. The stance of undeclared despair works like this.

THE NORTHWEST TOWN of Qalqilya (population 50,000) is totally surrounded by 17km of the wall with only one exit. The once-bustling main street now ends in the wall's waste land. The town's meagre economy is consequently in ruins. A market gardener trundles a wheelbarrow of sand to distribute round some plants before the coming winter. Until the wall he employed 12 workers, (95 per cent of Palestinian businesses have fewer than five employees). Today he employs nobody. The sales of his plants - because the town has been cut off - have been

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reduced by nine-tenths. He throws away instead of collecting the seeds from a heap of lychnis flowers. His large hands are heavy with the admission that henceforth here they have nothing to do.

Difficult to convey the sight of the wall where it crosses the land where there is nobody. It's the opposite of rubble. It is bureaucratic - carefully planned on electronic maps, prefabricated and pre-emptive. Its purpose is to prevent the creation of a Palestinian state. The aim of the sledgehammer. Since it began to be built three years ago, there has been no significant reduction in the number of kamikaze attacks. Standing before it, you feel as short as a cigarette butt. (Except during Ramadan, most Palestinians smoke a lot.) Yet, oddly, it doesn't look final, only insurmountable.

When it's finished, it will be the 640km long expressionless face of an inequality. At the moment it's 210km long. The inequality is between those who have the full arsenal of the latest military technology to defend what they believe to be their interest (Apache helicopters, Merkava tanks, F16s, etc) and those who have nothing, save their names and a shared belief that justice is axiomatic. The stance of undeclared despair works like this.

It could be that the wall belongs to the same short-sighted repressive logic as the "sonic boom" bombing that the inhabitants of Gaza are being submitted to every night as I write. Jet fighters dive very low at full speed to break the sound barrier, and the nerves of those huddling sleepless below with their axiom. And it won't work.

Such a superiority of firepower discourages intelligent strategy; to think strategically one has to be able to imagine oneself in one's opponent's place, and a habitual sense of superiority precludes this.

Climb one of the jabals and look at the wall way below, winding its geometric divider's course towards the southern horizon. Did you see the hoopoe bird? In the long-term view the wall looks makeshift.

THERE ARE 8,000 political prisoners in Israeli jails, 350 of them under 18 years old. A period in prison has become a normal phase to be undergone, once or several times, in a man's life. Throwing stones can lead to a sentence of 2½ years or more.

"Prison for us is a sort of education, a strange sort of university." The man speaking has glasses, is about 50 and is wearing a business-lunch suit. "You learn how to learn there." He's the youngest of five brothers and imports coffee machines. "You learn how to struggle together and become inseparable. Certain conditions have improved over the last 40 years - improved thanks to us and our hunger strikes. The most I did was 20 days. We won a quarter of an hour more exercise time each day. In the long-sentence prisons they used to mask the windows so there was no sunshine in the cells. We won back some sunshine. We got one body search removed from the daily routine. Otherwise we read and discuss what we read, teach each other different languages. And come to know certain soldiers and some of the guards. In the streets it's the language of bullets and stones between us. Inside it's different. They're in prison just as we are. The difference is we believe in what's got us there, and they mostly don't, because they're just there to earn a living. I know some of the friendships that began like that."

The stance of undeclared despair works like this.

THE JUDEAN DESERT between Jerusalem and Jericho is of sandstone, not sand, and is precipitous, not flat. In the spring parts of it are covered with wild grasses and the goats of Bedouins can feed off it. Later in the year there are only clumps of boxthorn.

If you contemplate this desert you quickly discover that it's a landscape whose gaze is totally directed towards the sky. A question of geology not biblical history. It hangs there beneath the sky like a hammock. And when it's windy it twists like a winding sheet. As a result the sky appears to be more substantial, more urgent, than the land. A porcupine quill blown by the wind lands at your feet. It's not surprising that hundreds of prophets, including the greatest, nurtured their visions here.

The light is fading and a herd of 200 goats, with a Bedouin shepherd on a mule with his dog, is making its evening zigzag descent down to the camp where there's water to drink and some extra grain to eat. The thistles and rhizome roots give little nourishment at this time of year.

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The difficulty with prophets and their final prophecies is that they tend to ignore what immediately follows an action, ignore consequences. Actions for them, instead of being instrumental, become symbolic. It can happen that prophecies cause people not to see what time contains.

The Bedouin family below are living in two abandoned buildings, not far from a Roman aqueduct. At this time of day the mother will be cooking flat bread, daily bread, on a heated stone. Seven of her sons, who were born here, work with the herd. The family has recently been informed by the IDF that they have to leave before next spring. Hands above the head and walk backwards! All the female goats are pregnant. Five months gestation period. "We'll face that when we get there," says one of the sons. The stance of undeclared despair works like this.

A refusal to see immediate consequences. For example - the wall and the annexation of still further Palestinian land cannot promise security for the state of Israel; it recruits martyrs.

For example - if a kamikaze martyr could see with their own eyes, before he or she died, the immediate consequences of their explosion, they might well reconsider the appropriateness of their steadfast decision.

The goddamned future of prophecies that ignores all but the final moment.

IN THE STANCE I keep referring to, here is something special, a quality which no postmodern or political vocabulary today can find a word for. The quality of a way of sharing which disarms the leading question of: why was one born into this life?

This way of sharing disarms and answers the question not with a promise, or a consolation, or an oath of vengeance - these forms of rhetoric are for the small or large leaders who make history - and this way disarmingly answers the question despite history. Its answer is brief, brief but perpetual. One was born into this life to share the time that repeatedly exists between moments: the time of Becoming, before Being risks to confront one yet again with undeclared despair.

John Berger is a novelist and the author of several studies of art including the widely acclaimed Ways of Seeing. His latest fiction, Here is Where We Meet, was published this year and Berger on Drawing has just been published by Occasional Press. Entries: Drawings 1999-2005, a collaborative project with Spanish artist Marisa Camino, is at the Vanguard Gallery, Carey's Lane, Cork, until Jan 21, 021-4278718

Load-Date: December 17, 2005

Put job-shy scroungers to work

Yorkshire Evening Post

September 2, 2006

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Body

I burst out laughing when I read A Hague's letter (YEP Aug 24) inferring that there is no work in the UK and suggesting that the jobs available here are mainly part time and meant for women.

Since May 1, 2004, more than one million people have travelled from Eastern Europe to secure employment here in the UK and the majority of these migrants are young men.

Jobs are available in the UK but the benefits system here is easy to exploit, thus allowing these lazy people who don't want to work to avoid doing any.

The large influx of migrant workers to the UK is a government ruse to help the business leaders drive down labour costs, yet the trade unions are unwilling to complain because they fear being labelled as racist.

This multi-cultural engineering experiment to appease the capitalists is now placing a great strain on our schools, NHS and social services. Inflation is now starting to rise because of this problem and it will gradually get worse.

Other EU countries had the sense to place restrictions on migrant workers and this off-loading effect has resulted in our own population rising to 60 million.

We are now one of the most densely populated countries in the world and I ask how many more people should we allow into the UK to work?

The answer to the labour shortage in the UK is not to infill our country with migrant workers - this is madness.

The government should force the dole cheats and benefit scroungers to work for a living. It's as simple as that.

PAUL COCKCROFT, Tingley, Wakefield

Moving film with a message we should heed

I have just seen the award-winning film *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* directed by Ken Loach, about the events leading up to the Partition of Ireland and the resultant civil war.

It is one of the saddest, most powerful films I have ever seen and it moved me to tears.

Unfortunately, many reviewers in the right-wing press vilified this film as poisonous, anti-British propaganda although the events narrated are taken straight from the pages of history.

Put job-shy scroungers to work

The film's main message is that when people take up arms for a passionately held belief against a perceived injustice such as the occupation of their country by a foreign power, and they have the support of the local population, it is utterly useless for a conventional army to try to defeat them with brute force in the long term.

Such an approach leads to more hatred and violence on both sides with civilians suffering in between, and Ken Loach's film shows this.

History is full of such examples - Vietnam being one of the most tragic.

Yet, instead of learning from history the 'leaders' of the West continue to send more soldiers to their deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq, instead of addressing the root causes of the conflict, and they stand back while Israel destroys the lives of people in Gaza and Lebanon, in defiance of international law.

The suffering in the film was portrayed by actors.

The suffering on TV screens is by real people.

We should bombard our government with demands to stop supporting the US and, therefore tacitly, Israel, and to use its influence to tackle the real causes of terrorism, which are poverty and injustice.

MS E WELLS, Ash Gardens, Leeds

Blot on landscape

My wife and I took advantage of your featured walk,(YEP, Saturday August 26) around Fountains Abbey, which we both enjoyed immensely and rounded off with a smashing pub lunch at the Black Bull in Ripon.

Part of the final stages of the walk caused concern as travellers had set up camp on a lay-by on Fountains Lane, which seems to have been established for some time, due to the scrap heap, caravan awnings, horse carts, bird coops on both sides of the road and notices for drivers to "Drive slow, hens on road".

All a blot on the beautiful Fountains Abbey countryside.

HW IBBETSON, Rothwell, Leeds

Backward look for Leeds

Recent announcements of a planned massive new programme of house building on the sites of two redundant chemical works in Leeds is welcome news indeed, given today's serious housing shortage. However, there is NO mention of what these new residents will have by way of doctors, dentists, school, even shops, because there are none present.

Both Kirkstall Road and Hunslet Road enjoy, or is it suffer, enormous volumes of traffic and the pollution associated with it and are surrounded by the remnants of Leeds' heavy industries.

It seems a supreme irony that years ago, Leeds City Council cleared away all the old slums there and moved people out to the greener suburbs to enjoy fresh air, parks and other leisure facilities, yet now wish to return them to almost derelict areas devoid of facilities of any kind.

Sometimes you have to wonder if this city, and the country overall, isn't going backwards.

DS BOYES, Bramley, Leeds

Wait for hearing aids is no surprise

RNID was appalled, but not surprised, to read about the experiences of hard of hearing pensioner Audrey Carcone in the article 'Pay up £4,000 to avoid hearing aid wait, 16th August 2006.'

Put job-shy scroungers to work

Every day, RNID hears of more people who are waiting for up to three years to get a digital hearing aid from the NHS following their initial visit to their GP.

RNID believes everyone who needs hearing aids has a right to receive them free of charge and in good time.

We are urging the Government to tackle the unacceptable length of waiting times for hearing aids. Until then, thousands of deaf and hard of hearing people will continue to face unnecessary exclusion and isolation.

We are grateful to MPs such as John Battle, who have supported RNID's parliamentary campaign for shorter waiting times.

If readers would like more information about hearing aids and hearing loss they can call RNID's information line on 0808 808 0123 (freephone), email informationline@rnid.org.uk or visit www.rnid.org.uk

Brian Lamb, OBE, RNID Director of Communications and Anna Hollis Senior Media Relations Officer Campaigns

First class wail

They closed all the little Post Offices

beloved by the old and infirm

who now take taxis or buses

Do you wonder it's making them squirm?

Now, in their wisdom, they've altered the price

and given us sums to work out

There are numbers to ring if you want their advice

with a ten minute wait I've no doubt!

The envelope size, the stamp and the weight

Will have to be studied with care

I think I will get me some pigeons

and send all my letters 'by air'!

Mrs E. Martin, Hollin Pk. Mount Leeds

Look after the pennies...

I am sorry DS Boyes (YEP Aug 28): I agree with the head of Yorkshire Bank.

I have been a member of this bank since it was the Yorkshire Penny Bank, when we took our pennies to school on a Monday morning to put in our account.

This is the only bank I have known who encourages children to save.

Today I have my money paid direct into the account. My bills are paid by direct debit. We have savings accounts, where we have a little put in every month, plus a little in a PEP. To avoid any forgotten direct debit or cheque, which could tip our account into the red, we took out an overdraft facility for £100.

Put job-shy scroungers to work

Now because of this we run our accounts with no worries, taking the advice the Yorkshire Bank gives us. So I say take the advice of the bank and live in peace, debt free.

LE SLACK, Lingfield View, Leeds

Why we owe the Poles

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Poles for their support throughout the Second World War.

About 40,000 served with great bravery and distinction.

Those who served in the RAF helped us win against great odds the Battle of Britain.

We abandoned them after the war and handed their country on a plate to Stalin.

We benefit from the Polish people who make their permanent homes with us.

M NICHOLSON, Barwick, Leeds

Out of touch

Why on earth do judges give such lenient sentences for a variety of crimes that should warrant years of imprisonment, not months?

These people on the benches are mostly old, antiquated, out of touch with reality.

If it's because the jails are full then bring back hard labour and boot camps.

J SHEDLOW, Moortown, Leeds

Bus stopped!

Regarding our recent letter in your column about buses failing to observe the bus stop at Portage Avenue - this matter has been noted by Coun Mick Lyons (Temple Newsam Ward) and he has dealt with this on our behalf.

We have been assured that all companies concerned are instructing staff to take note.

Notices have also been placed in the bus shelter involved with an address where any more complaints may be sent.

We can assure Coun Lyons of our support in the future.

MR & MRS DOWLING

Portage Crescent, Halton, Leeds

At fault in war

I totally agree with Roy Pearson's letter. I remember well the carnage of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem when Jewish terrorists murdered British officers, men and civilians.

They were trying to make a point to get their own land and the British caved in to these terrorists through the Balfour Declaration.

Is it not the same for the Palestinians, Hamas, Hezbollah, etc, who only want their land and their freedom back and yet they are called 'terrorists'.

I don't agree that Hezbollah started this war.

Put job-shy scroungers to work

The Israelis captured a doctor and his son and also killed an innocent family picnicking on the beach BEFORE Hezbollah captured Israeli soldiers.

Where is the conscience of the world?

R ROBINSON, Harrogate

Load-Date: September 2, 2006

End of Document

That was the Week that Was...

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

September 3, 2006 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 35

Length: 1575 words

Byline: Compiled by Anne-Marie Conway

Body

Home news

Blairs and their power struggles

"Let me get on with the job," the newly blond Prime Minister reiterated through the week, dashing hopes that he might step down - or even announce a date for his departure - at the party conference later this month.

The publication of Forbes magazine's list of the world's most powerful women on Friday must have been a blow to the Blair household, with no mention of Cherie Blair (ranked 62 last year), leaving the Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett, as our top woman at No 29.

So much for Government spending on spin, which, we learned on Wednesday, amounted to pounds 154 million on advertising alone last year.

Thousands under surveillance, say police

Scotland Yard said yesterday it was watching "thousands of people" who might be involved in supporting or encouraging terrorism. At least 16 of them were arrested in separate raids in London and Manchester on Friday night.

Child abuse database not safe for famous kids

Wednesday's disclosure that famous people's addresses will not go on the pounds 241 million Children's Index "for security reasons" threw a doubt on the confidentiality of the database, which is intended as an early warning system for children at risk of abuse. The index might also break data protection laws.

Possession of "violent and extreme pornography", online or offline, will soon carry up to three years' imprisonment, the Home Office minister Vernon Coaker announced on Wednesday. At present it is only an offence to publish or distribute such materials.

No to greenhouse gases, yes to the hard shoulder

Thirty-eight environmental activists were arrested during protests at Drax, Europe's biggest coal-fired power station, in North Yorkshire, on Thursday. They might have appreciated the Tories' promise to increase the proportion of "green" taxes, albeit without going into specifics; the Forestry Commission's vow to do more for trees by reducing

That was the Week that Was...

its paperwork; BP's membership of a global consortium to share green technology, and California's decision to take official action to reduce industrial emissions of greenhouse gases.

And new measures allowing British drivers to use motorway hard shoulders at certain times could reduce the need to build more lanes, although critics said there were safety issues.

Fat is no longer just a feminist issue

Obese women were told on Wednesday that they would have to lose weight if they wanted free NHS fertility treatment; though appropriately sized single women and lesbians will now be eligible. And a 29-stone man was forced to cancel his holiday when Thomas Cook Airlines said it could not fit him on the plane.

Elderly starve in hospital

Nine out of 10 nurses told the charity Age Concern that they did not have time to feed elderly patients, leaving them at risk of malnutrition and prolonging their time in hospital.

International news

Israel stands firm on blockade

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan left Jerusalem empty-handed on Wednesday, having failed to persuade Israel to end its sea and air blockade of Lebanon without the unconditional release of the two soldiers seized by Hezbollah in July. However, the Israeli army did withdraw from a section of the border zone on Thursday. And a donor conference in Stockholm raised almost pounds 500 million in aid pledges for Lebanon and pounds 262 million for the Palestinian territories.

Meanwhile, Israeli police commandos stormed a British embassy compound in Tel Aviv on Thursday to capture a Palestinian man who broke in and demanded asylum in the UK; two Western journalists kidnapped in Gaza were released on Sunday after converting to Islam - at gunpoint; and the Hamas government's official spokesman surprised the world by telling Palestinians to stop blaming Israel for all their ills and look at their own failures.

Pakistan erupts

Days of rioting in Baluchistan followed the death of the 79-year-old tribal warlord Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, after a Pakistani commando raid on his "cave complex" last weekend. The authorities then refused permission for a public burial for the Oxford-educated Nawab of the Bugtis, who had led the armed struggle for autonomy for the gas-rich but poverty-stricken province.

Stay away, tourists told

A Kurdish separatist group warned tourists to stay away from Turkey, after claiming responsibility for four of the five bombs that killed three people and injured dozens, including 10 Britons, in Istanbul, Marmaris and Antalya. There were further bombs in rubbish bins in other resorts through the week.

As one door closes...

Just as the Government admitted that it was considering making Bulgarians and Romanians take a skills test to get a permit to work in Britain, when they join the European Union in January, Poland decided to open its doors to unskilled workers to fill the gaps left by the 400,000 Poles now working in the UK.

People

Solo across the Atlantic

That was the Week that Was...

Despite the breakdown of his fresh- water machine, Rob Munslow, a 28-year-old Territorial Army recruitment officer from South Wales, became the fastest rower to cross the North Atlantic unassisted, when he landed at the Scilly Isles on Wednesday, 64 days, 10 hours and 48 minutes after leaving Canada.

Polygamist leader no longer wanted in US

Warren Jeffs, a polygamist sect leader who has been on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List, was arrested in Las Vegas on Monday while driving with his brother and one of his 70 or so wives. He had been in hiding since May after being charged with arranging marriages between under-age girls and older men.

Gone but not forgotten

Vladimir Tretchikoff, whose painting The Chinese Girl aka "the Green Lady", is the highest-selling print in history, at 92.

The 90-year-old actor Glenn Ford, star of Gilda, The Big Heat and The Blackboard Jungle, found dead at his Beverly Hills home on Wednesday.

The Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, the first writer in Arabic to win the Nobel Prize for literature, on Wednesday aged 94.

The National Hunt trainer David "The Duke" Nicholson, aged 67, who wished to be remembered as "a good tutor of jockeys, a good schooler of horses and a hard bastard".

The great West Indian batsman Sir Clyde Walcott, the first non-British chairman of the International Cricket Board, at the weekend, aged 80.

Business

A 'divi' for the 21st century

The Co-operative Group, which owns the Co-op Bank and CIS, said on Tuesday it was bringing back the members' profit-related dividend it dumped 30 years ago, and rebranding its 3,000 outlets as "The Co-operative". The group wants to capitalise on its "ethical" trading approach and increase membership from today's 600,000 to four million by 2010.

The danger of gambling with relationships

The Greenwich plan for Britain's first Las Vegas-style supercasino hit a snag on Wednesday, when the developer Anschutz Entertainment Group admitted that its contract with a proposed casino operator on the site of the Millennium Dome could be illegal. AEG's owner had already attracted unfavourable attention because of his relationship with John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, prompting the head of the Casino Advisory Panel to remark that the licence was certainly not "a done deal".

Then came news of Harrah's Entertainment's bid for London Clubs International, which, if accepted, would put the Las Vegas giant in place to bid for the supercasino licence.

No need to Google eBay

On Monday, eBay, the world's biggest internet auction company, signed a deal with Google to create a range of online advertisements individually tailored to each of its customers. On Thursday, the Information Commissioner was asked to investigate whether eBay was in breach of the Data Protection Act.

For the record

More than 30 years after the Beatles split up, a New York court gave them and their heirs the go-ahead to sue Capitol Records and its parent company EMI for more than pounds 10.5 million in lost earnings from recordings that

That was the Week that Was...

were allegedly secretly sold. Meanwhile, Universal Music, the world's biggest record company, was said to be backing SpiralFrog, an online start-up that will allow consumers to download music free.

An international consortium led by builder Laing O'Rourke won the pounds 100 million job of making sure that the London Olympics are constructed on time and on budget.

Ford said on Thursday that it wants to sell off Aston Martin, makers of James Bond's preferred cars.

Airfix, whose models kept millions of schoolboys occupied for 50 years and more, went into administration on Wednesday.

Sport

Murray and Agassi still in

Andy Murray's preparations for the US Open were disturbed on Monday when it emerged that his new coach, Brad Gilbert, is being sued for an alleged breach of contract by his management company. The British teenager still sailed through his first two matches, unlike Tim Henman, who beat fellow Briton Greg Rusedski in straight sets on Wednesday, only to be seen off himself by Roger Federer on Friday.

Despite having to have cortisone injections before going on court for his second round, the American veteran Andre Agassi still beat his 21-year-old opponent, and staved off his promised retirement a little bit longer.

That's enough transfer talk for now

The window for Premiership football club transfers closed on Thursday, to the relief of all those overcome by endless speculation about where Arsenal's Ashley Cole might end up (Chelsea, for pounds 5 million and a swap with William Gallas). They know it's all over now, at least until 2007.

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LETTERS FROM READERS

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

August 7, 2006 Monday

THIRD EDITION

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Body

Raunchy: A floater's view of behavior on the river

Regarding "Raunchy on the river" (July 30): A group of about 15 friends and I were floating recently. The harassment was so ridiculous that we don't want to go back to that spot. We are all 21 years old or older. At the camp site, park rangers literally were hiding in the woods with night-vision goggles in the middle of the night to spy on us. I would understand that behavior if we were being rowdy, doing drugs or causing a disturbance, but all we were doing was playing guitars around a campfire. We like clean fun, and, yes, we do drink. It was an invasion of our privacy to be watched constantly.

I could see if they had received complaints about us, but we were the only people at the walk-up campsites, so we were not disturbing anyone.

Yes, some people are vile and irresponsible. But constantly invading privacy and watching campers or floaters is not the solution. In fact, it often is the cause of the problem. These young adults are going to party whether we like it or not. Every person needs time to do his own thing and have a little freedom. Why are we changing this country with laws that make us less free? Our country's new motto should be "America, home of the law-makers."

Casey Govero | St. Louis

Education as mandate

Regarding "The proper duties of a school board" (Aug. 1): If Jim Fox attended St. Louis Public Schools board meetings and got involved from a pro-education vantage point, he would understand that the current board, under the presidency of Veronica O'Brien, takes public education as a mandate to this community.

If Mr. Fox is interested in the well-being of students, why has he not questioned the use of "scripted instruction" for students in four core subjects? Could it be that Mr. Fox is more interested in adding negativism in hopes of undermining the enormous task before the board? Is questioning and insulting the board the level to which we, citizens and commentators, have fallen? If so, get a copy of the circus route at City Hall, not at the Board of Education.

James Wiswall | St. Louis Teacher, Cleveland High School

Seeking justice

LETTERS FROM READERS

It should come as no surprise to the Catholic school teachers of the Archdiocese of St. Louis that their bishops have continued to ignore their pleas for social and economic justice in the workplace ("Teachers union plugs away, despite lack of recognition," July 28). Witness how the church regards the service of a woman who has dedicated her entire life to the church: A 64-year-old nun is required to beg for a job in the private sector when her teaching position is eliminated for economic reasons. When a Catholic nun in the Archdiocese is treated this way, should lay teachers expect anything better of their church leaders?

Mary Reinhardt | St. Louis

Supporting harmony

In "Primary candidates II" (July 31), an endorsement for the Missouri Senate's 4th District, the Post-Dispatch said my role on the Board of Aldermen was "divisive." Now we should discuss issues that have an impact on the 4th District.

I am opposed to the wasteful war in Iraq, which drains sorely needed resources from our citizens, fosters super-high gasoline prices and wastes human life. I am opposed to taking homeowners' property by eminent domain. I am opposed to the sale of Forest Park and Fairgrounds Park. I am opposed to the reversal of Roe v. Wade. I am opposed to taking resources from the public school system to divert to private interests.

I support the U.S. National Health Insurance Act and restoration of the Medicaid cuts because I believe that health care is a human right. I continue to support affirmative action in employment for African-Americans, other minorities and women. I support project labor agreements, a living wage, increasing the minimum wage and collective bargaining for public employees. I support stem cell research and a new Mississippi River bridge with an affirmative action component; both would create economic stimulus for our region. I support equality for the gay, lesbian and transgendered community. I support building social and political relationships that will lead to black, brown and white people living in peace, love and harmony, like brothers and sisters ought to live.

Kenneth Jones | St. Louis

Art restoration

I was amazed to learn that Webster Groves plans to replace the apples and the World War II memorial in its "Wedge" park with a "Back Flip" sculpture by Allan Jones.

Mr. Jones is a pop artist famous for his exhibition of erotic sculptures. His art generally is thought to be anti-feminine. It does not belong in the Wedge.

It seems inappropriate that a town that has a female mayor and boasts of a worldwide university founded by women would allow this sculpture to be installed. Even if the item itself is relatively benign, it will draw attention to the artist and imply a measure of respect for his work, which includes a lot of things I wouldn't let my underage children look at.

The WWII sculpture should stay. And the apples are OK, too.

Connie Abeln | Pacific

Animals in need

Regarding "Horribly abused dog said to be recovering" (July 30). Again we hear about an atrocity committed by a human being on a defenseless animal. Charlotte, a Chihuahua found with a wire tie around her neck, is the latest innocent victim. Much public outrage and offers to adopt ensued.

Are people aware of the hundreds of animals such as this in area shelters? Why does it take headline news to make people want to adopt one of these animals? If they cannot adopt Charlotte, many other animals need homes.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Joan Becker | Richmond Heights

Learn from mistakes

Eric Mink's commentary "Finally, the networks are mad as (heck)" (Aug. 2), about networks shying away from broadcasting certain shows for fear of large fines, misses the most important aspect of this story. Like an out-of-control child, the networks created this problem and now must live with the consequences.

Without restrictions, networks will air shows with whatever content brings in money or makes their political or social point. That's to their shame because this robs the public of opportunities to see valuable shows, such as World War II veterans speaking from the hearts. Don't blame the parents for putting a curfew on the kids. Blame the kids and hope they learn from their mistakes.

Mark Davidson | Webster Groves

Vermin eradication

People are wailing about "civilian" Lebanese casualties. Israel aims at military targets, and civilian casualties are either accidental or the result of Hezbollah embedding its assets in civilian areas. Meanwhile, Israeli civilians are intentionally targeted by Hezbollah. Hezbollah uses munitions loaded with ball bearings that are intended to inflict maximum suffering on civilians, contrary to the Geneva conventions.

Since our Supreme Court thinks it should be running foreign policy, maybe it should tell Hezbollah and **Hamas** to obey the Geneva conventions regarding weapons and the treatment of kidnapped Israeli soldiers.

A fundamental difference is that Israel, the United States and their allies target the enemy and try to avoid the innocent; terrorists target civilians and attempt to maximize the suffering of the innocent to achieve a political end. We need to wake up and eradicate these vermin.

Tom Jeffrey | St. Louis County

Long-range view

Democrats said, "The president has destroyed personal freedom for thousands of citizens and, after four years of war, has no idea where this conflict is going." That was 1864, in the middle of the 1864 election.

Pressure from Democrats came within an eyelash of getting Abraham Lincoln removed from the ballot. They screamed, "Remove the troops now." Attacks on Mr. Lincoln were so vicious I can't repeat them. But Mr. Lincoln had a long-range view. So does President George W. Bush. Think of what Iraq could be: a democracy in the middle of Islamic dictatorships. What a miracle. What a great thing for peace in this world. But it never will happen if Democrats have their way. Democrats always want to cut and run. Remember Vietnam?

Bob Strain | Ellisville

Compensation coming?

While I find AmerenUE's letters and advertisements in response to the extended power outages commendable, they fall woefully short of an adequate response to those who were without power.

Ameren should issue a credit on future bills to all households affected by the storms; \$100 per day of lost power seems reasonable. That's less than what people had to pay for hotels, restaurant meals, ice, laundromats, lost food, etc., but it would be an acknowledgment of the additional expenses, hassle and inconvenience. If so, those who waited the longest for restored power would reap the greatest compensation for their trouble.

Those who were last to have power restored should be first next time.

Carol A. Truesdale | Glendale

LETTERS FROM READERS

Courage breeds hope

Watching morning television in Perth, Western Australia, I heard of the utterly selfless actions of skydiver Robert Cook, who helped a young Australian woman survive a horrible plane crash.

I ended up in tears at his actions. How brave he was at such a young age and how kind he was. I am sure his family, while devastated, must be proud.

In this day and age where selfishness is rewarded, where "me, me, me" is the norm, it is gratifying to hear of the courage from one person to help another in surely the most dreadful moments of their lives. There is hope for us all.

Patricia Cross | Perth, Australia

Notes

OPINION

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End of Document

Israel-Lebanon War Sparks Gifts to Relief Groups

The Chronicle of Philanthropy

August 3, 2006 Thursday

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Byline: Caroline Preston

Body

Amid growing fears of a humanitarian catastrophe in the Middle East, aid organizations, religious groups, and other charities are raising money to help victims of the fighting in Lebanon, Israel, and Gaza.

While some nonprofit organizations have received strong financial support from Jewish donors and other people with personal ties to the region, many aid groups say they have yet to see much of a response, in part because the political dimensions of the crisis have overshadowed the humanitarian needs.

Mercy Corps, for example, has raised just \$70,000 for its work to provide food, blankets, and other supplies to the approximately 800,000 people in Lebanon who have fled their homes because of bombings and other violence; the organization is also providing aid in the Palestinian territories.

Matthew de Galan, chief development officer of the Portland, Ore., organization, says that the charitable response is sluggish in comparison with other crises like the earthquakes in Pakistan and Indonesia, which affected comparable numbers of people. (About 3.3 million individuals were left homeless by the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, while approximately 1.5 million people lost their homes in the 2006 temblor.)

"People respond to wars very differently, as donors, than they do to natural disasters," he says. "Initially, the media focuses on the story as a political-military story, and not as much as a humanitarian story. Therefore, the humanitarian needs really aren't as top of the mind."

\$12-Million for Israel Fund

Despite a slow initial response from some donors, several Jewish organizations have raised significant sums.

United Jewish Communities has already raised nearly \$12-million through its Israel Crisis Fund, including a \$5-million grant from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, in Baltimore.

"There's almost a reflexive desire to respond when Israel finds itself in need," says Doron Krakow, a senior vice president at the organization.

In the past two weeks, the charity has increased the new fund's fund-raising goal -- now \$18-million -- on four separate occasions because of the growing needs in the region.

At the moment, the organization is earmarking contributions to aid elderly people, new immigrants, and other vulnerable people who remain in the north of Israel, which has borne the brunt of attacks by the militant Lebanese

Israel - Lebanon War Sparks Gifts to Relief Groups

group Hezbollah. It is also working to help open camps for those who have fled to the south and to respond to other needs.

Other groups have raised far less. Save the Children, which is assisting people in Gaza, Israel, and Lebanon, has received just \$5,800 for relief efforts so far.

Eileen Burke, a spokeswoman for the charity, says that donors are often slow to contribute to humanitarian crises created by war because they want to ensure their gifts will help those in need. "We usually see fund-raising levels increase once people see it's easy to reach children and women with life-saving materials," she says.

Zahir Janmohamed, Amnesty International's advocacy director for the Middle East and North Africa, agrees that the potential for donations to fall into the wrong hands gives some donors pause.

"People are nervous about donating humanitarian aid to Lebanon because of a fear that the money could end up with a group like Hezbollah," he says. "There is a lot of trepidation and people aren't donating."

Donors may also worry that their gifts could send a political message, says Mr. Janmohamed. "People have a fear their donations might be construed as endorsing either a political agenda or side, or worse, might even be construed as endorsing a terrorist or disfavored group in the eyes of the U.S. government," he says.

'Too Early to Gauge'

Despite some hesitation among donors, several groups aiding Lebanon and Gaza are beginning to see stronger fund-raising results. American Near East Refugee Aid, which is distributing medicine and other supplies to the displaced in those regions, has raised \$150,000 in response to the fighting. The U.S. Fund for Unicef has raised more than \$42,000 for such efforts, \$14,000 of it in response to an online appeal sent last week.

Even as donations increase, many groups caution that it is too soon to measure donors' response to the crisis. Most charities have only begun to send out appeals or contact donors in recent days.

"It's still too early to gauge," says Mostafa Mahboob, a spokesman for Islamic Relief, which sent out an e-mail appeal a week ago to its approximately 30,000 donors. The group is trying to raise \$5-million for aid efforts in Lebanon and Gaza, and has allocated \$1-million thus far.

Some relief groups are also turning to Lebanese-Americans for support. Mercy Corps, for example, has started contacting Lebanese-American organizations to ask for donations.

While Mercy Corps officials say it is too early to tell if their appeals have been successful, many Lebanese-American groups say they are beginning to raise money to send to Lebanon. Elie Najm, chairman of the Council of Lebanese American Organizations, in Raleigh, N.C., says his group is encouraging members to give to the Lebanese Red Cross.

And at least one nonprofit group has been established in Lebanon with the mission of helping people made homeless by the violence. A group of young Lebanese friends and acquaintances started Mowatinun, or Citizens, out of frustration with the political situation and a desire to take action.

"It started out making sandwiches and collecting money and second-hand clothes within our circle, and giving them to places where refugees were staying," says Talia Khalil, the group's New York representative.

The group then received \$20,000, as well as office space in Beirut, from a Lebanese family to expand its efforts. It has since raised another \$20,000 and is providing food and other aid to 3,800 people. Ms. Khalil is in the process of applying for nonprofit status for the group in the United States.

Gaining Attention

Israel - Lebanon War Sparks Gifts to Relief Groups

American aid groups are hopeful that the news media's growing interest in the humanitarian aspects of the crisis, as well as increasing attention from the U.S. government to humanitarian needs in recent days, will also help their fund-raising efforts.

The United Nations announced an appeal on July 24 for \$150-million for Lebanon, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice -- during her trip there that same day -- announced a commitment to provide \$30-million in federal aid to the beleaguered country.

"Now that the U.S. government has stood up and announced this as an issue, this is hopefully something that could garner more attention," says Elizabeth Griffin, director of communications at Catholic Relief Services, which is providing aid to people who have fled or are trapped in their homes because of the violence.

Meanwhile, charities working in Lebanon and elsewhere in the region say their efforts to help those in need have been handicapped by a lack of security. The south of Lebanon is virtually inaccessible to humanitarian workers, and groups like Mercy Corps, which worked there before the outbreak of fighting, have relocated to other parts of the country.

Civilian trucks and other vehicles in southern Lebanon have been hit by the Israeli army, and aid trucks bearing relief supplies for displaced people were held up at the Syrian border because of violence.

"A lot of truck drivers don't want to go out there and put their lives at risk, and a lot of food, water, and day-to-day supplies aren't getting to the people," says Ms. Griffin of Catholic Relief Services. "Should these humanitarian supplies not get through, we're looking at a major humanitarian catastrophe."

Many relief organizations are calling for the establishment of a "humanitarian corridor," 50 miles long and five miles wide, into Beirut and southern Lebanon so that aid can arrive safely.

Some progress on the humanitarian front was made last week.

According to the United Nations, Israel has agreed to create a safe route for ships and aircraft, as well as for ground transportation to travel from the Syrian border crossing at Arida to Beirut. But while the first 10 of 100 U.N. trucks traveled south of the capital last week to provide aid, humanitarian groups say it is still unsafe for them to transport supplies in many parts of the country.

Charities have also been unable to travel to assess the extent of the need because of the dangers involved.

CARE, for example, is waiting until safety improves before sending staff members into Lebanon to determine the scope of the crisis and how much money will be required to help victims of the conflict.

And in Gaza, aid groups say that humanitarian needs fueled by the cut-off of international assistance after the January election of **Hamas** have only been exacerbated by recent air strikes and other violence.

Refugees Given Aid

Some charities are now helping those who have fled Lebanon for the United States. As part of a plan administered by the federal government, the American Red Cross has provided food, water, mental-health services, and assistance in finding housing to approximately 1,000 people in five cities.

Even groups that do not provide relief say their work has been affected by the crisis. Seeking Common Ground, a Denver charity that runs a program for Palestinian and Israeli girls, says that its staff members have spent more time discussing the mental health of the young girls it serves over the past two weeks than in previous years and are now seeking ways to provide psychological support.

But if the charity's work has become more challenging, it may well benefit from increased attention and additional contributions this year, says Melodye Feldman, the executive director.

Israel - Lebanon War Sparks Gifts to Relief Groups

"We are an alternative to the mayhem."

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End of Document

Terrorism is rotting the Islamic revolution it craves

The Sunday Times (London)

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Byline: Amir Taheri

Body

Hezbollah's men of terror are both the strength and the Achilles heel of a movement that seeks to spread Islamic states, says Amir Taheri

The scene is Beirut, some years on, when Hezbollah has driven out the "Crusader-Zionists" and begun building the model Islamic state it has promised since the 1980s.

The rallying cry of Tony Blair -for western democracies to remain united in the global war against terror and engage in a battle of values -has not been heeded.

The western powers, led by the United States, have run away from the Middle East, allowing the Islamic republic and its newly acquired allies in Al-Qaeda to set the agenda.

The former American University of Beirut has been replaced by the Iranian-sponsored Islamic University. As teenage "volunteers for martyrdom" chant "Allah, Koran, Khomeini", the new chancellor of the Islamic University prepares to read a message from Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranian president.

He calls on the Lebanese to prepare for more sacrifices because his "jihad to wipe the Jewish stain of shame" off the map is only the beginning. He plans to liberate Egypt, north Africa and Spain.

Much has changed in Lebanon since the Party of God seized power. Women have been put into purdah and men forced to grow beards. Bars, pubs, discotheques, hotels with a louche reputation, and other "places of sin" have been closed.

Swimming on some beaches is allowed, though not for women, and men are required to enter the sea fully dressed. Gone are cinemas, theatres, the opera, comedy saloons, and bookshops selling publications that are "at variance with Islamic values".

Newspapers and magazines that had once criticised the Party of God or its patrons in Tehran have been banned. In accordance with the slogan "Hizb faqat Hizballah" (Only one party: Hezbollah!), Lebanon has become a one-party state.

All that is but a glimpse of what Lebanon could look like if and when Hezbollah, armed to the teeth and flush with Iranian cash, realises its dream of extending south Beirut to the whole of Lebanon.

Terrorism is rotting the Islamic revolution it craves

The Lebanese know what all that could mean because they have seen it first hand in Beirut's suburbs controlled by Hezbollah. But how many might wish to live in such a system?

The answer came in Lebanon's first free general election last year: Hezbollah and its allies won 14 of the 27 seats allocated to the Shi'ite community in the 128-seat national assembly. This means that some 89% of the Lebanese, including half the Shi'ite community, do not share Hezbollah's vision of an Islamic state modelled on Iran.

Much of Hezbollah's current power and prestige is due to the fact that it is the best funded and best armed political-military machine in the country, feeding thousands of families through employment in its businesses or with subsidies and stipends.

Nevertheless, it would be naive to deny the fact that the message of Hezbollah, which is in fact that of the Khomeinist revolution in Iran and the various Salafist movements in other Muslim countries, appeals to large segments of opinion in the Islamic world and beyond.

The message, first put by Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, is simple: the modern world, a creation of Crusader-Zionists, cannot reflect the values and aspirations of Muslims. It declares that Islam has the right, indeed the duty, to offer an alternative to the western model.

To build the Islamic model, Muslims must expel the Crusader-Zionists from their land, regain control of their destiny, build powerful states and proceed to liberate Muslim lands lost to the "infidel".

The same message is put by Muhammad Khatami, Iran's former president, in a more sophisticated way: the modern West, a child of the Renaissance, has led to colonialism, imperialism and world wars, pushing mankind to the brink of extinction through thermonuclear exchanges or environmental collapse. Western civilisation has undermined the family, done away with moral scruples, encouraged sexual licentiousness and promoted greed as man's highest motivation. It is Islam's mission to offer all nations, Muslim or not, an alternative vision.

Such a purely political interpretation of Islam illustrates why the West must engage in a battle of values, as Blair suggests. For this political interpretation has several advantages for its proponents.

It challenges western-style nationalist, liberal, democratic, socialist and communist parties. It also prevents theological discussions that would reveal divisions within Islam, even inside rival Sunni and Shi'ite camps.

Inside the Muslim world rival sects persecute and murder each other because of religious differences. The Egyptian government does not allow Shi'ites to have a mosque in Cairo while the Khomeinist regime denies that right to Sunnis in Tehran.

Sectarian killings have become part of daily life in some Muslim countries, most glaringly in Pakistan and Iraq.

The more fanatical Sunnis and Shi'ites even refuse to shake hands with one another for fear of being "sullied". However, when it comes to hating the West and dreaming of planting the flag of Islam on every capital, they are at one.

Another advantage of transforming Islam into a purely political anti-West movement is that it can attract support for its various "causes" inside the West itself.

There are many westerners who, prompted by self-loathing or as a result of ideological passions, share the hatred that Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda have for the "infidel" West. The problem is that while most self-loathers in the West no longer use violence to express their views, Islamism of the type represented by Al Qaeda and Hezbollah is wedded to terrorism.

But there lies both the strength and the Achilles' heel of the Islamist movement.

Terrorism allows small groups to punch above their political weight. The Taliban militia consisted of just 6,000 men. The Fedayeen Islam, the backbone of the Khomeinist movement that rules Iran, originally consisted of just a few

Terrorism is rotting the Islamic revolution it craves

hundred assassins and their mentors. Even if we accept exaggerated figures presented by Israel, Hezbollah has a maximum of 8,000 fighters.

All those groups, however, were able, and some still are, to exert greater influence on their societies because they were ready to do something most people would not do: to use murder as an instrument of politics. By using systematic violence and terror, these groups hold their societies hostage. But terrorism could also be the undoing of Islamism.

The majority of Muslims abhor the use of indiscriminate violence even in response to genuine grievances let alone in pursuit of dreams of world conquest. And the history of the past three decades shows that Islamic terrorism can be defeated.

This happened in Egypt, where Islamists fought an exceptionally vicious campaign for a quarter of a century. It also happened in Algeria, where Islamic terrorism claimed some 150,000 lives in a decade. Turkey has managed to smash Islamist groups, most notably the Turkish branch of Hezbollah.

In the past five years Saudi Arabia has also crushed several Islamist groups, thus loosening their hold on segments of the population. Pakistan, too, has scored significant blows against Islamists -a fact largely ignored by the western media.

There is no doubt that force is often needed to break the terror machines that hold whole societies hostage. Algeria could not have returned to normal political life without defeating armed Islamists. Lebanon cannot live in peace unless Hezbollah is disarmed and turned into an ordinary political party.

Iraq will not know stability unless the insurgents and foreign terrorists are militarily crushed. But the war on terror has been won in several countries and can be won in others provided all those who wish to defeat Islamism remain united, resolute and patient.

The defeat of Islamism, an enemy not only of the West but also of the majority of Muslims, can be speeded up if force is complemented with political, ideological and cultural campaigns to reveal the bankruptcy of the Islamist doctrine. What is urgently needed is a common understanding in the West, and among modernising forces within Islam, of what is at stake.

This is not the first time that western values, of which many are now universal, have been challenged by mortal foes prepared to use violence, terrorism and war.

In every previous instance those foes were defeated because they offered despotism and despair.

There is no reason why the outcome should be different this time -or that the Khomeinist University should ever replace the American University of Beirut.

* THE ARC OF EXTREMISM: BATTLEGROUND OF VALUES AS WELL AS MILITARY MIGHT

Tony Blair says the West must confront Islamist extremists across the Middle East and beyond

LEBANON

Hezbollah, a militant Islamic group backed by Iran, has built up a strong military and political base

SYRIA

Supports Hezbollah and **Hamas**, a Palestinian group in Gaza. Has more than 300,000 military personnel and stockpiles of Scud missiles

IRAQ

New government remains weak. Some elements want Islamic state. Al-Qaeda also has a presence in the country

Terrorism is rotting the Islamic revolution it craves

IRAN

Led by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has called for Israel to be 'wiped off the map'. Suspected of developing a nuclear weapons programme

AFGHANISTAN

Taliban extremists are resurgent. British troops, who form part of a Nato force, facing stronger opposition than expected

PAKISTAN

Strong Islamic fundamentalist opposition to President Pervez Musharraf, who supports the West. Lawless borderlands are haven for Al-Qaeda

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End of Document

No ceasefire imminent

Guardian.com

August 1, 2006

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theguardian

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

Body

OLMERT: NO CEASEFIRE IMMINENT

Israel moved quickly to dampen down any expectations of an early ceasefire. "The fighting continues. There is no ceasefire and there will not be any ceasefire in the coming days," Ehud Olmert said yesterday, in comments reported by all the papers. The Telegraph says the Israeli PM was criticised by his own generals after offering a 48-hour ceasefire to enable the Lebanese to leave southern Lebanon - a move Hizbullah described as a "deception".

The Guardian says the Israeli PM wants an international force in place before he halts the offensive; the countries that may join the force want a ceasefire before they go in. The result is stalemate.

"Mr Olmert's defiance is rooted in rock-solid domestic support," says the Times. "Polls show 80-95 per cent support for continued strikes, with no evidence that the Qana killings or last week's bombing of a UN observer post caused a flicker of the needle. Overwhelmingly Israelis have internalised their Government's portrayal of the conflict as an existential one: Hizbullah as the proxy of Iran's mullahs, determined to exterminate the Jewish people."

Ian Black, writing in the Guardian, says "doveish" Israelis are aghast at the war: "Israeli doves hate Hizbullah but oppose Olmert's disproportionate response, which looks weak because he is relying only on force ... Some of the agonising now being heard in Israel flows from a flattering self-image that few Palestinians or foreigners would recognise. One successful Hebrew TV drama has a storyline about a pilot who has a nervous breakdown after killing civilians in Gaza while pursuing Hamas suicide bombers. The concept of 'shooting and weeping' has been around since Golda Meir expressed her fury at the Arabs who forced nice Jewish boys to fight and kill ...

"In the background are real worries about Israel's power to see off its enemies, an erosion of the old certainty that it can fight its way to security. And there is unease, not to be underestimated, about the very legitimacy of the Jewish state. If there are answers to these concerns they can only be in redoubled efforts, with whatever help others can give, to find a just settlement with the Palestinians."

Condoleezza Rice acknowledged that she found herself in "dicey circumstances", a remark the Telegraph says indicates that America is making little progress in trying to negotiate a settlement. But, it says, "there were signs that some of Israel's goals were being met. Hizbullah fired only two missiles into Israel yesterday and military sources claimed its rocket launching capacity had been largely destroyed."

No ceasefire imminent

The FT says Israel is deluding itself if it thinks it can destroy Hizbullah. "The prestige of Hizbullah has soared, in Lebanon and in the Arab and Muslim world ... Lebanon, whose 2005 'Cedar Revolution' Washington prematurely and opportunistically banked as a success for its Middle East freedom drive, is being destroyed ... The country could soon be a failed state."

* 'There will not be any ceasefire'

* Ian Black

* How ceasefire hopes foundered

* Telegraph: We will not cease fire, says Israel

SAYING NO TO DRUGS CLASSIFICATIONS

"DRUGS: THE REAL DEAL," splashes the Independent, publishing the "first ranking based upon scientific evidence of harm to both individuals and society. It was devised by government advisers - then ignored by ministers because of its controversial findings."

Predictably, heroin and cocaine come top, with alcohol at number five and tobacco at nine. Cannabis, a class C drug, is at 11, above solvents, LSD (class A), anabolic steroids and ecstasy (also class A), with the stimulant leaf khat at number 20.

The existing drug classifications "owe more to fear than reason", the paper says. The Guardian agrees. "The anomalies are staggering. Last year, for example, fresh magic mushrooms were criminalised and put in the most serious class A. Yet the drug is not addictive and not linked to crime ... With class A status comes a jail term of up to 14 years - as many youngsters have found to their cost. A brutalising spell inside can snuff out a bright future just as surely as any drug, and the adverse effects go beyond the unfortunate individuals caught: the misclassifications fuel a bulging prison population, which is costly for taxpayers and detrimental to the hope of reforming dangerous criminals."

* Class matters

* Independent: Drugs: the real deal

TWO MEN ARRESTED OVER 1967 SCHOOLBOY MURDER

The reopening of a 39-year-old murder case makes the front page of the Mirror. Two men were arrested yesterday over the killing of Keith Lyons, a schoolboy who was stabbed to death on a path near Brighton in 1967, "probably by teenage bullies from a rival school," the paper says. "Now 55 and 56, the suspects have been released on bail pending further inquiries," it reports.

The discovery of the murder weapon - which had been mislaid - under a pile of boxes in a police station basement, together with the use of DNA samples, have enabled police to reopen the case. They have appealed for information about a family who emigrated to Canada soon after the boy's murder.

* 39 years after boy's murder, police arrest two men

* Mirror: Nicked ... after 39 years

REFUSE OFTEN OFFENDS

"110 FINE IF YOU PUT BIN BAGS OUT EARLY," fumes the Mail in one of its threat-not-a-promise splashes. The paper says bin bags left out on the street are "an increasing problem" and councils are considering on-the-spot fines.

No ceasefire imminent

The Conservatives' local government spokesman tells the paper that fridge dumping is a much more serious problem and that "a smelly kipper or yesterday's vindaloo" should not have to be kept inside the house.

* Mail: Fine if you put bin bags out early

ROONEY'S A WINKER TOO

The first encounter between Wayne Rooney and Cristiano Ronaldo since the infamous winking incident intrigues all the papers. The Star says the Manchester United player greeted the "Portuguese winker" with "venom". But everyone else thinks they have made up thanks to a diplomatic lunch hosted by Sir Alex Ferguson.

According to the Sun, Rooney "winked at the World Cup winker" and the rest of the team fell about laughing.

* Sun: They wink, it's all over

UNBAREABLE STRESS

It is August and, despite the efforts of Hizbullah and Ehud Olmert, the silly season is in full swing. Today, the Herald Tribune applies itself to the vexed question of how little a lady on an artificial beach in Paris ought to wear.

Two policeman gaze searchingly at a couple of bikini-clad women lying thigh-to-thigh on a towel. "Nudity and thongs have been banned, but several women said that unwanted stares were already enough to deter them from baring too much. Page 3," says the front-page caption. Well, quite.

"This being France, there are rules for just about every sort of behaviour," reports the paper. "And this being France, even when there are rules, there also may be tolerance when they are broken, particularly when it comes to beach attire."

The monokini - a bikini minus its top half - has been banned, although no fines have yet been issued since the police and security staff have found that sunbathers generally oblige when asked to cover up. "If people want to see breasts, they should go to the Lido or the Moulin RouNo ceasefire imminentaris Plage advises.

"To stop women from wearing thongs, it's just so outrageous," a "tanned and well-oiled Brazilian property manager whose tiny Speedo was rolled down to reveal his buttocks", tells the paper. (Can Speedos be singular?)

A civil servant in a "revealing green bikini" offers some perspective on the issue. "We have so many problems in our country that deciding whether you take off your top or wear a thong is so trivial. What's more important is that people who have to work all summer have a place to sunbathe and feel like they're on vacation. If it's forbidden to be bare, I don't care."

Indeed. If the Wrap only worked 35 hours a week, she would definitely feel as though she were on holiday, beach notwithstanding.

Meanwhile, the Mail carries the cautionary tale of a man who decided his Cillit Bang all-purpose cleaner wasn't up to the job and mixed it with an eggcupful of petrol. "This turned out to be a mistake," the paper reports. "For the cocktail of fluids gave off vapours which were then ignited by the pilot light in his living room boiler." Ronald Cox was unhurt, but his bay window and kitchen ceiling will need to be replaced.

* IHT: Paris beach is all but au naturel

* Mail: The day my house went Cillit Bang!

COMING UP ON GUARDIAN UNLIMITED TODAY

Two British soldiers were killed today when their patrol vehicle came under attack from insurgents in Afghanistan.

No ceasefire imminent

The Israeli army will move deeper into southern Lebanon and hold on to that territory for several weeks, until a multinational force can deploy there, senior Israeli officials said.

Tony Blair has attended a climate-change summit with California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, BP boss Lord Browne and Virgin chief Sir Richard Branson.

The future of the Government's policy of imposing "control orders" on terror suspects when there is insufficient evidence to bring them to trial will be decided by the Court of Appeal this afternoon.

* Apologies for the late arrival of yesterday's Wrap, which was due to technical difficulties at our end.

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THE BOMBING

The Toronto Star
July 31, 2006 Monday

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Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israel has suspended its aerial bombardment of south Lebanon for 48 hours, following the bloodiest day of the Middle Eastern war so far.

But even yesterday's horrors - more than 50 dead civilians, most of them children, in a single Israeli attack - are unlikely to bring the conflict to an early end.

That was the consensus of a clutch of experts on the battle-scarred region who spoke to the Toronto Star yesterday in the wake of an Israeli air force attack earlier in the day that flattened a four-storey apartment building in the village of Qana in southern Lebanon, with a shocking loss of life.

"The government of Israel is determined not to halt the operation until it reaches a successful conclusion," said Ephraim Halevy, former head of the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, and now director of the Center for Strategic and Policy Studies at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

"And I don't expect a blatant demand by the United States, calling on Israel to reach an immediate ceasefire."

Most experts interviewed by the Star yesterday said they expect the war to continue for some time to come, never mind mounting international demands for a ceasefire and a negotiated settlement that might impose an end to a conflict that seems to grow more reckless and destructive with each passing week.

More than 50 civilians, including at least 37 children, were killed in yesterday's aerial attack on Qana, the worst one-day death toll since the war erupted nearly three weeks ago.

Speaking before the United Nations Security Council, Israeli Ambassador Dan Gillerman called it a "horrible, sad and bloody Sunday." He apologized for the air strike but blamed Hezbollah, which he said uses Lebanese civilians as human shields while intentionally targeting Israeli civilians.

In Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the campaign to crush Hezbollah could last up to two more weeks.

"We will not stop this battle, despite the difficult incidents (yesterday) morning," he told his cabinet, according to a participant. "If necessary, it will be broadened without hesitation."

THE BOMBING

Israel's announcement last night of a 48-hour suspension of aerial sorties over south Lebanon was intended to allow humanitarian agencies to deliver emergency aid to people stranded in the war-wracked south and to help them flee the area.

Last night, Israeli officials raised questions about just what occurred in Qana and said they also wanted to take time to investigate events leading up to the building's collapse at around 9 a.m. yesterday, or about seven hours after the Israeli air force says it made its bombing run over the village.

Israeli officials left open the possibility that Israel might hit targets to stop imminent attacks, and that the suspension could last less than 48 hours if the military completes its inquiry before then. It is unlikely Israel would maintain a ground offensive without air support.

Early today, Israeli warplanes launched raids on eastern Lebanon, Lebanese security sources said. The sources said at least two air strikes hit roads near the border with Syria in the early hours.

The Security Council expressed "extreme shock and distress" at the attack on Qana. A statement adopted unanimously last night by the 15-nation council "strongly deplores this loss of innocent lives" but did not call for an immediate truce, as requested by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan but opposed by the United States.

Instead, it stressed "the urgency of securing a lasting, permanent and sustainable ceasefire" and affirmed the council's determination to work "without any further delay" to adopt a resolution "for a lasting settlement of the crisis."

In Europe and elsewhere, there were growing calls for an immediate end to the conflict, which had already claimed hundreds of lives and inflicted hundreds of millions of dollars in economic damage even before yesterday's attack in Qana.

"This is going to make it more difficult for the Americans to fend off European pressure for a ceasefire," said Aluf Benn, diplomatic correspondent for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice cancelled a planned trip to Beirut yesterday and spent the day in Jerusalem instead, where she held meetings with Olmert and Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz.

She called for "an urgent end to the fighting," but this seemed to fall well short of pressing Israel to accept a prompt ceasefire or to withdraw its ground forces from southern Lebanon.

"This is the first time we have had a clear-cut green light (from Washington) in this regard," said Yaacov Bar-Sim-Tov, director of the Swiss Centre for Conflict Research, Management and Resolution at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

The conflict between Israel and Hezbollah guerrillas erupted into open war earlier this month after Hezbollah's irregular forces killed eight Israeli soldiers, captured two more, and began firing salvos of rockets - erratically aimed for the most part, but sometimes deadly - toward populated areas of northern Israel.

In response, political and military leaders in this country vowed to destroy the organization as an effective military force, and the war was on.

Three weeks later, Israel has still not managed to squash Hezbollah. The imperatives for Olmert's government now seem to be political as well as military.

"If the Israeli operation ends prematurely, in a way that allows Hezbollah to attack in six weeks or six months from now, the government will be in very great trouble," said Gerald Steinberg, director of the Program on Conflict and Diplomacy at Tel Aviv's Bar-Ilan University. "A premature ceasefire could cost this government dearly."

Meanwhile, there was no letup yesterday on the other side of the conflict, as Hezbollah put in its busiest day of the war so far, launching 156 rockets into northern Israel as of 11 p.m., more than on any other day since the conflict

THE BOMBING

broke out July 12. Some 30 rockets landed in or around the town of Keryat Shmona. At least eight people on the Israeli side were injured in yesterday's attacks

"The other side is not so eager to end hostilities, either," said Benn.

The attack on Qana flattened a building where more than 60 displaced people were in the basement. Many died as they slept. Rescue workers called off the search for bodies or survivors after hours of digging through the rubble with their hands, lifting out the twisted, dust-caked corpses of children.

Israel said it was unaware civilians were in the building and accused Hezbollah of firing rockets from Qana. Hezbollah vowed to retaliate, and the governing Palestinian movement **Hamas** also pledged to hit back with attacks on Israel. "Those people including **women** and children who were killed in this horrible tragic incident may have been killed by Israeli fire but they are the victims of the Hezbollah," Gillerman, the Israeli ambassador, told the Security Council.

"They are the victims of terror. If there were no Hezbollah this would never have happened."

Qana is already a potent symbol of Lebanese civilian deaths at Israeli hands. In April 1996, Israeli shelling killed more than 100 civilians sheltering at the base of UN peacekeepers in Qana during Israel's "Grapes of Wrath" bombing campaign.

Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Saniora said yesterday any talk of a larger peace package must wait until the firing stops.

"We will not negotiate until the Israeli war stops shedding the blood of innocent people," he told a gathering of diplomats. But he underlined that Lebanon stands by ideas for disarming Hezbollah that it put forward earlier and that Rice praised.

He also hinted that any Hezbollah response to the air strike at Qana was justified.

Benn said all indications are that Israel will keep its military operation going, noting: "We have virtually no (domestic) opposition to the war now."

That was true before yesterday's distressing loss of life amid the wreckage and rubble at Qana, and it may well be true still.

However, say the experts, the war will end eventually, and the terms of an eventual ceasefire will have to include such matters as the deployment of an international force to patrol southern Lebanon, as well as a possible exchange of prisoners between Israel and Hezbollah, and perhaps the turnover by Israel of a small parcel of land claimed by Lebanon and located on the Golan Heights.

It seems doubtful, however, that either the current fighting or an eventual ceasefire agreement will bring long-term peace to the region. "The future," said Steinberg, "is going to be murky."

Elsewhere, the Lebanese army opened fire yesterday on Israeli helicopters trying to land near a town in the Bekaa valley, security sources said. The four helicopters appeared to be trying to land soldiers near the town of Yammouni, they said. The helicopters flew away before Israeli warplanes launched air raids on the area, the sources said.

With files from Associated Press, Reuters

Graphic

THE BOMBING

Marco Di Lauro getty images Buildings are reduced to rubble after an Israeli air strike on Qana in southern Lebanon yesterday. More than 50 civilians, including at least 37 children, died. Israel accused Hezbollah of firing rockets from Qana. JACOB SILBERBERG ap An Israeli woman reacts yesterday as she stands at a site where a rocket fired by Hezbollah guerrillas from Lebanon hit the northern Israeli town of Akko, slightly wounding one person. Marco Di Lauro getty images Buildings are reduced to rubble after an Israeli air strike on Qana in southern Lebanon yesterday. More than 50 civilians, including at least 37 children, died. Israel accused Hezbollah of firing rockets from Qana. JACOB SILBERBERG ap An Israeli woman reacts yesterday as she stands at a site where a rocket fired by Hezbollah guerrillas from Lebanon hit the northern Israeli town of Akko, slightly wounding one person.

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Weck off now, Israel warned

Guardian.com

July 14, 2006

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theguardian

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

Body

ISRAEL 'MUST RESUME TALKS TO AVERT WAR'

"What's it all about?" asks the Mirror, summing up the current crisis in the Middle East with admirable concision. If, on the other hand, you want a stringent defence of Israel and a veiled warning to the country to back off now to avoid all-out war in the region, turn to the Sun and the Times.

"Israel has proved it will not be bullied," says the former. "Now it must choose the only route out of this crisis ... by reining in its forces and taking its place at the negotiating table."

The Telegraph says the answer is for a UN force to go into Lebanon and disarm Hizbullah. It is left to the Guardian, the Independent's Robert Fisk and the FT to condemn Israel's rocket attacks, which have killed at least 50 civilians, closed Beirut airport and provoked retaliatory strikes from Hizbullah on Haifa.

The Guardian describes the bombing of the airport as "outrageous" and says the crisis is "now a war in all but name". "None of this excuses Hizbullah. Its raid ... was an act of aggression, none the less so for being carried out by a non-state actor. Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000. Hizbullah's motive was to take prisoners to use as a bargaining chip to secure the freedom of its own people held in Israel. It calculated too that with the Israelis besieging the Gaza Strip and punishing and killing Palestinians there to try to free another captured soldier, their operation would be hailed as an act of Arab and Muslim solidarity with Hamas. That would suit Hizbullah's backers in Syria and Iran and cheer suffering Gazans, if not the many ordinary Lebanese who will pay the price in ruined lives and lost revenues. "The dangers in any such calculation have quickly become depressingly clear." George Bush should tell the Israeli PM to halt the attacks and seek mediation, the paper says.

The FT - which is worried about the jump in the oil price since the crisis erupted - also describes Israel's reaction as disproportionate and "illegitimate under international rules that outlaw the collective punishment of entire populations". It says Ehud Olmert is trying to prove his military credentials by "lashing out" and his strategy will not work.

The Times juxtaposes accounts of the deaths of a Lebanese family and an Israeli woman in moving reports on its front page. The latter was hit by a Hizbullah rocket as she sat on her balcony; the family was a Shia cleric with alleged connections to Hizbullah and his wife and 10 children. All died in an Israeli air raid on their home.

Weck off now, Israel warned

- * Israel attacks from air and sea
- * Disproportionate, dangerous, destructive
- * Times: Two sides - one war
- * FT: Olmert gambles on a tough line
- * Telegraph: The state of Lebanon
- * Sun: Blair: Evacuate the Brits

LEVY TO CONTINUE FUNDRAISING ROLE

The Times is not waiting for the outcome of the inquiry into "cash-for-peerages" to deliver its verdict on the affair.

"In a sense this [the inquiry and possible prosecutions] is all superfluous. The absence of a trial would not mean that what Labour (or the Opposition) did before the last election was ethical. It is an open secret that those who are determined to be nominated for a political honour can advance their chances hugely if they offer big sums to a party. This bargain is not explicit: it does not need to be. Business is conducted semi-telepathically. It is a practice that has taken place under both the major political parties (and the Liberal Democrats have not been whiter-than-white either) for a very long time. ... "And it is a practice that stinks. It is utterly demeaning to every person and every institution concerned. Many of the wealthy businessmen are admirable souls, extremely successful in their fields, charitable in their private lives and a potential asset to the second chamber. Yet they can find themselves drawn into a squalid auction. It is a system that has to be reformed."

Elsewhere, the paper reports that Lord Levy, who was questioned again by police yesterday, will continue to raise money for Labour because he is good at it and the party needs it. So far 48 people have been questioned and three have refused to be interviewed.

Polly Toynbee blames Labour's failure to introduce state funding for political parties for the affair; Roy Hattersley writes in the Times that Tony Blair's efforts to sever his dependence on trade unions are mostly responsible.

- * Cash and honours inquiry widens
- * Times: Oh what a tangled web

SURVEY RAISES OFFICIAL CHILD AUTISM RATE TO 1%

The Mail splashes with details of a study suggesting that many more children may be suffering from autism than previously thought. The researchers speculate that pesticides, vaccines, antibiotics or diet might bring out a genetic predisposition to autism.

- * Mail: Autism at a record high

IRAQI SECTARIAN VIOLENCE CONTINUES

The Herald Tribune says the sectarian violence of recent weeks is ebbing in Iraq - only six people were killed yesterday, compared with more than 140 in the previous four days. The Times gives a rather different impression.

"As I hung up the phone, I wondered if I would ever see my friend Ali alive again. Ali, the Times translator for the past three years, lives in west Baghdad, an area that is now in meltdown as a bitter civil war rages between Sunni insurgents and Shia militias. It is, quite simply, out of control," reports James Hider.

"I had returned to Baghdad on Monday after a break of several months, during which I too was guilty of glazing over every time I read another story of Iraqi violence. But two nights on the phone, listening to my lost and frightened Iraqi staff facing death at any moment, persuaded me that Baghdad is verging on total collapse.

Weck off now, Israel warned

"Ali phoned me on Tuesday night, about 10.30pm. There were cars full of gunmen prowling his mixed neighbourhood, he said. He and his neighbours were frantically exchanging information, trying to identify the gunmen. "Were they the Mahdi Army, the Shia militia blamed for drilling holes in their victims' eyes and limbs before executing them by the dozen? Or were they Sunni insurgents hunting down Shias to avenge Sunday's massacre when Shia gunmen rampaged through an area called Jihad, pulling people from their cars and homes and shooting them in the streets?"

* IHT: Iraqi ministers hold crisis talks amid ebb in violence

* Times: My friends live in fear

DOUBLE CENTURIES PUT PAKISTAN ON BACK FOOT

"England could hardly have begun the first npower test match against Pakistan in better fashion," says the Times. Both Paul Collingwood and Alastair Cook made centuries for an unbroken fourth-wicket stand of 221.

Regrettably, Geoff Boycott is not around to file grim warnings about the rest of the match, so Cook phones in a downbeat assessment of his own performance to the Telegraph. "I never felt like I was timing the ball well, but I just tried to be gritty and pick up those singles. I'll take an ugly hundred over a pretty 10 any day." Would-be Lord's spectators have been warned.

* Collingwood and Cook may Pakistan pay

* Telegraph: Alastair Cook

BREAKDOWNS NO JOKE FOR 'DUMB BLONDES'

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The Wrap: Back off now, Israel warned

Guardian.com

July 14, 2006

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theguardian

Length: 1568 words

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

Body

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

ISRAEL 'MUST RESUME TALKS TO AVERT WAR'

"What's it all about?" asks the Mirror, summing up the current crisis in the Middle East with admirable concision. If, on the other hand, you want a stringent defence of Israel and a veiled warning to the country to back off now to avoid all-out war in the region, turn to the Sun and the Times.

"Israel has proved it will not be bullied," says the former. "Now it must choose the only route out of this crisis ... by reining in its forces and taking its place at the negotiating table."

The Telegraph says the answer is for a UN force to go into Lebanon and disarm Hizbullah. It is left to the Guardian, the Independent's Robert Fisk and the FT to condemn Israel's rocket attacks, which have killed at least 50 civilians, closed Beirut airport and provoked retaliatory strikes from Hizbullah on Haifa.

The Guardian describes the bombing of the airport as "outrageous" and says the crisis is "now a war in all but name". "None of this excuses Hizbullah. Its raid ... was an act of aggression, none the less so for being carried out by a non-state actor. Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000. Hizbullah's motive was to take prisoners to use as a bargaining chip to secure the freedom of its own people held in Israel. It calculated too that with the Israelis besieging the Gaza Strip and punishing and killing Palestinians there to try to free another captured soldier, their operation would be hailed as an act of Arab and Muslim solidarity with Hamas. That would suit Hizbullah's backers in Syria and Iran and cheer suffering Gazans, if not the many ordinary Lebanese who will pay the price in ruined lives and lost revenues. "The dangers in any such calculation have quickly become depressingly clear." George Bush should tell the Israeli PM to halt the attacks and seek mediation, the paper says.

The FT - which is worried about the jump in the oil price since the crisis erupted - also describes Israel's reaction as disproportionate and "illegitimate under international rules that outlaw the collective punishment of entire populations". It says Ehud Olmert is trying to prove his military credentials by "lashing out" and his strategy will not work.

The Wrap: Back off now, Israel warned

The Times juxtaposes accounts of the deaths of a Lebanese family and an Israeli woman in moving reports on its front page. The latter was hit by a Hizbullah rocket as she sat on her balcony; the family was a Shia cleric with alleged connections to Hizbullah and his wife and 10 children. All died in an Israeli air raid on their home.

- * Israel attacks from air and sea
- * Disproportionate, dangerous, destructive
- * Times: Two sides - one war
- * FT: Olmert gambles on a tough line
- * Telegraph: The state of Lebanon
- * Sun: Blair: Evacuate the Brits

LEVY TO CONTINUE FUNDRAISING ROLE

The Times is not waiting for the outcome of the inquiry into "cash-for-peerages" to deliver its verdict on the affair.

"In a sense this [the inquiry and possible prosecutions] is all superfluous. The absence of a trial would not mean that what Labour (or the Opposition) did before the last election was ethical. It is an open secret that those who are determined to be nominated for a political honour can advance their chances hugely if they offer big sums to a party. This bargain is not explicit: it does not need to be. Business is conducted semi-telepathically. It is a practice that has taken place under both the major political parties (and the Liberal Democrats have not been whiter-than-white either) for a very long time. ... "And it is a practice that stinks. It is utterly demeaning to every person and every institution concerned. Many of the wealthy businessmen are admirable souls, extremely successful in their fields, charitable in their private lives and a potential asset to the second chamber. Yet they can find themselves drawn into a squalid auction. It is a system that has to be reformed."

Elsewhere, the paper reports that Lord Levy, who was questioned again by police yesterday, will continue to raise money for Labour because he is good at it and the party needs it. So far 48 people have been questioned and three have refused to be interviewed.

Polly Toynbee blames Labour's failure to introduce state funding for political parties for the affair; Roy Hattersley writes in the Times that Tony Blair's efforts to sever his dependence on trade unions are mostly responsible.

- * Cash and honours inquiry widens
- * Times: Oh what a tangled web

SURVEY RAISES OFFICIAL CHILD AUTISM RATE TO 1%

The Mail splashes with details of a study suggesting that many more children may be suffering from autism than previously thought. The researchers speculate that pesticides, vaccines, antibiotics or diet might bring out a genetic predisposition to autism.

- * Mail: Autism at a record high

IRAQI SECTARIAN VIOLENCE CONTINUES

The Herald Tribune says the sectarian violence of recent weeks is ebbing in Iraq - only six people were killed yesterday, compared with more than 140 in the previous four days. The Times gives a rather different impression.

"As I hung up the phone, I wondered if I would ever see my friend Ali alive again. Ali, the Times translator for the past three years, lives in west Baghdad, an area that is now in meltdown as a bitter civil war rages between Sunni insurgents and Shia militias. It is, quite simply, out of control," reports James Hider.

The Wrap: Back off now, Israel warned

"I had returned to Baghdad on Monday after a break of several months, during which I too was guilty of glazing over every time I read another story of Iraqi violence. But two nights on the phone, listening to my lost and frightened Iraqi staff facing death at any moment, persuaded me that Baghdad is verging on total collapse.

"Ali phoned me on Tuesday night, about 10.30pm. There were cars full of gunmen prowling his mixed neighbourhood, he said. He and his neighbours were frantically exchanging information, trying to identify the gunmen. "Were they the Mahdi Army, the Shia militia blamed for drilling holes in their victims' eyes and limbs before executing them by the dozen? Or were they Sunni insurgents hunting down Shias to avenge Sunday's massacre when Shia gunmen rampaged through an area called Jihad, pulling people from their cars and homes and shooting them in the streets?"

* IHT: Iraqi ministers hold crisis talks amid ebb in violence

* Times: My friends live in fear

DOUBLE CENTURIES PUT PAKISTAN ON BACK FOOT

"England could hardly have begun the first npower test match against Pakistan in better fashion," says the Times. Both Paul Collingwood and Alastair Cook made centuries for an unbroken fourth-wicket stand of 221.

Regrettably, Geoff Boycott is not around to file grim warnings about the rest of the match, so Cook phones in a downbeat assessment of his own performance to the Telegraph. "I never felt like I was timing the ball well, but I just tried to be gritty and pick up those singles. I'll take an ugly hundred over a pretty 10 any day." Would-be Lord's spectators have been warned.

* Collingwood and Cook may Pakistan pay

* Telegraph: Alastair Cook

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