

Date and Time: Saturday, May 4, 2024 2:41:00AM EEST

Job Number: 223498912

Documents (100)

1. [Egyptians struggle over response Sympathy for their 'brothers' apparently goes only so far](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

2. [39 die in Lebanese fighting](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

3. [HAMAS BETRAYS THE PALESTINIANS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

4. [Italian peacekeepers in Zibqin , south Lebanon > LEBANON : Peacekeepers Tread Lightly in a Wounded Land](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

5. [Violence erupts in Lebanon ; 39 killed in skirmish Army troops battle Fatah Islam group](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

6. [*Soliya Programme connects United States and the Middle East campuses CULTURE: It All Begins With a Webcam and a Smile*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

7. [*Assassination woven in tapestry of world conflict But the 'cowardly act' has also been a part of the evolution of democracies, writes Neely Tuckerr*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

8. [*Islamo-Fascism Awareness Week POLITICS-US: Welcome to 'Islamo-Fascism Awareness Week&*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

9. [*The humble car bomb changed the world*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

10. [*JOAN OF ARC V NAPOLEON HOPEFULS NECK AND NECK AS FRANCE GOES TO POLLS*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

11. [JOAN OF ARC V NAPOLEON AS FRANCE GOES TO POLLS, HEROES INSPIRE HOPEFULS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

13. [Why Islamist political parties are prospering](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

14. [Mailbag](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

15. [US: Mashaal's truce offer to Carter is meaningless. Ex-president brokers Hamas pledge to send letter from Schalit to parents](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

16. [YES STARS beats a tonsorial Zionist gagfest](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

17. [Iran resurgent, Persia redux](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

18. [Whither Israeli Arabs?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

19. [WITH CAIR, COMPROMISE COMPLICATED](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

20. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

21. [Review: A life in writing: 'A circle of madness': Lebanese author Elias Khoury gives voice to refugees and dissolves boundaries through fiction. One year after the 33-day war, he feels his country is hurtling towards chaos again.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

22. [A Zionist hero](#)

Client/Matter: -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

23. ['The people are really in a panic ... Gaza has no safe places' As thousands of Palestinians flee from Israel's onslaught, Damien Henderson reports on an intensifying campaign Refugees rush to escape air attacks | Eyewitnesses tell of devastation | Rallies in UK | Political impact in Middle East | World leaders react to the crisis | Crucial history](#)

Client/Matter: -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

24. [Israeli assault on Hamas kills more than 200](#)

Client/Matter: -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

25. [Comment & Debate: Israel has yet to learn the US lesson, that the war on terror was a failure: Americans now realise that aggression fuels extremism. This offers Obama the chance for a new Middle East policy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

26. [*Songs of lost innocence*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

27. [*Victory through air attack? It's pie in the sky Israel imagined it could defeat Hamas though aerial bombardment. It shows it hasn't learnt the lessons of history, Correlli Barnett says*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

28. [*Israel pulls back as war enters its 'final act' Truce deal is close, says UN Secretary-General*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

29. [*Lockerbie: Justice on Trial: The night death rained from the skies*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

30. [*My Say: Palestine 's Warsaw ghettos*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

31. [*The Rule of Law*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

32. [*Islamic reasoning, with loopholes*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

33. [*Vote Conservative for their record*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

34. [*For Jewish Voters in New York , 'Almost an Embarrassment of Riches'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

35. [*Meade students tackle homeland security issues*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

36. [THE END OF JIHAD](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

37. [Lies, kidnapping and a mysterious laptop](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

38. [She raised our hopes - then dashed them](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

39. [Cool Islam in the entrails of post-industrial Buffalo](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

40. [Chasing dreams of a new era in the Mideast](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

41. [*U.S. arms sales preserve Israel 's edge POLITICS: U.S. Arms Sales Preserve Israel 's Edge*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

42. [*Cool Islam in the entrails of post-industrial Buffalo*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

43. [*Brian Lenihan is a Taoiseach in waiting... if he disowns Bertie*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

44. [*We are losing this war*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

45. [*Ivory towerchutzpah*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

46. [*Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Annapolis , Maryland MIDEAST: High Stakes for Annapolis Peace Meet*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

47. [Coming through the shells](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

48. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

49. [Readers Write](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

50. [The Kingdom is a compelling counter-narrative to anti- US films](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

51. [From cedars of Lebanon to waters of Jordan](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

52. [*Israeli offensive in Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

53. [*Force Zvika*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

54. [*Israeli offensive in Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

55. [*5 Minute Herald*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

56. [*WHY DOES RUSH HATE AMERICA SO MUCH?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

57. [UN appeal for truce in Gaza unheeded Aid groups express growing frustration with poor conditions](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

58. [Aid Groups Rebuke Israel Over Conditions in Gaza](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

59. [Soldiers of Allah](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

60. [' Hamas has been badly beaten'; Israel says goals met, ceases fire in Gaza](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

61. [UN appeal for truce in Gaza is rejected Fighting unchecked as Israel and Hamas defy cease-fire call](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

62. [ISRAEL REJECTS GAZA CEASE-FIRE, BUT OFFERS AID](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

63. [Assassinations are shots in the dark](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

64. [U.N. relief convoy hit in battle between Lebanese army, Islamic militant group](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

65. [If I Could Talk To The Taliban LITTLEJOHN](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

66. [Anger at kiss for teacher](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

67. [FAST NEWS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

68. [*Moral high ground is shifting beneath secularists' feet*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

69. [*Tour of duty*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

70. [*\(Ducking the\) Decision Day*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

71. [*A tasty prospect not to everyone's taste*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

72. [*Speaking to the region across a wide gulf*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

73. [Terror recalled](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

74. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

75. [THE 'INDECENT' PICTURE THAT HAS SET IRAN 'S MULLAHS AGAINST THEIR PRESIDENT](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

76. [Israeli Shells Kill 40 At Gaza U.N. School](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

77. [5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

78. [NO EARLY END SEEN TO 'ALL-OUT WAR' ON HAMAS IN GAZA](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

79. [Faith, freedom and bling](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

80. [5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

81. [Faith, Freedom and Bling in the Middle East](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

82. [A plague with no cure](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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84. [*HOLDING HANDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST THE PRESIDENT SHEATHES HIS SWORD AND TRIES TO RESCUE HIS LEGACY BY LIVING IT UP ON A TOUR OF ARABIA*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

85. [*The neocon hand in Obama 's victory*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

86. [*TWO WEDDINGS AND A WAR*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

87. [*I only answer to God, says Sheik*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

88. [THE 'INDECENT' PICTURE THAT HAS SET IRAN 'S MULLAHS AGAINST THEIR PRESIDENT](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

89. [BLOODIED GAZA SET FOR THE ENDGAME](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

90. [Mufti says he answers only to his God](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

91. [Mufti dismisses council vote](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

92. [Show of the week Wednesday 1](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

93. [Left-wing dreamers](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

94. [*Bush rallies Gulf against Iran 'terror'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

95. [*Empty tables, empty chairs*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

96. [*G2: The broken bloodline: Fatima Bhutto is Benazir's niece. The resemblance is striking: the long nose, the headstrong personality, the burning rage about a father's violent death. Declan Walsh meets the woman who would have been the heir to Benazir's throne - if it weren't for the family feud that came between them*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

97. [*Too close for comfort*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

98. [*Visions of the old settlers*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to
Jan 31, 2009

99. [*An oasis of tolerance in Turkey ; Secular Turks still fear an Islamic-rooted government*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to
Jan 31, 2009

100. [*Delights amid the dangers Beirut's hardy people buzz with a lust for life, even though the city bears the scars from decades of strife*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to
Jan 31, 2009

Egyptians struggle over response; Sympathy for their 'brothers' apparently goes only so far

The International Herald Tribune

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 5

Length: 1014 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: EL ARISH, Egypt

Body

Nadim Audi contributed reporting.

*

Egyptian ambulances have brought at least 43 wounded Palestinians from Gaza to the general hospital in this southern city, with 15 of them needing mechanical respirators to keep them alive, said Muhammad al-Gabr, a doctor who has been trying to keep them alive and get them to more sophisticated surgical hospitals in Cairo.

Nine remained here Tuesday, including a young boy. They all were in critical condition with blast and fracture wounds, and Gabr hoped to medivac them out Tuesday night. "The doctors in Gaza are very talented," he said with some admiration. "They've had a lot of experience."

He said that as far as he knew all the patients sent here were civilians.

He said he felt he was trying to do his part for Gaza, though he recognized that Egypt and its longtime president, Hosni Mubarak, faced a difficult political dilemma - needing to show solidarity with the Palestinians under attack while refusing to open the border between Egypt and Gaza to anything but carefully monitored humanitarian missions, like the 30 ambulances this reporter saw Tuesday heading toward Gaza.

"Gaza was part of Egypt if you go back in history, so there is a special feeling," Gabr said. "But we don't look at borders this way. We are helping the people."

But some here, where an important part of the economy is based on smuggling food, supplies, weapons and explosives to Gaza, feel that Egypt must do more while Gaza is under such heavy attack from Israeli warplanes.

"Egypt is helping the wounded and sending supplies for the people," said Hishmat Abu Bakr, 63, who fought in the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. "But we'd prefer bigger help. We'd like to break the border and go die there with our brothers."

Open criticism of Mubarak was rare Tuesday in southern Egypt, where the landscape and the architecture are nearly identical to that in Gaza. There is a heavy presence of police, military and secret police, the Mukhabarat, and numerous checkpoints along the roads on the way to Rafah, which has been declared a military zone.

Egyptians struggle over response Sympathy for their 'brothers' apparently goes only so far

President Bashar al-Assad of Syria and his ally, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah in Lebanon, have called on Egypt to open the barriers to Gaza and the Egyptian people to break them down. But Mubarak's forces have already clashed with Palestinians trying to leave Gaza, and he has said that the border would remain closed.

Egypt would only reopen the Rafah crossing when the Palestinian faction Hamas reconciles with the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, and allows him to reassert his authority over all of Palestine, including Gaza, Mubarak said Tuesday in a nationally televised speech.

"We in Egypt are not going to contribute to perpetuating the rift by opening the Rafah crossing in the absence of the Palestinian Authority and European Union observers," as called for in a 2005 agreement opening Rafah that was negotiated with Abbas, Israel and the United States.

Mubarak condemned Israel's "savage aggression," said Israel's "blood-stained hands are stirring up feelings of enormous anger" and called for an immediate cease-fire.

But in a riposte to Arab critics who live at a distance, Mubarak said: "We say to those who are trying to make political capital out of the plight of the Palestinian people that Palestinian blood has a price." He told the Palestinians "to restore your unity" and said he had warned Hamas leaders that ending the six-month truce with Israel would bring new Israeli attacks.

Bakr, the war veteran, refused to believe it when told of Mubarak's speech. "Mubarak could not say something so wrong," Bakr said. "The Palestinians are his brothers."

There have been attacks, meanwhile, on Egyptian diplomatic missions in Beirut and in Aden, Yemen. Egypt will act as host of a meeting Wednesday of Arab League foreign ministers before a summit meeting on Friday in Doha.

Muhammad Ahmad, 25, who owns the Farha(Happiness) dress shop, said he felt that Egypt was doing what it could. "If they open the border just like that, it will be chaos like last year," he said. "That's why we need an agreement. Here in El Arish we're so close to Gaza and yet there's nothing we can do. It's sad, but we're powerless."

Hassan Salem, 22, said he and Khaled Kamal, 25, had traveled the 35 kilometers, or 20 miles, from Rafah to this seaside city "to look at young women and to rest my head." Kamal said that when the Israelis were bombing near Rafah to try to destroy the smuggling tunnels that run between the Egyptian and Gazan side of the once-unified city, "we were almost knocked out by the noise."

Everyone in Rafah has family on both sides of the border, Salem said. "So there's a lot of worry - everyone on both sides of Rafah is worried."

They sat in a tea shop, eyes glued to Al Jazeera and its nonstop coverage of the wounded and dead in Gaza, with a special focus on two dead sisters, 4 and 11, shown lying in shrouds side by side.

"When you see small children dying like that, why did they die?" Kamal said passionately. "What did they do?"

Both were careful in discussing the tunnels, but Salem said, with a bit of exaggeration: "Israel destroyed maybe 40 tunnels the other day, but there are a thousand."

His words were echoed by Ahmad Abdo, 43. "The tunnels are our lifeline," he said. "The Israelis bombed some, but they can't bomb them all. Their economy is our economy."

Salem said that all Arabs should help the Palestinians, but he was less clear about how.

As for Egypt, he said that Mubarak was "doing all he can to help them." Kamal remembered how Hamas blew up the border between Gaza and Egypt last year, and how the first days of celebration were followed by resentments and the denuding of southern Egypt of goods meant for Egyptians. "After three days, there was nothing left for us to buy," he said.

Egyptians struggle over response Sympathy for their 'brothers' apparently goes only so far

The military men in Rafah, Salem said, "are there to help." But then he said, neatly describing the Egyptian dilemma, "Of course, if the Palestinians push through, the military is also there to push them back."

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

End of Document

39 die in Lebanese fighting

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

May 21, 2007 Monday

Copyright 2007 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 1103 words

Byline: Bassem Mroue Associated Press

Body

TRIPOLI, Lebanon -- Lebanese army tanks pounded a shadowy group suspected of ties to al-Qaida on Sunday, targeting its hideouts inside a Palestinian refugee camp after hours of clashes killed at least 22 soldiers and 17 militants.

The violence between the army and the Fatah Islam group erupted both in the northern port city of Tripoli and the adjacent Nahr el-Bared refugee camp. It added further instability to a country already mired in its worst political crisis between the Western-backed government and Hezbollah-led opposition since the end of the 1975-90 Lebanese civil war.

It was the most serious fight the army had engaged in Lebanon in more than a decade and the worst violence to hit Tripoli in two decades.

The clashes between army troops surrounding the camp and Fatah Islam fighters began after a gunbattle raged in a neighborhood in Tripoli, a predominantly Sunni city known to have Islamic fundamentalists, witnesses said.

Fighting spread after police raided suspected Fatah Islam hideouts in several buildings in Tripoli, searching for men wanted in a recent bank robbery. A gunbattle ensued and troops were called in to help the police.

Militants then burst out of the refugee camp, seizing Lebanese army positions, capturing two armored vehicles and ambushing troops. They killed two soldiers on roads leading to the city.

Smoke billowed from the camp as a steady barrage of artillery and heavy machine gunfire from army positions pounded militant positions inside.

Security forces were able to quell the resistance in Tripoli after sundown, and troops seized all positions around the refugee camp late Sunday, the army said.

In Beirut late Sunday, an explosion across the street from a busy shopping mall killed a 63-year-old woman and injured 12 other people in the Christian sector of the Lebanese capital, police said.

A wall in the woman's nearby apartment collapsed on her from the impact of the blast, said the Lebanese Broadcasting Corp., a Christian TV station.

The bomb left a crater about 4 feet deep and 9 feet wide, and police said the explosives were estimated to weigh 22 pounds. The blast -- heard across the city -- gutted cars, set vehicles ablaze and shattered store and apartment windows.

39 die in Lebanese fighting

Beirut and surrounding suburbs have seen a series of explosions in the last two years, many targeting Christian areas. Authorities blamed Fatah Islam for Feb. 13 bombings of commuter buses that killed three people, but the group denied involvement.

Cabinet minister Pierre Pharaon said Sunday's explosion was aimed at undermining Lebanon's security as the U.N. Security Council considers imposing an international tribunal to try suspects in the assassination of former Premier Rafik Hariri.

A U.N. investigation has linked Syrian and Lebanese security officials to the 2005 truck bombing that killed Hariri, and it has been expanded to include the other Beirut attacks.

Syria has denied involvement in any of the bombings, but the country was forced to withdraw its army from Lebanon after a 29-year presence two months after Hariri's assassination.

Hundreds of Lebanese applauded the army's tough response in the refugee camp in a sign of the long-standing tensions that remain between some Lebanese and the estimated 350,000 Palestinians who have taken refuge in Lebanon since the creation of Israel in 1948.

At the same time, a group of militants holed up in a building in Tripoli fought off army and police units for hours before finally losing the battle. The building remained partially on fire Sunday night, its staircase and entrance peppered with gunshots and rockets. About a dozen cars on the street were shot up or gutted. TV footage showed the bodies of dead militants amid the debris.

Security officials said some of the militants killed in the building in Tripoli had worn explosive belts but did not have time to detonate them.

The Lebanese Broadcasting Corp. TV station reported that among the dead militants were men from Bangladesh, Yemen and other Arab countries, underlining the group's reach outside of Lebanon.

"We strongly back the Lebanese army troops and what they are doing," said Abed Attar, a Tripoli resident who stood watching soldiers firing tank shells into the camp while others cheered.

Abu Salim, a spokesman for Fatah Islam in Nahr el-Bared, said on television that the militants were firing in self-defense.

Security officials said 22 soldiers were killed and 19 were injured along with 14 police officers who were hurt.

They said 10 militants were killed in the raids in Tripoli, and seven more were killed in the refugee camp.

A senior Lebanese security official said a high-ranking member of Fatah Islam, known as Abu Yazan, was among those killed.

Medical officials said 17 Palestinian civilians were wounded, with three women and four children in serious condition.

"We are living in a state of fear. The electricity was cut since 6 a.m., and the shelling is targeting civilians," said Khaled Najm, a Palestinian who spoke by telephone from inside the camp. "Those fighters came from abroad, and we are paying the price for their actions," he said.

Fatah Islam is an offshoot of the pro-Syrian Fatah Uprising, which broke from the mainstream Palestinian Fatah movement in the early 1980s and has headquarters in Syria, Lebanese officials say.

It is believed to be led by Shaker Youssef al-Absi, a Palestinian who was sentenced to death in absentia in July 2004 by a Jordanian military court for conspiring in a plot that led to the assassination in Jordan of U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley. Al-Qaida in Iraq and its former leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi were blamed for the killing.

39 die in Lebanese fighting

Some Lebanese security officials consider Fatah Islam a radical Sunni Muslim group with ties to al-Qaida or at least al-Qaida-style militancy and doctrine. Others say they are a front for Syrian military intelligence aimed at destabilizing Lebanon.

Prime Minister Fuad Saniora said the fighting was a "dangerous attempt at hitting Lebanese security." Mainstream Sunni Muslim leaders, clerics and politicians threw their support behind the army, as did the Palestine Liberation Organization representative in Lebanon.

It also underlined the difficulty authorities have in trying to defeat the country's armed groups which control pockets across Lebanon.

The army is stretched thin, having to frequently separate Shiite and Sunni Muslims rioters as well as rival Christian factions supporting the opposing political camps in Beirut. It has thousands patrolling southern Lebanon with U.N. peacekeepers and thousands more deployed along Syria's border to guard against illegal transfer of weapons.

Load-Date: May 21, 2007

End of Document

HAMAS BETRAYS THE PALESTINIANS

The Australian

December 29, 2008 Monday

2 - All-round First Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 11

Length: 1066 words

Body

The deaths of hundreds in the Gaza airstrikes at the weekend are a further cost of implacable militancy

THE piteous images of the dead and wounded in the Gaza Strip after the Israeli airstrikes there at the weekend cannot obscure the betrayal of Palestinian welfare and interests that is perpetrated by Hamas, the militant ruling party in the long-suffering refugee enclave. Civilians have died cruelly, caught in the line of fire. Even the Hamas police recruits who were killed may have been young men seeking one of the few jobs to be had in the besieged Strip. But who is to blame? Where might peace be found? How will other governments, particularly the incoming administration of Barack Obama in the US, respond to this test in a most fractious region?

The Gazans have been on the path to worsening strife since many of them, with other Palestinians in the West Bank, elected Hamas to power in the Palestinian Authority's parliament in early 2006. Hamas is an Islamist group whose goal of Israel's destruction is also championed by Iran, which likes to see the Middle East and Gulf as part of its rising hegemony. Hamas did not follow up on its election win by implementing a program of enlightened and progressive policies across the Palestinian territories. Instead it chose to entrench itself militarily and politically within teeming Gaza, expelling its main Palestinian rival party, Fatah. The Strip became a base camp for the radicals' struggle against Israel.

The military and political wisdom of the caretaker Israeli cabinet's approval of the strikes will be debated, as was the case with Israel's incursion into Lebanon in 2006. The latter was seen afterwards as possibly having strengthened the political clout of the radical Islamist party Hezbollah, which was Israel's target in Lebanon. The same risk applies with Hamas, but to a much lesser degree. Both military actions were responses to an intolerable pattern of rocket attacks on Israel and the seizing of its soldiers.

What counts now is that the Israeli leadership has at least a partial political solution to the conflict with Gaza in mind, beyond a substantial dismantling of Hamas's ability to harass. The cabinet, dominated by the Kadima and Labour parties, will be hoping the strikes have done sufficient military damage to obviate the need for a major ground invasion, with its risk of high casualties on both sides.

The relatively muted and balanced response from Western governments shows Israel's dilemma is understood, and Jerusalem will be given time. The strongest language among leaders is probably that of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who called the strikes "disproportionate" to Hamas's threat. The strikes certainly exceeded the rockets emanating from Gaza in destruction but they were reportedly aimed at reducing Hamas's military power for long enough to get useful negotiations going -- finally.

HAMAS BETRAYS THE PALESTINIANS

In 2005, then prime minister Ariel Sharon took Israeli forces and civilian settlers out of Gaza after nearly four decades of occupation, but instead of the improved relations that could have been a precursor to an eventual Palestinian state, the result was an increase in attacks on nearby communities in Israel. Israel's punitive reprisals were tough and by the middle of this year a six-month ceasefire was in place. But rocket attacks resumed in earnest after the six months were up this month.

Hamas has proved the hardest of enemies to crack without warfare. A near-total Israeli blockade of the Strip, accompanied by matching security to the south by Egypt -- desirous of excluding radicals from entry -- has boosted the dominance of Hamas within the Strip, as the party grabbed control of goods and money in short supply. The blockade became porous as a result of tunnelling, but Hamas controlled that, too. Instead of the revolt against Hamas that Israel -- and let it be said most Western nations -- hoped would occur, Hamas was able to exploit the shortages to encourage dependence on it among Gazans. For months, it turns out, the Israeli leadership has been contemplating an attempt at disarming Gaza as the next step, and these airstrikes are the result. Dislodging Hamas appears impossible in the near future, despite Fatah's expressed interest in filling any void, so renewed international pressure to draw it into talks with Israel, directly or otherwise, would be welcome.

The suffering of the Gazans, who number about 1.5 million, must end. The impasse has global consequences. The death and maiming will inflame opponents of Israel and the West, especially in Muslim countries. But often that denunciation will be hypocritical, if understandable. It is also no time for holding the misapprehension that Israel's existence is a thorn between the West and Israel's implacable opponents. Israel attracts fierce opposition in the Middle East because it is seen as Western, as a democracy espousing liberal values, including religious tolerance. If the Middle East question merely concerned a territorial settlement for displaced Palestinians, peace would have come long ago.

The strikes have come at a messy time. The US is in political transition, and Israel faces elections in February. The latest polling, done just before the strikes, rates as fairly even Kadima and Labour on the one hand, and the Likud opposition, led by former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, usually regarded as a hardliner. Likud had been seen as the likely winner. The military option was reportedly supervised by caretaker Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. If the Israeli public approves of the strikes, this will do no harm to his successor as Kadima leader, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who is seeking to become Israel's second female prime minister.

In the US, even before being sworn into office on January 20, the president-elect, Mr Obama, is facing his first major foreign challenge, as is his secretary of state-designate, Hillary Clinton. The choice of Senator Clinton -- one of whose main advisers would be her husband, former president Bill Clinton -- has been depicted as of much significance for the Middle East. Mr Clinton made the last concentrated attempt at a solution until Fatah's Yasser Arafat pulled the rug out from under him. His successor, George W. Bush, has seen little point in trying again at this late stage. Mr Obama and Senator Clinton are presented with grave danger, but also opportunity.

Load-Date: December 28, 2008

*Italian peacekeepers in Zibqin, south Lebanon; >LEBANON: Peacekeepers
Tread Lightly in a Wounded Land*

IPS (Latin America)

December 4, 2007 Tuesday

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Length: 1022 words

Byline: Rebecca Murray

Body

Tereano leans back in his chair and sips espresso outside the base café, a mandatory stop for all soldiers craving a taste of home. "Without the approval of the population we cannot fulfill our duty -- it's impossible," he explains. "So the main task is to accomplish the mission as well as do activities with the community. Any other way is a risk to us."

Zibqin is a small, isolated farming town of 1,500 people perched on a rugged hilltop with breathtaking views of Tyre and the Mediterranean Sea below. Just a few miles from the Israeli border, the rubble and billboards commemorating Zibqin's "martyrs" tell of the town's long embattled history with its southern neighbour.

Last summer, Zibqin suffered a devastating blow when a bomb killed 12 members of the same family sitting down to breakfast at the start of the 34-day conflict with Israel. Sixty percent of the town's homes were subsequently destroyed by the bombardment, while thousands of cluster munitions now contaminate its agricultural fields.

Although **Hezbollah** gave those with damaged property up to 10,000 dollars in spending money after the ceasefire, residents complain that the long-term reconstruction aid promised by the Fouad Siniora government has yet to materialise, forcing many to emigrate to Beirut, Africa, the Americas or the Gulf, unable to afford the expensive cost of rebuilding their homes and finding work.

"The first day back after the war was really very bad -- there was a smell of death," recalls Fatima Bzei, a pretty schoolteacher living in a small cinderblock home with her family near the Italian base on the town's outskirts. "Now many people have moved away," she adds softly. "Before I had a lot of friends, but we've been apart for a whole year and our relationship has changed."

Tereano and his "Savoia Cavalleria" regiment of 150 men arrived in Zibqin one month ago, part of an ongoing six-month rotation. They are members of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), initially established in 1978 and upgraded by Security Council Resolution 1701 to an expanded, more militarised presence below the Litani River at the end of last year's conflict.

With lead contributions by Italy, France, Spain and Germany, there are now 14,000 peacekeepers supporting the Lebanese army enforcing the peace in the south.

Tereano's men patrol the area in light armoured vehicles watching for illicit arms, provide security for the border demarcation with Israel, record daily flyover violations by Israeli jets, and put great store in maintaining community relations.

Italian peacekeepers in Zibqin , south Lebanon > LEBANON : Peacekeepers Tread Lightly in a Wounded Land

'The Italian unit is the best at doing this,' former long-time UNIFIL advisor Timur Goksel told IPS. 'They believe that going after hearts and minds provides security for the troops -- it brings intelligence and warnings.'

However, the roadside bombing that killed six Spanish troops on Jun. 24 exacted a toll on community relations as peacekeepers throughout Lebanon's south retreated behind tall blast walls and armoured patrols.

'UNIFIL is in a dilemma,' explains Goksel. 'On one hand as a military, they have to be seen as taking measures. However, this comes at a cost. Peacekeepers need to maintain relations with people as a stabiliser. You cannot do this by staying behind fences and in armoured cars.'

With the bitter winter rains approaching, rising fuel costs dominate the conversation at the Bzei home while the television broadcasts the latest news about Beirut's political crises. This family is no stranger to hardship. Fatima and her sister Somaya teach to help support the family, while their ailing father had to destroy cluster bombs before harvesting his fields of olives and tobacco for minimal profit.

Fatima's grandparents moved in last summer after the bombing destroyed their house, while her older sibling had her legs blown off by another Israeli bomb, 15 years earlier.

The family's favourite pastime is spending evenings on their front porch, smoking argeleh and greeting neighbours, as the Italian patrols periodically pass by. 'The Nepalese were here until 2000. They acted like civilians and wanted to help everybody,' recalls Somaya fondly.

'Italian UNIFIL doesn't talk to anyone, they just drive by in their vehicles,' she continues, echoing a common refrain voiced by many in the community. 'We don't feel a change, and Israeli fighters are still daily in the sky.'

Tereano, in consultation with Zibqin's mayor, is working to reverse this perception. After a local woman and her child, with a cut, bleeding hand, was denied emergency medical care at the base's gate, the Italians listened to the community's subsequent indignation, apologised, and established a Friday morning first aid clinic in town.

Tereano is now looking to form a football team with the town's kids, a health forum for women and foot patrols with an interpreter along the town's main road. 'The risk at the moment is very low for the Italian contingents,' he says. 'Here in the village you can feel it -- the situation is calm.'

While the national political crisis overshadows daily life for Lebanese everywhere, Goksel dismisses rumours that UNIFIL will pull out of the south anytime soon. 'They will continue to stress their relationship with the Lebanese army, and be careful not to get involved in local politics,' he says. 'By next August [the date for mandate renewal talks] the government will have sorted itself out.'

'We have good relations with the Italians,' affirms Zibqin's mouqtar Raef Bzei, whose job includes settling community disputes. Noting that cluster bomb removal is his primary concern, he is enthusiastic for the Italian's upcoming projects and hopes that emergency medical care on the base, road maintenance and increased interaction with the Italians happens.

'It's known that all the south loves UNIFIL and treats them like members of their own family. If something happens to them, it's not from the south but from the outside,' he says. © 2007 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

Load-Date: December 4, 2007

Violence erupts in Lebanon; 39 killed in skirmish; Army troops battle Fatah Islam group

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

May 21, 2007, Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. P1A

Length: 1106 words

Byline: Bassem Mroue, The Associated Press

Body

TRIPOLI, Lebanon - Lebanese army tanks pounded a shadowy group suspected of ties to al-Qaida on Sunday, targeting its hideouts inside a Palestinian refugee camp after hours of clashes killed at least 22 soldiers and 17 militants.

The violence between the army and the Fatah Islam group erupted both in the northern port city of Tripoli and the adjacent Nahr el-Bared refugee camp. It added further instability to a country already mired in its worst political crisis between the Western-backed government and Hezbollah-led opposition since the end of the 1975-90 Lebanese civil war.

It was the most serious fight the army had engaged in in Lebanon in more than a decade and the worst violence to hit Tripoli in two decades.

The clashes between army troops surrounding the camp and Fatah Islam fighters began after a gunbattle raged in a neighborhood in Tripoli, a predominantly Sunni city known to have Islamic fundamentalists, witnesses said.

Fighting spread after police raided suspected Fatah Islam hideouts in several buildings in Tripoli, searching for men wanted in a recent bank robbery. A gunbattle ensued and troops were called in to help the police.

Militants then burst out of the refugee camp, seizing Lebanese army positions, capturing two armored vehicles and ambushing troops. They killed two soldiers on roads leading to the city.

Smoke billowed from the camp as a steady barrage of artillery and heavy machine gunfire from army positions pounded militant positions inside.

Security forces were able to quell the resistance in Tripoli after sundown, and troops seized all positions around the refugee camp late Sunday, the army said.

In Beirut late Sunday, an explosion across the street from a busy shopping mall killed a 63-year-old woman and injured 12 other people in the Christian sector of the Lebanese capital, police said.

A wall in the woman's nearby apartment collapsed on her from the impact of the blast, said the Lebanese Broadcasting Corp., a Christian TV station.

Violence erupts in Lebanon ; 39 killed in skirmish Army troops battle Fatah Islam group

The bomb left a crater about 4 feet deep and 9 feet wide, and police said the explosives were estimated to weigh 22 pounds. The blast - heard across the city - gutted cars, set vehicles ablaze and shattered store and apartment windows.

Beirut and surrounding suburbs have seen a series of explosions in the last two years, many targeting Christian areas. Authorities blamed Fatah Islam for the Feb. 13 bombings of commuter buses that killed three people, but the group denied involvement.

Cabinet minister Pierre Pharaon said Sunday's explosion was aimed at undermining Lebanon's security as the U.N. Security Council considers imposing an international tribunal to try suspects in the assassination of former Premier Rafik Hariri.

A U.N. investigation has linked Syrian and Lebanese security officials to the 2005 truck bombing that killed Hariri, and it has been expanded to include the other Beirut attacks.

Syria has denied involvement in any of the bombings, but the country was forced to withdraw its army from Lebanon after a 29-year presence two months after Hariri's assassination.

Hundreds of Lebanese applauded the army's tough response in the refugee camp in a sign of the long-standing tensions that remain between some Lebanese and the estimated 350,000 Palestinians who have taken refuge in Lebanon since the creation of Israel in 1948.

At the same time, a group of militants holed up in a building in Tripoli fought off army and police units for hours before finally losing the battle. The building remained partially on fire Sunday night, its staircase and entrance peppered with gunshots and rockets.

About a dozen cars on the street were shot up or gutted. TV footage showed the bodies of dead militants amid the debris.

Security officials said some of the militants killed in the building in Tripoli had worn explosive belts but did not have time to detonate them.

The Lebanese Broadcasting Corp. TV station reported that among the dead militants were men from Bangladesh, Yemen and other Arab countries, underlining the group's reach outside of Lebanon.

"We strongly back the Lebanese army troops and what they are doing," said Abed Attar, a Tripoli resident who stood watching soldiers firing tank shells into the camp while others cheered.

Abu Salim, a spokesman for Fatah Islam in Nahr el-Bared, said on television that the militants were firing in self-defense.

Security officials said 22 soldiers were killed and 19 were injured along with 14 police officers who were hurt.

They said 10 militants were killed in the raids in Tripoli, and seven more were killed in the refugee camp.

A senior Lebanese security official said a high-ranking member of Fatah Islam, known as Abu Yazan, was among those killed.

Medical officials said 17 Palestinian civilians were wounded, with three women and four children in serious condition.

"We are living in a state of fear. The electricity was cut since 6 a.m., and the shelling is targeting civilians," said Khaled Najm, a Palestinian who spoke by telephone from inside the camp. "Those fighters came from abroad, and we are paying the price for their actions," he said.

Fatah Islam is an offshoot of the pro-Syrian Fatah Uprising, which broke from the mainstream Palestinian Fatah movement in the early 1980s and has headquarters in Syria, Lebanese officials say.

Violence erupts in Lebanon ; 39 killed in skirmish Army troops battle Fatah Islam group

It is believed to be led by Shaker Youssef al-Absi, a Palestinian who was sentenced to death in absentia in July 2004 by a Jordanian military court for conspiring in a plot that led to the assassination in Jordan of U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley. Al-Qaida in Iraq and its former leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi were blamed for the killing.

Some Lebanese security officials consider Fatah Islam a radical Sunni Muslim group with ties to al-Qaida or at least al-Qaida-style militancy and doctrine. Others say they are a front for Syrian military intelligence aimed at destabilizing Lebanon.

Prime Minister Fuad Saniora said the fighting was a "dangerous attempt at hitting Lebanese security." Mainstream Sunni Muslim leaders, clerics and politicians threw their support behind the army, as did the Palestine Liberation Organization representative in Lebanon.

It also underlined the difficulty authorities have in trying to defeat the country's armed groups which control pockets across Lebanon.

The army is stretched thin, having to frequently separate Shiite and Sunni Muslims rioters as well as rival Christian factions supporting the opposing political camps in Beirut. It has thousands patrolling southern Lebanon with U.N. peacekeepers and thousands more deployed along Syria's border to guard against illegal transfer of weapons.

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End of Document

**Soliya Programme connects United States and the Middle East campuses;
CULTURE: It All Begins With a Webcam and a Smile**

IPS (Latin America)

August 10, 2007 Friday

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Length: 1037 words

Byline: Brian D. Pellot

Body

For university students across the United States, Europe and the Middle East, this improbable encounter has become a weekly reality thanks to the Soliya Connect Programme.

'Soliya' -- derived from sol, the Latin word for sun, and iya, Arabic for 'beam of light' -- connects groups of eight university students around the world through advanced online videoconferencing technology in an attempt to bridge thorny cultural divides between the West and Arab worlds.

'Having relationships and establishing that human connection enables people to talk about things in a much more open and trusting way,' Soliya President Lucas Welch told IPS.

'We'd like to think that having a cross-cultural experience should be a fundamental part of a meaningful higher education and an important part of becoming a global citizen,' he added.

The Connect Programme began in 2003 at just five universities and has grown to reach approximately 800 students at 30 schools including Harvard and Georgetown in the United States, the University of Amsterdam, the American University in Cairo and Al-Akhawayn University in Morocco.

According to Welch, most students enroll in the programme to fulfil a course requirement, but at some universities, including the all-**female** Dar Al Hekma in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, it can be pursued as an extracurricular activity.

Along with the weekly two-hour chats monitored by volunteer facilitators, students must create and exchange video packages illustrating their perspectives on current world events and must form cross-cultural groups of two or three students within their discussion groups to write a joint article.

'The video was the most interesting part [of the programme]. While preparing it, I felt as if I was in a different world,' Sultan H. Al Nehyan, former Soliya participant and Emirati student at the American University of Sharjah, told IPS.

When students with different frames of reference collaborate on joint articles that focus on current events, one uniform conclusion is seldom a feasible end result. Not a problem, as far as Soliya organisers and facilitators are concerned.

David Specht, Soliya facilitator and faculty at Woodbury College in Vermont, told IPS the story of a Jewish student from the U.S. and a Muslim student from the Middle East who wrote a joint article on the Palestinian question.

Soliya Programme connects United States and the Middle East campuses CULTURE: It All Begins With a Webcam and a Smile

According to Specht, the two students in his discussion group became troubled by their inability to arrive at a shared conclusion on the issue. Eventually, they laid out two different perspectives of the situation based on their own backgrounds and beliefs.

'We had a piece at the end that presented both issues and that didn't diminish one from the other by coming to an agreement that wasn't real,' Specht said.

Ryan Merchant, a recent Georgetown graduate and Soliya participant in the spring semester, and his partner, a Middle Eastern student, took a similar approach when writing their joint article on the Israel-Hezbollah conflict of 2006.

'We did a point-counterpoint kind of thing and included our own opinions,' Merchant told IPS. 'You don't have to speak for the masses.'

Despite Welch's initial fear that Soliya could become a series of 'flame wars or some sort of forum for vitriolic exchanges,' most discussions have been orderly and constructive.

'There were no fights, but there were friendly arguments about some issues that reflected disputes in perception and interpretation of ideas,' Al Nehyan said of his experience with his online group. 'This characterises any discussion. It's a crucial part of being civilised -- listen to each other, respect others' opinions and communicate peacefully.'

'There were broad disagreements, but it never got out of control. There were never people signing off or screaming,' Merchant added.

Quite the contrary. Merchant admits, 'I didn't expect the conversations to be as open as they were. Work, school, sex, relationships, religion, you name it. We touched on everything.'

Although most students and facilitators seem to enjoy their time spent in virtual communication, a few structural and technological kinks still need to be resolved for Soliya to function at its desired capacity.

All dialogues are currently conducted in English, and while many small groups have a pair of facilitators, each fluent in English or Arabic, several have only one English speaker in the facilitating role.

'It's a significant disadvantage for students who are speaking in their second language,' Specht said. 'This creates a power dynamic that allows people who have a working facility of the language to express their thoughts more strongly than others.'

'Maybe it was the language barrier that prevented others from voicing their views more strongly,' Merchant added.

'The only thing I did not like about the programme is its failure to have a clear agenda of what is to be discussed while online,' Al Nehyan said. 'The assigned topics were so important, but the time allocated was too short to achieve what could have been desired.'

When the Soliya Connect Programme ends as it did for Merchant in May, the relationships forged need not vanish as well. The Georgetown graduate remains in contact with two students in the Middle East, two in Europe and two from other schools in the U.S.

'Going in, I was like, 'this is going to take a lot of time'. By the second week, I was pretty much hooked on it. It was a great experience overall,' Merchant said.

Soliya provides a number of continued engagement activities that enable students to keep in touch, work to educate their communities and bridge the divide between the West and Arab worlds.

Soliya Programme connects United States and the Middle East campuses CULTURE: It All Begins With a Webcam and a Smile

According to Welch, Soliya is in the process of launching a social media network next year that will enable alumni, and eventually the general public, to learn about rich cultural and media issues.

“There is a common belief that education plays a key role in bridging the cultural divide. The more we're able to connect people to people, the less likely we are to have these divisive issues in the world,” Welch said © 2007 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

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Assassination woven in tapestry of world conflict; But the 'cowardly act' has also been a part of the evolution of democracies, writes Neely Tuckerr

The Sunday Independent (South Africa)

January 06, 2008

e1 Edition

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Section: DISPATCHES; Pg. 14

Length: 1098 words

Body

Benazir Bhutto's father was prime minister of Pakistan in the 1970s and before he was hanged he would tell her to study the lives of great women as inspiration.

She sometimes told reporters the story, including the names of Joan of Arc and Indira Gandhi as study subjects suggested by her father. The French revolutionary was burned at the stake; the Indian prime minister was assassinated by her bodyguards.

Their violent ends did not deter Bhutto, nor did the murders of her father and brother. A Harvard graduate with a sharp knowledge of history, she would have known that the assassination has been around a lot longer than the ballot and is often more influential.

The assassination is almost universally denigrated as a "cowardly act" (as United States President George Bush described Bhutto's killing this week). But the historical record shows it to be a dramatic, low-cost, highly symbolic means of communication - and murder - that disaffected people use to try to influence national or even international affairs.

It can work or backfire or just disappear, like a bloody drop in a bucket. Pakistan will be unstable in the coming days, as it has been in the past and will be again. Who can say if Bhutto's slaying is the pinball that leads to destruction, the painful agent of positive change, or just a killing, like most, full of sound and fury and signifying nothing more than murderous nihilism?

The descent into regional conflagration could have been triggered "by 'shock and awe' in Iraq, or the assassination in 2005 of Rafik Hariri, the then prime minister of Lebanon, or Israel's battles with Hezbollah," says Mustafa Aksakal, assistant professor of history at American University in Washington, who is writing a book about the Ottoman Empire's descent into the First World War.

"But the region has so far been able to absorb these shocks. It's just impossible to say what will be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

"Anyone who thinks he can predict the consequences of a political assassination is a damn fool," says Eric Rauchway, the author of *Murdering McKinley: The Making of Teddy Roosevelt's America* and a history professor at the University of California, Davis.

Assassination woven in tapestry of world conflict But the 'cowardly act' has also been a part of the evolution of democracies, writes Neely Tuckerr

"All it provides is an opportunity. However, the opportunity it provides is often not one the assassin intended."

This has been true from the Ides of March forward.

Did Marcus Junius Brutus, when he pulled out his blade to join in the murder of his one-time friend Julius Caesar, understand that his actions would produce (a) perhaps the most famous and influential political assassination in western history; (b) one of the immortal lines of betrayal - "Et tu, Bruté?" - that echoes in the cultural id more than 2 000 years later; or (c) his own ignominy and suicide?

On the evening of January 30 1948, Nathuram Godse, a radical Hindu newspaper editor pulled out a pistol and approached an old man on his way to prayer service. In the instant before he pulled the trigger, he certainly intended to kill Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, at whom he was enraged for his role in the partition of India and Pakistan.

But did he know that by so doing he would turn the diminutive weaver of cotton into the "Father of India" and a global icon of non-violent resistance?

But these killings were nothing close to the most murderously effective. The dubious title goes to Gavrilo Princip, the Serbian nationalist.

Standing at a stone bridge in Sarajevo in late June 1914, Princip shot Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand (and his wife) to demonstrate that he and his compatriots wanted to be freed of the constraints of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and to join neighbouring Serbia. What did he know? He was scarcely 20 years old. But his act of assassination worked; it led to Austria pulling out of Bosnia.

The collateral damage was that it ignited the First World War.

In the next four years, more than 10 million citizens of 16 nations lost their lives, twice that many were wounded, the entire Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed, Germany was humiliated in defeat (laying the groundwork for the rise of Hitler, the Second World War and the Holocaust) and the US was launched into world prominence.

Princip's pistol also led to the creation of Yugoslavia, which led to the destruction of Yugoslavia, which led to another war involving ethnic Serbs in Bosnia, which led to mass murder of Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica, which led to US troops landing in a place called Tuzla, which led to war crimes tribunals and the imprisonment and subsequent death of the Serbian president, who had started the war on a platform of ethnic nationalism.

Moving south, if one wants the short course on why peace in the Middle East is so elusive, just look up "Nobel Peace Prize", followed by "assassination".

Former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat won that award in 1978, along with Menachem Begin, his Israeli counterpart, for their peace agreement, the Camp David Accords. That lasted for three years, until Muslim fundamentalists stormed a parade route and shot Sadat dead.

Thirteen years later, Yitzhak Rabin, the then Israeli prime minister (and colleague Shimon Peres) shared the Nobel with Yasser Arafat, Rabin's mortal enemy and then chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

The two men had, mostly in secret, brokered a peace agreement (the Oslo Accords) that promised to have a transformative effect on the Middle East. But it was largely an agreement between two men, not two nations.

One Israeli law student thought that Rabin, a soldier who had defended Israel almost his entire adult life, was "giving our country to the Arabs." He took it upon himself to shoot and kill Rabin.

Thereafter the Oslo Accords withered and died. In the US, about one of every 11 presidents has been assassinated, and it is, of course, where Martin Luther King jnr, the Nobel laureate and civil rights leader lost his life

Assassination woven in tapestry of world conflict But the 'cowardly act' has also been a part of the evolution of democracies, writes Neely Tuckerr

to an assassin's bullet. In 1998, the US justice department published something called the Exceptional Case Study Project, as part of a threat assessment guide for law enforcement officials.

The study reviewed the historical record back to 1835 and surveyed "the thinking and behaviour of all 83 persons known to have attacked or approached to attack a prominent public official or figure in the US from 1949 to 1996".

They fit no one profile, authors Robert Fein and Bryan Vossekuil found. Some had political beliefs, some were just nuts. And some, perhaps like the person or people who killed Bhutto wanted to "save the country or the world; to fix a world problem".

How seldom it works out that way. - The Washington Post

Load-Date: January 6, 2008

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Islamo-Fascism Awareness Week; POLITICS-US: Welcome to 'Islamo-Fascism Awareness Week&

IPS (Latin America)

October 29, 2007 Monday

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Length: 1118 words

Byline: Khody Akhavi and Ali Gharib

Body

As bodyguards and police loomed on stage and in the aisles, Horowitz launched into an unscripted two-hour tirade that meandered between selective (and dubious) readings of Middle East history and pointed attacks against those who criticised his efforts.

It was the latest permutation of Horowitz's long march as the harbinger of revolutionary knowledge in the face of public opprobrium. And as usual, he offered up a sensational and bizarre spectacle that appeared better suited for the U.S. tabloid talk show circuit than a forum of legitimate public debate.

During his speech, sponsored by the conservative student group Young America Foundation, Horowitz condemned the 'oppression of women in Islam', and what he perceived as the endemic 'genocidal Jew hatred' throughout the Middle East. He took aim at the 'juvenile delinquents' -- GW university students -- who had satirised his efforts, said that Palestinians, through their actions, showed that they did not want a state of their own. Horowitz also alleged that the Muslim Students Association, which has chapters at universities across the nation, is a creation of the 'Islamo-fascist jihad'.

He called Lebanese Hezbollah a 'Nazi party,' and warned that Turkey was teetering on the edge of becoming an Islamo-fascist state. And he described Iran as the archetype of this phenomenon.

'There is an intellectual terror in this country, which you have all seen. The president [George W. Bush] is intimidated from using the term Islamo-fascism because it is supposed to be racist,' he told an audience of students, a majority of whom applauded his words.

'Why the term fascism? The analytical reason is simple,' he said. 'Probably Islamo-Nazism is a more appropriate term.'

Horowitz's conservative Freedom Centre (DHFC) designated last week as the first annual 'Islamo-fascism Awareness Week' -- a time to refute 'the two big lies of the political Left: that George Bush created the war on terror and that global warming is a greater danger to Americans than the terrorist threat.'

The programme consisted of more than 30 events at 26 universities across the nation. Conservative pundits, politicians, and academic and think-tank experts, including former Senator Rick Santorum, conservative icon Ann Coulter, and historian Daniel Pipes, delivered speeches and spoke on panels.

Pipes is among a small group of neoconservatives who advise Republican presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani on Middle East affairs.

Islamofascism Awareness Week POLITICS-US: Welcome to Islamofascism Awareness Week

College students were urged to stage sit-ins outside women's studies departments, and to distribute pamphlets, including titles such as 'Jimmy Carter's War Against the Jews'. Films screened included 'Islam: What the West Needs to Know'. According to its description, the film 'reveals the violent, expansionary ideology of the so called 'religion of peace' that seeks the destruction or subjugation of other faiths, cultures, and systems of government'.

But Horowitz's speech Thursday did not reflect a coherent policy towards the perceived threat. Instead, it overflowed with insults, sweeping generalisations and hyperbole that were aimed at smearing his political enemies - mostly liberals, whom he described as 'leftists' -- giving him ammunition for his fundraising drives.

Horowitz focused much of his speech on the personal attacks he had received, repeatedly alluding to violent threats, and describing the fiasco as a 'national hate campaign' against him, as if a 'target' had been placed on his back.

The day earlier, he said, he was shouted down and was unable to finish a planned speech at Emory University in Georgia. Horowitz's website, Frontpagemag.com, called the students 'brownshirts', an allusion to a Nazi paramilitary group in fascist Germany.

Horowitz sent a solicitation email to DHFC supporters in anticipation of the week asking for additional contributions 'toward the expenses of providing security' for speakers. Donors of 50 dollars or more receive two booklets -- 'What Americans Need to Know About Jihad', by Robert Spencer, and 'The Violent Oppression of Women in Islam', by Robert Spencer and Phyllis Chesler.

On Thursday, he appeared on stage with a large bodyguard constantly scanning the crowd. Journalists were barred from asking any questions.

One protestor who had snuck a banner into the theatre was removed quickly by security as soon as he stood up and unfurled it. Several heated discussions occurred in the lobby and outside the building shortly after the event ended.

The publicity provided by the extreme rhetoric and protest incidents gets the attention of a cabal of wealthy and powerful conservatives who in turn fund Horowitz's activities through foundations.

The Freedom Centre has received more than 15 million dollars in grants from conservative donors, according a report from Media Transparency, an organisation that monitors contributions to conservative media. Major contributors include the John M. Olin Foundation, a New York based think-tank that closed its doors in 2005, and which funded major right-wing think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute, Heritage Foundation and the Hoover Institute.

Prominent conservative billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife has poured 4.2 million dollars into Horowitz's activities, through the Sarah Scaife Foundation, the Carthage Foundation, and the Allegheny Foundation.

Horowitz also received 6.1 million dollars from the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, considered the country's largest and most influential right-wing foundation.

By the end of the week, 'Islamofascism Awareness' had descended into a publicity circus.

According to independent journalist Max Blumenthal, who was in attendance at the IFAW Horowitz talk on Friday at Columbia University, Horowitz was surrounded by a group of bodyguards that almost outnumbered the amount of people there to protest his speech. Columbia security subsequently removed the protesters from the campus.

Horowitz went on a bizarre rant -- claiming that there 'will never be social justice' -- and launched into a tirade about the threats from the guests on the Jerry Springer Show, a U.S. television tabloid talk show. He also compared his own father, a communist Queens schoolteacher, to Mohammad Atta, the operational leader of the 9/11 attacks.

Islamofascism Awareness Week POLITICS-US: Welcome to Islamofascism Awareness Week

It was like listening to the ravings of a lunatic on a subway car, said Blumenthal. The only difference was that on the subway the police are there to remove the lunatic and here they were there to protect the lunatic. © 2007 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

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The humble car bomb changed the world

The Sunday Times (London)

July 27, 2008

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Section: FEATURES; News Review; Pg.4

Length: 1025 words

Byline: Robert Baer

Body

The US is spending £ 2.1bn a year to fight the terrorist's most lethal weapon, reports the former CIA agent Robert Baer.

It was a sunny afternoon on Beirut's glamorous seafront in April 1983 and the world was about to change for ever. Old men stood fishing on the rocks opposite the American embassy. Women in high heels and sunglasses strolled along the boardwalk undeterred by the civil war and the honking traffic. Just before 1pm a green Mercedes carefully drove past the embassy, scouting the entrance, and 300 yards later flashed its lights at a waiting GMC flat-bed truck. The young man driving the Texas-built truck then slowly drove up to the embassy, accelerated the wrong way through the exit ramp, hit the entrance steps, bounced up into the lobby and exploded his bomb.

It was a stunning assault using the deadliest weapon so far of the 21st century: the car bomb. It was also the first suicide car-bomb attack on a western target.

In the confined space of the US embassy lobby, the blast wave from the 2,000lb of raw PETN - an extremely powerful military explosive - was catastrophic. The explosion ripped away the front of the building: the upper floors fell like cards, killing those inside. Sixty-three people were murdered - Lebanese and Americans, many of them close colleagues of mine in the CIA. They found the hand of my boss Robert Ames a mile offshore - identified by his graduation ring.

The CIA station had been meeting on the fourth floor, in the CIA's offices, to discuss the threat of terrorism when the bomber struck. I was lucky: I wasn't there that day, but as a CIA agent stationed in the Middle East, I could so easily have been in the building.

For years afterwards, I kept having the same dream: sitting at the conference suite on the fourth floor, drinking coffee, chit-chatting with colleagues, waiting for the meeting to start, and then the windows bursting in, doors, ceilings, everything falling around me and the noise of the explosion. Then darkness.

What happened in that summer of 1983 in Beirut has come back to haunt us in Iraq and Afghanistan. In their decades of civil war, the Lebanese, an inventive people, refined the weapon and became the best car-bombers in

The humble car bomb changed the world

the world. The bombs that go off every day in Baghdad, the very concept of the suicide driver, were developed on the streets of Beirut.

The Lebanese raided the shelves of RadioShack and turned everyday electrical items - from mobile phones and electronic garage-door openers to model aircraft control panels - into remotely controlled detonation triggers for car bombs. The Lebanese added gas canisters to boost the blast wave - a technique used in the attempted attack in July 2007 at Glasgow airport.

The threat from car bombs now spans the globe. Anywhere and anyone, a government building, an airport, could be a target. From Downing Street to the White House, governments are turning their offices into fortresses - and waiting for the next attack.

In 1983 in Beirut, car bombs were always the number one threat. You were a fool if you drove down the same road at the same time every day, because all it took to kill you was an old car and some explosives. Instead of driving around in an armoured limousine that would have made it obvious I was an American, I used to take taxis. I bought old Mercedes taxis, and regularly changed their colour. I even picked up passengers to help maintain the disguise. And I survived because I knew just how lethal car bombs could be.

The Lebanese did not invent the car bomb; that honour goes to the Americans. The world's first car bomb, a horse-and-car bomb, exploded on Wall Street on September 16, 1920, killing 38 people. But the Lebanese made car bombs a lot more lethal. When they planted them, it was to make the pavements run with blood. Everyone did it: the Christians, the Palestinians, Hezbollah and the Israelis.

For three decades Lebanon has been a research laboratory for car bombers. The same signature car-bomb techniques turned up in Baghdad soon after the 2003 US invasion. A lot of Lebanese car bombers just drove across the border into Syria and on to Baghdad.

We should have seen it coming. The US embassy was not the only place to be attacked. In 1982 President Reagan had sent in the US marines to sort out the aftermath of another Lebanese war: the 1982 Israeli invasion. The marines went on patrol, handed out sweets and tried to support the shaky Lebanese government. In the background, though, the civil war was still raging. Foolishly we got involved, taking sides. The reckoning was paid in American blood.

On October 23, 1983, at 6.20am, a bomber hit the main US marine barracks with a 12,000lb suicide truck, and 241 marines were killed. There was a lot of the usual bluster about staying the course, but we were defeated - by car bombs. We fled five months later. In the right place and with the right amount of explosive, car bombs really can change history.

It's a lesson we should have remembered before invading Iraq. In Baghdad, the car bomb swiftly became king of the highway. Car bombs, whether they are driven by suicide bombers or disguised as delivery trucks, are deadly because they disguise killing power in something so familiar that we don't even see it - until it's too late.

Somewhat belatedly, the US military is spending £ 2.1 billion a year on secret programmes run by a military task force, JIEDDO (the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organisation), to counter the car bomb.

But even JIEDDO's deputy director, Brigadier-General Anthony Tata, admits: "A car is a commercial entity. You go buy a car, find some old 155mm shells and you've got yourself a car bomb." If you can't pick up old artillery shells, instructions for making your own explosives are on the internet.

The car is now as basic a tool of our civilisation as a knife. It is no longer a dream of freedom; it's a necessity. And so, with its perfect invisibility in everyday traffic, it will continue to be a decisive weapon in all future human conflict.

Robert Baer's documentary Car Bomb is on Channel 4 tonight at 7pm

The humble car bomb changed the world

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JOAN OF ARC V NAPOLEON; HOPEFULS NECK AND NECK AS FRANCE GOES TO POLLS

Sunday Mirror
April 22, 2007 Sunday
Ulster Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 1018 words

Byline: BY VINCENT MOSS, POLITICAL EDITOR AND IAN SPARKS IN PARIS

Body

FRANCE goes to the polls today with glamorous left-winger Segolene Royal hoping to become France's first **female** president.

The last opinion polls before the voting booths open showed her closing the gap to within one point of her rival Nicolas Sarkozy.

Under the French system, the country's 48 million voters will today choose two candidates to go head-to-head for the presidency on May 6. But if one of them wins more than 50 per cent of the vote today, they will automatically become president.

So far, Right-winger Sarkozy, who models himself on emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, has been the front-runner.

But he is now facing a real challenge from Socialist Royal - whose heroine is Joan Of Arc, burnt at the stake after fighting the English during the Hundred Years' War.

Although Sarkozy is leading the race on 27 per cent, mother-of-four Royal is snapping at his heels on 26 per cent. Downing Street is closely watching the battle to replace centre-right Jacques Chirac after 12 years as France's "Gaullist" president.

They believe the outcome could be critical in relations between London and Paris - and the rest of Europe.

During the campaign, Royal branded Sarkozy a dangerous brute for suggesting that being a paedophile was a genetic condition. He had already accused Royal of siding with fraudsters and cheats for refusing to condemn rioters at a Paris railway station.

In the last day of official campaigning on Friday, Sarkozy posed on a horse in a bid to bolster his tough-guy image.

JOAN OF ARC V NAPOLEON HOPEFULS NECK AND NECK AS FRANCE GOES TO POLLS

In contrast, Royal held a picnic in her South-West France constituency - and posed on the grass with a glass of wine and a sandwich.

The mudslinging continued this weekend with Sarkozy's opponents questioning the absence of his wife Cecilia from his campaign. Twicemarried Sarkozy separated from ex-model Cecilia briefly last year after she had an affair.

Sarkozy is a big admirer of Tony Blair and wants to copy his efforts to modernise public services and change France. Echoing the PM's admission that the reforms had left him "with the scars on his back", he said on Friday: "I am covered in scars."

His tough line on law and order and immigration has won support across large parts of France. But millions are wary of his plans to make them work harder, earning him the nickname "the French Margaret Thatcher".

Critics say his policies could spark national strikes.

Royal is promising a more feminine style of leadership. Her slick style and easy charm have meant she has been called "Tony Blair in a skirt".

But she has started to play down her admiration for Mr Blair in an attempt to woo traditional Socialists.

Both candidates face a challenge from the "Third Man" - ex-farmer Francois Bayrou, who presents himself in the centre ground and who was on 16 per cent in the polls.

The fourth major name in the frame is National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, still campaigning for his extremist policies at 78. He was on 17 per cent.

French political commentator Thierry Boccia said: "Sarkozy and Royal are clear favourites. But whoever wins, France will never be the same."

The country is desperate to avoid a repeat of the 2002 election, when the Socialist vote was split between three candidates - allowing Le Pen to make it to the final round before suffering a massive defeat to Jacques Chirac.

SEGOLENE ROYAL

(Joan of Arc) ODDS: 3/1

PARTY: Socialist Party.

AGE: 53.

BACKGROUND: Her partner is Francois Hollande, leader of the Socialist Party, who would be France's first "First Man" if she is elected. They have been live-in lovers for 25 years and have four children.

PERSONALITY: Described as charming and a devoted parent by fans, arrogant and empty-headed by enemies.

PREVIOUS JOBS: Adviser to ex-Socialist President Francois Mitterand; junior family minister; junior education minister.

POLICIES: Promises to bring women's salaries in line with men's and up benefits for single mums. Would increase public spending in some areas and is pro-immigration. Wants to re-nationalise power firm EDF. Called "Tony Blair in a skirt" by opponents.

BIGGEST GAFFE: Failed to condemn a tirade against Israel and America made by a Hezbollah MP while she was on a visit to the Lebanon.

NICOLAS SARKOZY

(Napoleon) 2/5 fav.

JOAN OF ARC V NAPOLEON HOPEFULS NECK AND NECK AS FRANCE GOES TO POLLS

PARTY: Ruling right-wing UMP (Union For A Popular Movement).

AGE: 52.

BACKGROUND: Son of a Hungarian immigrant. A child by second wife, ex-model Cecilia, and two by first wife. His marriage is on the rocks after Cecilia had an affair with US businessman Richard Attias.

PERSONALITY: Charismatic workaholic with short temper.

PREVIOUS JOBS: Mayor of posh Paris suburb of Neuilly; Interior Minister.

POLICIES: Hard-line on law and order and immigration. Wants to scrap 35-hour working week, cut red tape and taxes and reduce bloated civil service.

BIGGEST GAFFE: Criticising gangs of youngsters before 2005 Paris riots as "racaille" - which means scum or rabble.

JEAN-MARIE LE PEN (50/1)

PARTY: National Front. AGE: 78.

BACKGROUND: Married to Jenny. They have two daughters - both devoted National Front activists.

PERSONALITY: Seen by critics as a thuggish racist, by supporters as a patriot.

PREVIOUS JOBS: French Foreign Legion. Started political career in 1956.

POLICIES: Ferociously anti-immigration. Has been convicted for making racist and anti-Semitic statements. Supports death penalty and national service and wants more cash for the military. Shook establishment in 2002 by making it to the final round of Presidential election.

BIGGEST GAFFE: Caused outrage in 1987 by describing the Nazi gas chambers as "a detail of history".

FRANCOIS BAYROU (5/1)

PARTY: Centrist UDF Party (Union For French Democracy). AGE: 56.

BACKGROUND: Devout Catholic. He and wife Elizabeth have six children.

PERSONALITY: Still owns a tractor and can milk a cow. Uses his farming roots to connect with voters. Once joked "plodding along at tractor speed" should be fashionable.

PREVIOUS JOBS: Farmer and teacher, Education Minister.

POLICIES: Billed as the "Third Man", he wants to bridge gap between left and right.

BIGGEST GAFFE: Blew his chances in 2002 election by saying he would back Jacques Chirac if he lost in the first round.

vincent.moss@mgn.co.uk

Load-Date: April 22, 2007

**JOAN OF ARC V NAPOLEON; AS FRANCE GOES TO POLLS, HEROES
INSPIRE HOPEFULS**

Sunday Mirror
April 22, 2007 Sunday
3 Star Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 1027 words

Byline: BY VINCENT MOSS, POLITICAL EDITOR AND IAN SPARKS IN PARIS

Body

FRANCE goes to the polls today with glamorous left-winger Segolene Royal hoping to become France's first **female** President.

The last opinion polls before the voting booths open showed her closing the gap to within one point of her rival Nicolas Sarkozy.

Under the French system, the country's 48 million voters will today choose two candidates to go head-to-head for the Presidency on May 6. But if any of them wins more than 50 per cent of the vote, they will automatically become President.

Right-winger Sarkozy, who models himself on Napoleon Bonaparte, has been the front-runner so far. But he is now facing a real challenge from Socialist Royal - whose heroine is Joan Of Arc.

Although Sarkozy is leading the race on 27 per cent, mother-of-four Royal is snapping at his heels on 26 per cent. Downing Street is closely watching the battle to replace centre-right Jacques Chirac after 12 years as France's "Gaullist" president.

They believe the outcome could be critical in relations between London and Paris - and the rest of Europe.

During the campaign, Royal branded Sarkozy a dangerous brute for suggesting that being a paedophile was a genetic condition. He had already accused Royal of siding with fraudsters and cheats for refusing to condemn rioters at a Paris railway station.

In the last day of official campaigning on Friday, Sarkozy posed on a horse in a bid to bolster his tough-guy image. In contrast, Royal held a picnic in her South-West France constituency - and posed on the grass with a glass of wine and a sandwich.

JOAN OF ARC V NAPOLEON AS FRANCE GOES TO POLLS, HEROES INSPIRE HOPEFULS

The mudslinging continued this weekend with Sarkozy's opponents questioning the absence of his wife Cecilia from his campaign. Twice-married Sarkozy separated from ex-model Cecilia briefly last year after she had an affair.

Sarkozy is a big admirer of Tony Blair and wants to copy his efforts to modernise public services and change France. Echoing the PM's admission that the reforms had left him "with the scars on his back", he said on Friday: "I am covered in scars."

His tough line on law and order and immigration has won support across large parts of France. But millions are wary of his plans to make them work harder, earning him the nickname "the French Margaret Thatcher".

Critics warn of his temper tantrums and the risk his policies could spark national strikes. Left-winger Royal is promising a more feminine style of leadership. Her slick style and easy charm have meant she has been called "Tony Blair in a skirt".

But she has played down the admiration she expressed for Mr Blair a year ago to woo the votes of traditional Socialists.

Both candidates face a challenge from the "Third Man" - ex-farmer Bayrou, who presents himself in the political centre ground between his two rivals. He was on 16 per cent in the polls.

The fourth major name in the frame is National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, still campaigning for his extremist policies at 78, and who was on 17 per cent.

French political commentator Thierry Bocuse said: "Sarkozy and Royal are clear favourites. But whoever wins, France will never be the same."

The country is desperate to avoid a repeat of the 2002 election, when the Socialist vote was split between three candidates - allowing Le Pen to make it to the final round before suffering a massive defeat to Jacques Chirac.

SEGOLENE ROYAL

(Joan of Arc)

PARTY: Socialist Party. AGE: 53.

BACKGROUND: Her partner is Francois Hollande, leader of the Socialist Party, who would be France's first "First Man" if she is elected. They have been live-in lovers for 25 years and have four children.

PERSONALITY: Described as charming and a devoted parent by fans, arrogant and empty-headed by enemies.

PREVIOUS JOBS: Adviser to ex-Socialist President Francois Mitterand; junior family minister; junior education minister.

ODDS: Second favourite, at 3/1.

POLICIES: Promises to bring women's salaries in line with men's and up benefits for single mums. Would increase public spending in some areas and is pro-immigration. Wants to re-nationalise power firm EDF. Called "Tony Blair in a skirt" by opponents.

BIGGEST GAFFE: Failed to condemn a tirade against Israel and America made by a Hezbollah MP while she was on a visit to the Lebanon.

NICOLAS SARKOZY

(Napoleon)

PARTY: Ruling right-wing UMP (Union For A Popular Movement). AGE: 52.

JOAN OF ARC V NAPOLEON AS FRANCE GOES TO POLLS, HEROES INSPIRE HOPEFULS

BACKGROUND: Son of a Hungarian immigrant. A child by second wife, ex-model Cecilia, and two by first wife. His marriage is on the rocks after Cecilia had an affair with US businessman Richard Attias.

PERSONALITY: Charismatic workaholic with short temper.

PREVIOUS JOBS: Mayor of posh Paris suburb of Neuilly; Interior Minister.

ODDS: Hot favourite at 2/5.

POLICIES: Hard-line on law and order and immigration. Wants to scrap 35-hour working week, cut red tape and taxes and reduce bloated civil service.

BIGGEST GAFFE: Criticising gangs of youngsters before 2005 Paris riots as "racaille" - which means scum or rabble.

JEAN-MARIE LE PEN

PARTY: National Front. **AGE:** 78.

BACKGROUND: Married to Jenny. They have two daughters - both devoted National Front activists.

PERSONALITY: Seen by critics as a thuggish racist, by supporters as a patriot.

PREVIOUS JOBS: French Foreign Legion. Started political career in 1956.

ODDS: 50/1.

POLICIES: Ferociously anti-immigration. Has been convicted for making racist and anti-Semitic statements. Supports death penalty and national service and wants more cash for the military. Shook establishment in 2002 by making it to the final round of Presidential election.

BIGGEST GAFFE: Caused outrage in 1987 by describing the Nazi gas chambers as "a detail of history".

FRANCOIS BAYROU

PARTY: Centrist UDF Party (Union For French Democracy). **AGE:** 56.

BACKGROUND: Devout Catholic. He and wife Elizabeth have six children.

PERSONALITY: Still owns a tractor and can milk a cow. Uses his farming roots to connect with voters. Once joked "plodding along at tractor speed" should be fashionable.

PREVIOUS JOBS: Farmer and teacher, Education Minister.

ODDS: 5/1

POLICIES: Billed as the "Third Man", he wants to bridge gap between left and right.

BIGGEST GAFFE: Blew his chances in 2002 election by saying he would back Jacques Chirac if he lost in the first round.

vincent.moss@mgn.co.uk

Load-Date: April 22, 2007

Does Islam encourage terrorism?

The Irish Times

August 13, 2007 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Opinion; Pg. 16

Length: 1691 words

Body

YES says Susan Philips. NO says Syyed Siraj H Zaidi. Join the online debate @ www.ireland.com/head2head.

YES Susan Philips says Islamist terrorism is rooted, not in political conditions, but in the sacred texts of the religion.

On September 11th, 2001, as Mohammed Atta flew American Airlines Flight 11 into the World Trade Center, he screamed "Allahu akbar" (Allah is great). And when video tapes emerged after the July 2005 London bombings, Sidique Khan, in his Yorkshire accent, clearly stated "our words are dead until we give them life with our blood. Our religion is Islam, obedience to the one true Allah". These men had a deep religious conviction that they were carrying out their Quranic duty to extend the kingdom of Islam worldwide. No matter what moderates argue, countless suicide attacks by jihadis against the western infidel, as well as against fellow Muslims whose interpretations of their faith seem to vary from their own, are given a religious justification.

The rise of a radical element within Islam is undeniable. Islamists take issue with mainstream Islam, which they say fails to fully follow the seventh-century classical teachings of Muhammad. Many fundamental groupings such as Hamas, *Hizbullah* and Jamaat-I Islam base their inspiration on Muslim Brotherhood ideology, which emanated from Egypt during the second part of the 20th century.

Such influence was based on earlier writers who struggled to make sense of the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of western colonial rule. Sayyid Qutb, the godfather of modern radical movements, blamed Muslim leaders such as Jamal Abdul Nasser for failing to establish pure Islamic states and for espousing a watered-down version of Islam. Their viewpoint was that incorrect interpretation had crept in, resulting in a downfall after many centuries of golden rule.

Qutb urged a return to seventh-century truths as the only solution for the bruised and humiliated ummah (world body of Muslims) and he set out a list of milestones for the onward passage of Islam, arguing that the creation of a truly Islamic government is a divine commandment for every Muslim. Modern radical groups may vary according to cultural norms, but central to their manifestos would be Qutb's interpretation that jihad was to be a proactive tool for forcing a return to the sovereignty of Allah. Nearer to home, and advocating similar ideology, we find Al-Muhaniroun, the party associated in Britain with Abu Hamza from the Finsbury Park mosque, whose seditious preaching influenced the London bombers.

It is true that certain Qur'an verses forbid suicide. However, to many Muslims, the word jihad (to struggle or to strive) refers to the means to trade this life for the life to come. Militant groupings often quote Muhammad Abd el

Does Islam encourage terrorism?

Salem Farag who, taking his inspiration from Qutb, made the critical point that jihad in the form of violent confrontation had to be reinstated.

Quoting the so-called "sword verse", which directs followers to "slay the unbelievers wherever you find them, arrest them, besiege them and lie in ambush everywhere for them", he concluded that "there can be no excuses, there can be no middle way, it is jihad and Islam or there is blasphemy". This allows Islamist leaders to argue that suicide bombing attacks are not suicide but acts of martyrdom, and therefore not punishable. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi invoked this interpretation at the July 2003 meeting of the Dublin-based European Council for Fatwa and Research, when suicide attacks against Israel were deemed permissible.

Other verses from the Qur'an and hadith clearly advocate violence. To those who point to earlier and more peaceful suras, it is important to understand that the rule of abrogation places greater emphasis on later Medinan verses in situations where verses seem in contradiction to each other. Moderate Muslims may say that such an interpretation is incorrect. Radicals accuse them of not taking the Qur'an seriously. And where Islamists read "fight them until there is no more disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah, and every kind of worship is for Allah alone", they see this as referring to Islam ruling the world. Moderates have a difficult time explaining away verses that incite violence, because Islam teaches that the Qur'an was dictated by Allah.

Factors such as the existence of Israel and the occupation of Iraq by western armies may provide a focus for Islamists. But none of these so-called provocations existed in the seventh century when Islam spread like wildfire, mainly by the sword.

Many consider Islam to contain peaceful approaches, but within its literature, significant space exists to nurture a radical vanguard force, which is religiously driven and committed to world domination through a process of jihad. Unless Islam is understood in such terms and is held in check by world opinion, the power of western institutions or moderate Islamic elites, it will continue unchecked in its quest to establish a global caliphate.

Susan Philips is a political analyst and author of a recent study, *The London Bombings*.

NO Syyed Siraj H Zaidi says Islam and terrorism are contradict- ory terms. A terrorist cannot be a Muslim and a Muslim cannot be a terrorist.

The word Islam is derived from the word slim, which means reconciliation, peace, submission and deliverance. Before Islam, all previous revelations had been sent to particular nations. For the first time in human history, Islam came as the religion for all humanity and the Prophet Mohammad was the first to be honoured with a duty towards all humanity.

Islam - like all monotheist religions - is a religion of peace and tolerance. Prayers (salat), fasting, pilgrimage, alms giving and defending it from annihilation (jihad) are the main pillars of Islam. There over one billion Muslims in the world today - over 20 million in the EU - and 52 predominantly Muslim countries. Islam has 72 various sub-sects or schools of thought. However, all Muslims believe in the fundamental principles of Islam. The sole prerequisite for Islam is that one should "really" believe and live accordingly. It is the fastest growing way of life in the world today.

Islam is the religion of unity. That is to say in the field of faith, this is a religion based on believing only in one God. Its view of life and the social system all call for the unity of humanity, brother and sisterhood, equality in basic rights and the abolition of all discrimination based on colour or race. Islam has declared that all people have honour, with no socio-political, material, spiritual, racial or cultural discrimination. It is therefore categorically untrue to claim that terrorism is a principle of Islam.

If one looks into the history of Islam, one would find that this most sublime religion became the victim of extreme brutality and terrorism by so-called Muslims who did not follow the Prophet's instructions and teaching of Qur'an, immediately after his demise. Khilafat - a false so-called Islamic political system - was imposed upon Muslims in the sixth century of the Christian era at the expense of the correct and rightful system of Imamatus. The same people have revived militarism to their twisted ideologies and erroneous understanding of Islam, and called it "Islamic ideology". They contradict what Islam is really about.

Does Islam encourage terrorism?

"Does Islam encourage terrorism?" The question directly points a finger at the religion as opposed to this specific sect which believes in terrorism, and implies that there is something inherently wrong with it. This absurd question shows a profound lack of knowledge of Islam. One cannot even juxtapose the word terrorism with Islam - they are contradictory terms. In true Islam, terror does not exist. In Islam, killing a human is an act equal in gravity to unbelief.

No person can kill a human. No one can touch an innocent person, even in times of war. No one can give fatwa - a legal pronouncement in Islam - in this matter. There is no such thing as a Muslim terrorist; a terrorist cannot be a Muslim; a Muslim cannot be a terrorist. Islamic criteria cannot justify or permit suicide attacks. Islam, always, in all circumstances, approbates peace. The Qur'an regards human life as being exalted and inviolate. Islam considers murder as one of the gravest sins and as a capital crime. In Islam, even in warfare, there are rules to be observed; even trees and crops have rights and non-combatant innocent people cannot be killed. Women and children are protected. Islam regards suicide attackers as heinous murders.

The Qur'an says that killing an innocent person is the same as killing all people: "If someone kills another person - unless it is in retaliation for someone else or for causing corruption in the Earth - it is as if he had murdered all mankind. And if anyone gives life to another person, it is as if he had given life to all mankind. The instructions came to them with clear signs, but even after that many of them committed outrages in the Earth." (Q. 5:32)

In this Quranic verse, Muslim morality is explained: "To be one of those who believe and urge each other to steadfastness and urge each other to compassion. Those are the companions of the right." (Q: 17-18)

Islam, as described in the Qur'an, is a modern, enlightened, progressive religion. A Muslim is above all a person of peace; he is tolerant, with a democratic spirit, cultured, enlightened, honest, and knowledgeable about art, science and civilisations.

A Muslim educated in the fine moral teaching of the Qur'an approaches everyone with the love that Islam expects. He shows respect for every idea and values art and aesthetics. He is conciliatory in the face of every event, diminishing tension and restoring amity.

In societies composed of such individuals, there has to be refined higher civilisation, a higher social morality, more joy, happiness, justice, security, abundance and blessings than in the world's most modern nations.

Syyed Siraj H Zaidi is an actor, film and TV producer and distributor and a founding member of the Three Faiths Forum of Ireland which brings together Muslims, Jews and Christians

Load-Date: August 13, 2007

Why Islamist political parties are prospering

Ottawa Citizen

August 29, 2007 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A13

Length: 1135 words

Byline: Harry Sterling, Citizen Special

Body

If totally free and open elections were held in Arab countries, Islamic political parties would win almost everywhere. And most would be anti-American.

Those sentiments did not issue from the lips of a militant Islamic supporter, but rather were expressed to me the other day, in a matter-of-fact way, by a diplomat from a pro-Western country in the Middle East.

Such views obviously provide little comfort for those increasingly concerned about inroads being made by Islamic movements and political parties, particularly radical Muslim groups implicated in acts of terrorism. These concerns raise important questions regarding why Islamic political parties have been able to win greater support in recent times.

Equally importantly, what is it about Islamic extremism that attracts individuals to its doctrines, including those willing to become suicide bombers?

The most recent elections in Egypt saw a large number of so-called independent candidates enter parliament even though they were linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, which was banned from presenting candidates.

Last year, the militant Hamas party in the occupied Palestinian territories stunned everyone by winning power in parliamentary elections over the traditional Fatah party, now led by Mahmoud Abbas.

Although Hamas's Ismail Haniya was appointed prime minister, western nations, including Canada, refused to deal with the new government and stopped all financial and development assistance, citing Hamas's links with terrorism.

Notwithstanding the perceived threat posed by Islamic parties in the minds of many, Turkish voters these days clearly don't share such fears.

Despite concerted efforts by Turkey's secular-minded military and traditional power brokers -- as well as ultra-nationalists -- urging Turkish voters to turn their backs on the Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party, AKP, of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan during crucially important July 22 elections, voters rewarded the AKP with 47 per cent of the total vote, up from 34 per cent won in 2002. The AKP's sweeping electoral victory was such that it even won more than 50 per cent of the vote in the violence-ridden Kurdish region of the southeast.

Why Islamist political parties are prospering

And yesterday, Turkey's parliament elected controversial foreign minister Abdullah Gul as president, after his bid was initially blocked by the military over fears about his Islamist political past.

Given the constant warnings about the Islamization of society if avowedly Islamic parties gain power, what explains their appeal?

One key factor is that many Islamic political parties have reputations for being honest and untainted by corruption scandals, the latter extremely pervasive among secular parties such as Fatah. Hamas's electoral victory last year was at least partially based on Fatah's blatant nepotism, corruption and failure to deal with widespread unemployment.

Islamic parties also have developed popular social-welfare programs in their societies. Hamas, and Hezbollah in Lebanon, were particularly effective in providing assistance to the people. The rapid aid provided by Pakistani Islamic movements won them considerable praise after that country's devastating earthquake in 2005.

It's generally believed Islamic parties would do well in most Muslim countries, including the more authoritarian ones, such as Saudi Arabia, were they allowed to operate freely. And it's precisely the attempt by authoritarian and monarchical-based systems in the Arab world to ban or manipulate elections that undoubtedly plays a significant role in generating support for Islamic movements, whether ostensibly legal or covert.

Although until recent times there was a belief that the appeal of radical Islamic groups, like Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda, appealed primarily to the poor and marginalized within society, that view has been questioned.

The migration of millions of rural poor to urban centres in the 20th century created considerable socio-economic discontent in many countries, including Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and elsewhere. However, as demonstrated on Sept. 11, 2001, a significant number of militants come from educated and professional backgrounds, including engineers and doctors.

While many Muslims may have regarded Islamic parties as offering opportunities to improve their economic lot in societies ruled by small groups of privileged elites, many also saw Islamic fundamentalism as offering a degree of certainty in a rapidly changing world. Modern concepts and practices -- including the emancipation of women -- were seen as undermining traditional ways of life, shunting many to the sidelines in their own countries.

Support for repressive and corruption-ridden governments in the Arab world by the United States and European countries only reinforced anti-western sentiment further.

Islamic radicals offered an antidote to widespread discontent and the sense of humiliation felt by many who were resentful of foreign influences flooding their conservative societies, leaving them alienated and seemingly powerless.

The siren call of Islamic fundamentalism with its demand for a return to the certainties offered by the Koran and universal Muslim brotherhood has fallen on receptive ears, especially among those indoctrinated by imams and mullahs in religious schools, as in Pakistan, where radicalized religious leaders and students -- many of the latter women -- participated in the recent bloody showdown with Pakistani commandos besieging the controversial Red Mosque in Islamabad.

Another contributing factor behind the current jihad (holy war) against the west, is the simple desire of younger Muslims to participate in a cause, the present intervention by the U.S. and other nations in Iraq and Afghanistan being regarded as a premeditated war against Islam. In some cases, as in Bosnia, many foreign Muslims joined the fighting as a proxy battle for their own homelands, such as Chechnya and Uzbekistan.

While U.S. President George W. Bush and others have convinced themselves the only way to reduce the appeal of radical Islamists is to promote free market economies and western concepts of democracy and human rights, others in the Muslim world insist their religion and its teachings from the Koran are integral to the daily life of the Muslim faithful, and foreign concepts of secularism and unfettered democracy are alien concepts, unsuited to Muslim society.

Why Islamist political parties are prospering

But until such time as the inhabitants of predominantly Muslim societies benefit from universal education and health care, adequate living standards and employment -- plus assured security -- the question of what kind of society they truly prefer to live in, whether secular and fully democratic, or non-secular, will likely remain unanswered.

Harry Sterling, a former diplomat, is an Ottawa-based commentator.

He served in Turkey.

Load-Date: August 29, 2007

End of Document

[Mailbag](#)

The Jerusalem Post

September 19, 2008 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 12

Length: 1589 words

Byline: Wendy Blumfield, J. Fischer, M. Schwarcz, Lynette Ordman, Response from the Editor - Oren Klass, Larry Bigio, Trudy Gefen, B.B., Sarah Goodman

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Wise women indeed

Dear editor,

Re: Wise women (September 12)

They are indeed 'Wise Women,' this new generation of Israeli midwives who have moved into the 21st century with a radical change of outlook. For many years there was resistance to our organization's attempts to present a more human face to hospital births, to provide more options in choice of birth-place and to promote breastfeeding according to the recommendations of the World Health Organization.

These midwives and others not mentioned in the article are now using their experience and knowledge to further our vision of freedom of choice based on information and support for the woman and her family during the childbearing year.

I would nevertheless like to point out that a midwifery license is not an automatic certification as a childbirth educator or lactation counselor. The Israel Childbirth Education Center runs very specialized training courses and many midwives, as well as other professionals, have graduated from these courses with enhanced listening and counseling skills. Working together can only enrich the childbearing experience for the parents and babies of Israel.

Wendy Blumfield,

Hon. President

Israel Childbirth Education Center

Higher tuition fees

for draft-dodgers

Dear editor,

Re: Students urge action to exclude draft-dodgers (September 12)

Mailbag

I was glad to see that the students' association at the Netanya Academic College is urging the government to adopt regulations to keep draft-dodgers out of academic institutions. Make them do a few years of Sherut Leumi (National Service) for the country they live in and which provides them with all kinds of services, mainly defending them! They could also pay higher university fees than those who have served. My children, their spouses and grandchildren served in the army before going on to study. My son, aged 48, still does his reserve duty training - giving back to the State of Israel!

J. Fischer,

Michmoret

Kosher food for all

Dear editor,

Re: Parents angry over lack of kashrut on Poland trip

We were amazed and upset by the information in the article about lack of kashrut for Ra'anana students in Poland. The children were there as part of an official visit by Israeli students, and thus kosher food should have been supplied to all the participants with no need to make advance requests.

Dr. Ida Selavan Schwarcz and Dr. Joseph M. Schwarcz,

Ganei Omer

Stunned at Metro

Re: Neither shall they study war anymore (September 5)

I was stunned that there were no letters of strong condemnation to Metro's four pages of publicity for an organization that seeks to help those Israelis who don't want to fight for their country.

Compare this to Sarah Honig's article "The wooden-headedness factor" from September 12th, which included the comment that "the youngest Israelis are never taught (the justice of their cause) and remain ignorant to a degree that severely imperils Israel's self-preservation prospects." Dr. Dolev's organization is clearly an example of the result of this failure to educate.

But far more is at stake when journalists choose to reinforce the way that our enemies portray us. As Sarah Honig states, it is not "enlightenment and broadmindedness." On the contrary, it is a totally irresponsible and self-destructive activity, at a time when this country desperately needs to inform its people of the facts.

Lynette Ordman,

Netanya

Response from the editor

What are "enlightenment and broadmindedness" if not utterly subjective qualities? Indeed, one cannot fight a wrong unless one knows it exists, and it is the journalistic obligation to ensure that the public becomes aware of its existence. The article was neither a publicity piece nor an expression of any editorial point of view. The comments made in the article by members of New Profile speak for themselves, and it is up to every person to reach their own conclusion and to act according to their own conscience. On a related sidenote, earlier this week Attorney-General Menahem Mazuz ordered a criminal probe of New Profile's web site.

Sincerely,

Oren Klass

Mailbag

This may come as a surprise to New Profile

Dear editor,

Re: Neither shall they study war anymore (September 5)

The description of the New Profile group by Carl Hoffman shows that this group just doesn't get it (though they like to think of themselves as moral icons). The Palestinians, Syrians, Hizbullah, Iran, etc. don't really want to create a Palestinian state. They aren't "struggling for freedom." They aren't "resisting the occupation." They only want to destroy Israel and kill Jews, at least those who had the audacity to actually return to live in their ancestral homeland. The enemy's missiles and suicide bombers don't and won't distinguish between New Profile members and anyone else.

If the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states had really wanted a Palestinian state, they could have built one following the partition in 1947. They could have built, created, grown and developed peacefully next to Israel, rather than putting rocket launchers on vacated farms in Gaza. It's not Israel's actions that create the hatred. Israel's actions are a reaction to and defense against the hatred (yes, including all those barriers that weren't there until the suicide bomber rate started to skyrocket). Have you ever seen a Palestinian who can say "gee, the Jews have some rights to this land also; they used to live here and had a state here long ago; let's share the land with them"?

Seven years ago we made aliya to this land. Our daughter now serves in the IDF working with volunteers who come from abroad to help Israel. Yes, it may surprise New Profile, but there are many, many people who see service, be it in the IDF or in National Service, as a privilege of our generation. It may surprise them that there are many foreigners who pay money to come and help out on Israeli military bases, all so that people like me and my family and the folks of New Profile can live here in freedom and say what we think to the newspapers.

Is this a perfect state? Of course not. Do we have a perfect government or a perfect army? Of course not. That's why we are here trying to help, build, develop, serve and grow ourselves in the process. If the people of New Profile don't want to serve in the army, that's their prerogative (and, to some extent, their loss). They should consider other ways of serving in order to make this a better society, instead of teaching others how not to serve.

Larry Bigio,

Zichron Ya'acov

From Orwell to JFK: Musings on serving one's country

Dear editor,

Re: Neither shall they study war anymore (September 5)

I was pleased to read the responses by Zelda Harris, Barry Newman and Reida Mishory-Isserof in last week's Metro Mailbag. I add the following observations on pacifism by George Orwell during WWII, who was a communist in his youth but saw the light as he matured, becoming one of the strongest critics of communism at that time:

1. "Pacifism is objectively pro-Fascist. This is elementary common sense. If you hamper the war effort on one side, you automatically help out that of the other." (Partisan Review, 1942)
2. "We sleep safely in our beds because 'rough' men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would harm us."

I hope the above will be read and ingested by Diana Dolev and the founders and members of New Profile - i.e., all those who contemplate dodging their commitments to their country, especially National Service.

They should also remember the words of John F. Kennedy, which went something like this: "Do not ask what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

Mailbag

Trudy Gefen,

Kiryat Ono

Still HOT and sticky

Dear editor,

Seems like this subject has developed into a "swarm of hornets" issue with all the feedback you are receiving from the public.

One of your regulars, Mr. Barry Newman from Ginot Shomron, answered that the public should already be aware of big business policies of "maximum profit with minimum quality service."

Another answered that this way of thinking is an insult. I agree, it is an insult to the consumer. It is for this reason that Better Business Bureau started in the United States - in order to protect the consumers from the big and small businesses that decide the consumer's brain is incapable of deciphering the cheating nature of their business (big time con-artists?).

When a company agrees to give a specific quality service upon a consumer's agreement, then that company is obligated to provide said service at the specific price quoted. Furthermore, I believe that rates should not be changed until the consumer is duly informed of the change and the reason. There should be some type of warning in advance (mail, email, telephone).

Again, it seems to me that governmental supervision is lacking in the case of cable companies' service and automatic raising of rates. That spells out to me as negligence.

Another reader in Eilat answered that consumers shouldn't complain - that all we have to do is not give in to temptation and cut ourselves off from satellite cable television. Does he believe that all Israeli citizens live in homes that can put up their own satellite dish? Naive.

B.B. (Not giving name as don't want Hot to raise my rates),

Haifa

My chase is over

Dear editor,

Thank you for publishing my letter in Metro, September 5th, in which I complained about HOT overcharging me. I received a call from them on September 7th and a promise of a refund. Perhaps my letter in Metro was instrumental in waking them up! I had been chasing them since May.

Sarah Goodman,, Haifa

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

**US: Mashaal's truce offer to Carter is meaningless. Ex-president brokers
 Hamas pledge to send letter from Schalit to parents**

The Jerusalem Post
April 22, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1673 words

Byline: TOVAH LAZAROFF and HERB KEINON, AP contributed to this report.

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

Former US president Jimmy Carter ended his nine-day trip to the region with a promise from Hamas to offer Israel tacit recognition and a 10-year truce if Israel in turn withdrew to the pre-1967 borders.

Khaled Mashaal, whose group has sworn to destroy Israel, told reporters in Damascus on Monday that Hamas would accept a Palestinian state in the West Bank with Israel as its neighbor, but stressed that his group would not formally recognize it, a move immediately dismissed by the US as meaningless.

"We agree to a (Palestinian) state on pre-67 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital with genuine sovereignty without settlements, but without recognizing

Israel," Mashaal said. "We have offered a truce if Israel withdraws to the 1967 borders, a truce of 10 years as a proof of recognition."

Mashaal said he made the offer to Carter during talks between the two men on Friday and Saturday in the Syrian capital.

Mashaal used the Arabic word "hudna," meaning truce, which is more concrete than "tahadiyeh" - a period of calm - which Hamas often uses to describe a simple cease-fire. Hudna implies a recognition of the other party's existence.

In Washington, deputy State Department spokesman Tom Casey brushed aside Hamas's offer, saying the group's past rhetoric contained "all this language about truces and other kinds of issues. But the bottom line is, Hamas still believes in the destruction of the state of Israel; they don't believe Israel has a right to exist," adding it was clear "that nothing has changed" in Hamas's attitude - including that the group still refuses to explicitly recognize Israel and denounce terrorism.

The statements by Hamas followed Carter's visit to the region, during which he spent time in Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

Carter angered both Israel and his own government by meeting with Hamas, which is considered by both countries to be a terrorist organization. It has carried out terror attacks in Israel, and has launched rockets against the country's southern border. It has also held Cpl. Gilad Schalit captive since June 2006.

US: Mashaal's truce offer to Carter is meaningless. Ex-president brokers Hamas pledge to send letter from Schalit to parents

Top Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, refused to meet with Carter during his stay. But Carter, who ended his visit to the region on Monday, said that it was critical to talk to Hamas.

The former president, who brokered a peace deal between Egypt and Israel in 1979, said repeatedly that in those meetings, as well as in others he held, he was simply on a fact-finding mission for the Carter Center, which he runs in the United States.

But he did more than just receive information. He tried and failed to broker deals regarding a cease-fire with Hamas and the release of Schalit.

He did, however, wrangle a promise from Hamas that it would send a letter from the young man to his parents.

The gesture was acknowledged by Mashaal on Monday, who told reporters in Damascus that he had agreed to this "humanitarian" gesture out of respect for Carter.

Schalit's father, Noam, who, along with his wife, spoke with Carter both before and after his trip to Damascus, said he would wait until receiving the letter before commenting on the gesture.

Speaking to the Israel Council on Foreign Relations, Carter said that Hamas had rejected his proposal for a rapid prisoner exchange that would allow Schalit to be moved to Egypt in exchange for the release of people held by Israel not guilty of violent crimes, including politicians, women and children.

"Hamas considered its negotiations through Egypt to be well advanced," and it had already made promises to the families of prisoners who are on the prisoner list that is already under discussion with Israel, Carter said.

But, he added, Hamas would be willing to move Schalit to Egypt after the first part of that deal brokered with Egypt had been concluded.

Israel has agreed to release 1,000 prisoners in exchange for Schalit, but the hold-up has been the identity of the prisoners on the list.

Ofer Dekel, the official charged by Olmert with dealing with the kidnapped soldiers issue, was reported as saying Monday that he had not received a briefing about Carter's activities in Damascus and his talks with Mashaal, government sources said.

They added it was clear that Industry and Trade Minister Eli Yishai would brief the government - and Dekel - on what he heard from Carter regarding Schalit.

The two men met both before and after Carter's talks with Mashaal.

Far from knocking Carter's efforts, Yishai had asked Carter to help arrange a meeting between him and Hamas to work on releasing Schalit.

Carter told Yishai that Hamas was interested in such a meeting, but did not want to talk to him at this time, out of fear it would complicate already existing negotiations.

But Carter said he would help Yishai arrange a meeting in Egypt with intelligence chief Omar Sulliman. Yishai also spoke with Carter about his involvement in a conference of Islamic and Jewish religious leaders.

But, while Yishai wanted to work with Carter, one government official said the former US president had done more harm than good, even with the promise of a new letter. The Schalit family had previously received a letter from their son last June.

According to this official, Hamas is dissatisfied that, despite holding Schalit for almost two years, they have not gotten what they want from the Israeli government - the release of high-profile terrorists - for his return.

US: Mashaal's truce offer to Carter is meaningless. Ex-president brokers Hamas pledge to send letter from Schalit to parents

In an attempt to pressure the Israeli public to pressure the government, Hamas is interested in opening up another negotiating track which bypasses Dekel and the government, and goes directly to the public.

Carter, the official said, serves this purpose, because the impression that things could move much faster if only another channel of communications were tapped is exactly the message Hamas wanted the Israeli public to hear.

The official said it was clear that Hamas was using Carter for its purposes, and that Mashaal, who knew far in advance that Carter was coming to Damascus to meet him, could very well have had a letter to give the former president from Schalit. It's all about shaping Israeli public opinion, the official said.

The official said that Hamas also used Carter to give it legitimization.

The US and European Union position is that Hamas should not be engaged until it accepts three preconditions: recognizing Israel, disavowing terrorism and accepting previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

In comes Carter, the official said, and he meets Hamas without its having to pay any price, which is exactly what the organization wants to have happen with the rest of the world.

But, during his Jerusalem speech, Carter defended his actions.

"It was a small step forward to reassure Cpl. Schalit's parents that he is alive and well and will be writing them a letter soon," said Carter.

He also reported that Hamas would accept any deal negotiated by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, even one they disagreed with, as long as it was approved by the Palestinian people through a referendum.

"Let me underscore the significance of the statement. It means that Hamas will not undermine Abbas's efforts to negotiate the agreement," said Carter.

More to the point, if the Palestinian people, through a referendum, agreed to recognize Israel, then Hamas, in effect, would do so as well, he said.

But Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri in Gaza said Hamas's readiness to put a peace deal to a referendum "does not mean that Hamas is going to accept the result of the referendum."

Such a referendum, he said, would have to be voted on by Palestinians living all over the world. They number about 9.3 million, including some 4 million living in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem.

A spokesman for Carter said the former president had already left the country and had no response to the comment.

But during his speech, Carter acknowledged that he had failed in some respects during his talks with Hamas.

The group had rejected his suggestion for a 30-day unilateral cease-fire, he said.

"They met all day yesterday to consider this proposal. They finally decided that they were dependent on Egypt as an intermediary, and that progress which had been made already with Egypt should prevail. They couldn't terminate unilaterally, because they didn't trust Israel to follow up by lessening their attacks on Gaza and the West Bank," said Carter.

Separately, Carter said that Hamas wants to negotiate an agreement with Abbas to create a government of national consensus with a unified professional security force for the West Bank and Gaza. The cabinet would be composed of technocrats, until another election was held.

Hamas has also proposed that the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza be reopened with the help of EU monitors, as it was in the past, except that this time, Egypt, not Israel, would control it.

US: Mashaal's truce offer to Carter is meaningless. Ex-president brokers Hamas pledge to send letter from Schalit to parents

With respect to Syria, where Carter met with President Bashar al-Assad and senior officials, Carter said that Syria wants to conclude a peace agreement with Israel as soon as possible.

"I was impressed with their eagerness to complete an agreement on the Golan Heights. He [Assad] said that the only major difference in starting good faith talks was that Israel insisted that there be no public acknowledgement that the talks are going on, whereas Syria insisted that the talks being conducted would not be a secret."

Carter said that 85 percent of the differences had been resolved, including borders, water rights, security zones and the presence of international forces. He chastised the US for opposing talks between Syria and Israel.

Syria wants the US to play strong role, and "I hope that it will be done," said Carter.

He said that he asked the Syrians about the fate of Israeli soldier Guy Hever, who went missing in 1997, while in the area of the Golan Heights. There are those who believe he is being held by Syria.

Carter said the Syrians had no evidence of his whereabouts. They also said they knew nothing about the fate of kidnapped soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, both of whom were abducted by Hizbullah in July 2006.

Graphic

Photo: FORMER US president Jimmy Carter addresses the Israel Council on Foreign Relations in Jerusalem yesterday. (Credit: Tara Todras-Whitehill/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

YES STARS beats a tonsorial Zionist gagfest

The Jerusalem Post

June 27, 2008 Friday

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Length: 1695 words

Byline: DAVID HOROVITZ

Highlight: Adam Sandler's new comedy is an unsubtle assertion of Israeli humanity and Arab villainy. And it's not even the best Israeli propaganda film currently playing. EDITOR'S NOTES

Body

The critics have been mixed about *You Don't Mess with the Zohan*. The US box office take, edging close to \$100 million three weeks after release, is middling - solid rather than spectacular. But in one aspect at least, we can be definitive about Adam Sandler's latest comedy: It has to be the most overtly pro-Israel movie to come out of Hollywood since, well, *Exodus*.

It has been reported that some of the Arab actors who worked on the film were somewhat unhappy at its tone. I'm not surprised. I frankly cannot imagine how it will be viewed in the Arab world - if it gets there. Come to that, I'm intrigued to see how it will go down in the UK, that bastion of Zionist empathy, where it opens later this summer. In Israel, unsurprisingly, it is playing to packed and delighted houses.

The truth is, it's a ridiculous movie, unsubtle, with an absurd plot, hammy performances and humor in frequently the worst possible taste. But for hyping heroic, fundamentally humane Israel, it is peerless.

We're talking screwball comedy here, so it's a thoroughly superficial and slapstick Israel Sandler gives us, too - an Israel depicted against the modern soundtrack of "Hadag Nahash" but one still drawn from 1970s stereotype, a nation of homophobic macho chauvinists with exaggerated libidos, and ripe bikini-clad women, all getting along on a diet of humous, barbecued fish and "Fizzy Bubbelech" orange soda.

The theme of ...the Zohan, though, is Israel's essential life-affirming goodness, a quality relentlessly contrasted, moreover, with almost unstinting Arab perfidy.

Sandler's character is a lean, yet anything but mean, killing machine. He's very good at it, he knows it has to be done, but he really doesn't want to hunt down terrorists. What the toned, honed counterterror commando truly longs to do is cut hair - "silky smooth." (This patently absurd premise is apparently not quite that absurd; it was based on three genuine ex-IDF brothers who now run California styling salons.) The metal object Zohan cradles in bed is not his gun but his trimming scissors. The glossy magazine he pores over is not *Guns & Ammo* but the Paul Mitchell stylists' catalog.

This central incongruity - Zohan the peerless warrior whose true passion is hairdressing - is played for laughs umpteen times in the movie. The contrast between the would- be peaceable Israelis and the invariably murderous Arabs is played for laughs as well. But that doesn't make it any less potent.

YES STARS beats a tonsorial Zionist gagfest

THE FILM'S opening scenes show Zohan living it up on the beach at Tel Aviv, enjoying a jiggy respite from his undercover heroics. But that Arab predilection for violence intrudes immediately: Zohan must be dragged away from his carefree sun-drenched antics to be briefed on his latest assignment - recapturing the notorious Palestinian terrorist "Phantom."

Recapturing? Yes, with jarring resonance for a modern Israel agonizing over the asymmetrical price of prisoner exchanges, Zohan, it turns out, has captured Phantom once before, but the Arab villain has since been set free by the government in exchange for various Israeli captives and so now must be tackled again.

An hour and a half or so later, toward the very end of the film, Phantom reveals that he doesn't really live to kill, either. His thwarted vocation, he avers, is to be a shoe salesman. But this is a throwaway line, inserted as the film's loose ends are being tied up, long after Phantom's murderous characteristics have been internalized by the audience.

For the intervening length of the movie, Sandler gives us an Israeli hero who fakes his own death at the hands of Phantom so that he can give up killing and follow his wash- and-cut dream to America, and a nemesis who achieves acclaim and riches in the Arab world for erroneously claiming to have murdered the Israeli. Zohan has barely set foot in America before he is standing up for a hapless cyclist, the blameless victim of a car accident. Meanwhile, the celebrity Arab terrorist - also depicted, incidentally, as a multiple bigamist, whose whole claim to fame of course is one big joke played on him by his smarter, tougher, braver, handsomer Israeli rival - opens a fast-food chain with an advertising slogan that includes the phrase "America is Satan."

The movie is peopled by Israelis who are likable, hard-working and resourceful, if not always entirely law-abiding. Some of the Arabs are honest and decent, too, but many are terrorists, admirers of terrorists, or inept would-be terrorists, phoning Hizbullah hot lines for advice on building bombs.

In a scene where Israeli and Arab shopkeepers are facing off against each other in New York, but tense relations are just starting to thaw, an Arab character complains that life is hard for Arabs in the US because everybody thinks they are terrorists. It's hard for us, too, one of the Israelis responds, and you wonder which Israeli fault is finally to be acknowledged. But no. The line he delivers is that it's hard for Israelis in the US... because they look like Arabs.

Even the most redeeming of the Arab characters, the Palestinian woman who runs the salon where hairdresser Zohan gets his break, and who turns out, inevitably, to be both his one true love and Phantom's sister, is played by Canadian actress Emmanuelle Chriqui, who just so happens to be the Jewish daughter of Moroccan immigrants, and brought up Orthodox at that, with relatives in Israel.

In another of the early scenes, Zohan gets a big laugh, and gets in another blow against violent Arabs when, combining superhero and party-clown capabilities, he dazzlingly pouches the avalanche of rocks thrown at him by Arab villagers and instantly sculpts them into a gray stone version of those little balloon dogs beloved at children's parties.

But so evidently intent is the movie on championing Israel that it departs from this kind of broad and universal humor on occasion to supply what can only be described as a Zionist narrative. At one point in mid-chase, for instance, Phantom accuses Zohan and the Israelis of stealing the Arabs' land. Half to himself, and thoroughly audibly to the audience, Zohan retorts that the Jews have been living in these parts for thousands of years.

Staggering stuff: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad misrepresentation of Israel as a colonial upstart despicably imposed upon the blameless Palestinians, as delivered to a worldwide audience last winter from the podium of the United Nations General Assembly, demolished in a one-liner in a puerile Hollywood laughathon. The straightforward assertion of Israel's historic legitimacy that the massed statespeople of the UN could not muster, brought home to millions by a wisecracking comedian from Brooklyn.

...THE ZOHAN is simplistic and childish - though emphatically a film to which you should not take your children. It is less original than Borat, and sprinkled with Hebrew where Sacha Baron Cohen's movie could have qualified as

YES STARS beats a tonsorial Zionist gagfest

Israel's foreign language Oscar entry. But it is remarkable because it makes for so radical a contrast to the usual negative diet of film on Israel - in news and in feature footage.

Yet there's a far more insightful Israeli production currently playing in our cinemas - and on our TV screens. More uplifting, too. And far more improbable. I'm talking about the commercials for our local satellite TV company's YES STARS channel.

If you've not had the pleasure, this brief clip - 60 seconds of satirical perfection - is set in Iran, and begins with "Ahmadinejad" proudly announcing on TV to his countrymen in Farsi: "My brothers, the uranium is in our hands," and so, "After Monday, Israel will be finished."

The Iranian mullahs' brief, initial savoring of the prospect of Israel's imminent demise immediately gives way, however, to concerns about the future. Wait, worries the first maverick to rise at a meeting of Islamic clerics, if there is no Israel from Monday, what will become of that wonderful series that YES STARS has been screening that day? A chorus of protest rises from the coffee houses. Soon the masses are on the streets.

"Call off the bombing," the mob urges the president. If YES STARS goes off the air, they warn, "There'll be chaos in Teheran."

Demonstrators demanding their Israeli TV fix file past a street mural of the stern Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Bearded clerics raise their palms to the heavens in supplication. Black-clad ranks of Iranian women join in the outraged marches. Revolutionary guardsmen wave their machine guns along with the chanting, by now in Hebrew, and soon Ahmadinejad is persuaded of the error of his ways, and is shown dancing to what has become the celebratory chorus: "Never mind the bombings. Watch Israel's YES STARS. Great programs."

At a time when Iran's anti-Israel incitement is reaching new heights, when Iran's uranium enrichment is indeed bringing the ayatollahs ever-closer to obtaining the means for their declared aim of Israel's destruction, when Israel has leaked word of its training missions for a possible attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, and false rumors of such a strike are capable of sending oil prices soaring, this short commercial underlines the very best qualities about Israel more accurately than Sandler's protracted tonsorial Zionist gagfest:

In a region filled with hatred, forced to fight relentlessly for our very survival, Israelis have nonetheless managed both to retain our own humor and largely to resist the temptation to demonize even our most overt and bitter enemies. Even as the Iranian regime and its adherents attempt to dehumanize us, we, in that commercial, insistently humanize them. Even as their extremists glory in death, we insist on portraying the Iranian populace as ultimately wanting to enjoy life rather than end it.

I'm not sure I'd even want Iranians to watch You Don't Mess with the Zohan. I certainly can't imagine they'd swallow the unsubtle propagandizing. But the YES STARS commercial? I wish it was playing daily in Teheran. I know that Iran's extremists could easily sustain their hatred for us even in the face of our evident good-natured ribbing. But the masses. Could they really resist just the hint of a grin?

Graphic

4 photos: SANDLER ON the beach at Tel Aviv. Israel's historic legitimacy asserted by a wisecracking Brooklyn comedian. YES IRAN. Sixty seconds of satirical perfection.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

YES STARS beats a tonsorial Zionist gagfest

End of Document

Iran resurgent, Persia redux

The Jerusalem Post

January 16, 2009 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 30

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Byline: STEPHEN SHAINWALD

Highlight: Impressions from a recent trip to Teheran

Body

A visitor to the Islamic Republic of Iran is constantly reminded that this Middle Eastern country is unique in the region, part-Persian, part-Islamic and part- Western - and not Arab.

In 1935 the Persian ambassador to Berlin wrote to Hitler, "We are Aryans," and the country's name was changed from Persia to Iran, "land of the Aryans" in Farsi.

The illustrious history of ancient Persia still resonates strongly. If anything, there has been a revival of interest in its scope and grandeur, and the Islamic Revolution of 1979 with its oppressive, Arabizing policies is sometimes referred to scornfully as "the second Arab invasion." Modern Iranians are proud that it took the seventh-century Arab invaders 200 years to subdue Persia and Zoroastrianism; that Persians later asserted their individuality by adopting Shi'ite rather than Sunni Islam; and that the Farsi language stubbornly survived even though Arabic script was imposed upon it.

Many cultural norms remain distinctly Persian. "Do Iranians have four wives?" "No, that's the Arab mentality!" The rich tradition of Persian poetry, full of love and wine, roses and nightingales, permeates language and culture. Iranians like to stroll in the elegant, traditional gardens of the mausoleums of their famous poets - Hafez, Sa'di, Rumi and others - whose works are a part of the school curriculum that the Islamist regime was unable to stamp out. Concepts of freedom, truth and human rights have deep roots here.

The world heritage, but pre-Islamic, ruins of Persepolis were barely saved from bulldozing ordered by zealous clerics. "But now," writes one blogger, "even religious conservatives are reconciling themselves with the past, with who we are." The tomb of Cyrus, a lone ziggurat amid the windswept ruins of his capital city, Pasargadae, is being carefully restored.

One of the most powerful drivers of the nuclear program is this resurgent nationalism, fueled not only by the confidence of oil bounty, but by long-standing resentment of foreign intervention in Iran's internal affairs, and by a sense that Iran is at last taking its proper place in the region and the world. Support for a nuclear Iran is fervent. Why India, Pakistan and Israel, and not us?

Since its uranium enrichment was revealed, the Natanz nuclear facility has been ringed by electronic surveillance and anti-aircraft guns. From the road, the above-ground buildings look like any other industrial plant dotted across the flat Isfahan hinterland - petrochemicals, steel, concrete, oil refining.

Iran resurgent, Persia redux

Photos are strictly forbidden.

We stare hard as we pass by, stopping only at one of the shabby wayside gas stations and snack bars. The pace is steady. Intercity buses have their speed controlled by GPS checked against a digital tachygraph that the driver has to produce at police checkpoints, with his ID.

While the average Iranian undoubtedly opposes Israel as an oppressive occupier of Palestinian land, anti- Israelism is not a defining element of Iranian-Persian identity. There are no specific quarrels, no disputed borders. Educated Iranians cite historical associations with Jews, and are aware that Teheranis such as Moshe Katsav and Shaul Mofaz became prominent Israelis. They laugh at the thought of Iran attacking Israel - unless Israel attacks first.

The ruling regime, of course, remains implacably hostile. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's "annihilate Israel" comments were not original, but repeated Ayatollah Khomeini's mantras of some years before. Former president Muhammad Khatami spoke of Israel as "a plague," a "terrorist racist Zionist regime."

The newest twist, in Iranian TV's documentary The Secrets of Armageddon, is that international Zionism aims not only to take over the world, but to turn Iran into a location for Armageddon.

Iranians readily admit that they help to train and supply Hizbullah and Hamas. "There is a balance," said one. "We support these two groups against a strong Israel. That's fine so long as the balance doesn't change." What Teheran thinks about the balance in view of Israel's attack on Gaza remains to be seen.

Yet the preoccupations of most Iranians are not about conquest, destroying Israel, raising the flag of jihad or retrieving Muslim land for Allah. The parlous state of the economy - 25 percent to 30% inflation and 20% unemployment - dominates conversations and already overshadows the May 2009 elections. Iranians are daily reminded of their devalued currency: Thick green wads of 20,000-rial notes, each worth about \$1, are needed for every transaction.

The labor force is swollen by two million illegal foreign workers, mostly from Afghanistan, and thousands of Iraqi refugees. Some Iranians find work in the black market that flourishes across porous borders for all kinds of goods, including large quantities of drugs and alcohol - liquor is readily available from car trunks if you know a clandestine dealer's cellphone number. But many unemployed graduates emigrate, voting with their feet in a large and damaging brain drain.

Everywhere, one hears complaints about Ahmadinejad. A former mayor of Teheran, he had no national standing before becoming president. Elected by only 10 million of the 17 million who bothered to vote, he is derided for his economically unsound policies, financial mismanagement and embarrassing behavior on the international stage. "He has attracted enemies unnecessarily," said one Iranian.

By some estimates, only 15% of the population supports Ahmadinejad's rigid fundamentalism. A devout believer in the reappearance of Shi'ite Islam's 12th imam, who will restore justice to the world (and hopefully to Iran), the president keeps an empty chair beside him at cabinet meetings, which many regard as extreme. There are new claims of cronyism. The interior minister being impeached for his fake Oxford PhD certificate is a friend of Ahmadinejad, who, it is said, must have known.

Although the regime's grip has diminished since the 1980s - partly to avoid antagonizing the country's huge youth population, partly because of more pressing concerns - criticism is quickly stifled. Newspapers critical of the government are closed down, most recently the popular weekly Shahravande Emrouz, for "publishing baseless news about President Ahmadinejad's administration..."

Activists in the 1-million-signature campaign to change discriminatory laws against women are being harassed, arrested and even imprisoned. Under Iranian law no woman can retain custody of children older than seven, and a woman's testimony is worth half that of a man's.

The overriding political problem is that there is no organized or national opposition, and the numerous individuals and groups who privately oppose the regime have no shared forum. Dissident students are not allowed a voice.

Iran resurgent, Persia redux

This is no 1979, when a broad-based anti-shah opposition including communists, republicans, intellectuals and Islamists delivered a revolution.

Yet there is considerable restiveness. Seventy percent of the population is younger than 30, beneficiaries of the government's pro-baby policy after the massive death toll of the Iran-Iraq War.

Many are avid Internet users and bloggers, and plugged into illegal satellite TV. They are internationally aware, curious, lively, unfailingly courteous, more secular, but very nationalistic.

"We lead a double life," several explained. "What was public before the revolution [alcohol consumption, freedom of dress] is now private, and what was private [religious observance] is now public. When we close the doors of our homes, we are in a different world."

Here and there, hijabs are brighter colored and pushed back to reveal hair, and women's garments more figure-hugging, often worn over jeans. The vigilantes who once barged unannounced into private homes to check on religious observance are now rarely seen except at public events.

In the republic's early years, the ruling clerics tried to run the economy along strict Islamic lines, with disastrous results. Attempts to diversify under the moderately reformist Khatami (1997-2005) were sabotaged by powerful clerical cadres.

Thirty years after the revolution the economy remains heavily oil-dependent, incompetently managed and now stricken by a plunging oil price that also puts at risk Ahmadinejad's expensive populist commitments. The International Monetary Fund has calculated that Iran needs an oil price of \$95 a barrel just to balance its budget.

The economic malaise has reached crisis point. In November a conference on international investment in tourism was held in Teheran with the express aims of job creation and diversifying the economy away from oil. A 20-year plan is targeting 20 million tourists. Tax and land use incentives were offered, along with an extensive list of historic sites requiring development from cultural heritage to accommodation, eco-tourism and handicraft villages.

The main participants were Turks - scoffed at as minor players by one Teherani businessman who has felt the bite of US-led financial sanctions as he failed to secure overseas contracts. Government interference in Iran's private sector has long made it a high-risk investment. But the recently stepped-up sanctions on banks that do business with Iran have cut far deeper than the UN measures. Many foreign banks are refusing loans to Iranians, creating difficulties for trade financing and payments - and for major sectoral development such as tourism.

Those calling for Khatami to stand again in May do so knowing that the regime's control of the Majlis, and the powers of the shadowy Guardian Council, are unlikely to change. The council's strict vetting of all parliamentary candidates disqualified hundreds from the 2005 election. "It doesn't matter who is elected president next year," said one Iranian grimly, "the system remains the same."

In the background, however, is the relentless demographic surge, a groundswell for change. Yet the change wanted by many Iranians is not more Westernization or imposed solutions. Some say that what may emerge is a religious democracy with its own norms and values, but it will be novel, and quintessentially Iranian.

The US presidential election aroused some excitement. "Forty years is a special number," exclaimed one young Teherani. "[Barack] Obama has become president 40 years after Bobby Kennedy said that a black man would do this. It will soon be 40 years since our revolution, and we have a new young generation that does not share the values of the present regime. I can feel the winds of change coming."

Graphic

Iran resurgent, Persia redux

5 photos: The tomb of Cyrus, a lone ziggurat amid the windswept ruins of his capital city, Pasargadae, is being carefully restored. Downtown Teheran. Memories of greater times. Under Iranian law no woman can retain custody of children older than seven, and a woman's testimony is worth half that of a man's. Seventy percent of the population is younger than 30, beneficiaries of the government's pro-baby policy after the massive death toll of the Iran-Iraq War. (Credit: STEPHEN SHAINWALD)

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End of Document

Whither Israeli Arabs?

The Jerusalem Post

March 11, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

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Byline: CAROLINE B. GLICK

Highlight: The government is neglecting the Arab sector, but there may still be time to salvage the situation. OUR WORLD

Body

Last Thursday, a 28-year-old IDF non-commissioned officer was killed by a roadside bomb along the border with Gaza. A Beduin from the South, he served as a combat tracker. At his funeral, his cousin said, "He did everything he could to convince [Beduin] youth to enlist in the army to serve the state. He said his service was hard, but he chose to defend his country." Another cousin noted that almost all the men in their family serve in the IDF.

At his family's request, his name was not released to the public. He was buried in a non-military funeral.

The family's request stemmed from fear that the Israeli Arab leadership or terrorists from the Palestinian Authority would take revenge on its members for their service to the State of Israel. Their fear of violent attack outweighed their desire to have their hero receive the public honors he so richly deserved for sacrificing his life for his country.

Contrast the fortunes of this family to those of an Arab family in Jerusalem who also lost a son last Thursday.

Last Friday, hundreds visited a traditional Muslim mourning tent in Jerusalem's Jabel Mukaber neighborhood to pay their respects to the family. The tent was adorned by hundreds of posters of the dead man's face. It also was also decorated with *Hizbullah* and Hamas banners.

The tent was erected to honor Alaa Abu D'heim. In a scene taken from a Russian pogrom, Thursday night D'heim entered Mercaz Harav Yeshiva and massacred eight boys and young men as they studied Torah.

D'heim's family did not fear retribution from their fellow Arabs. His neighbors did not demonstrate against his crime. The Israeli Arab leadership did not credibly condemn it.

Yet the lack of protests did not necessarily mean that his crime is supported by all Arabs in Israel. Sunday night, Channel 2's Suleiman Ashafi interviewed a young man outside the tent who said, "If I had known that he was planning to attack people, that he was planning to carry out a terrorist attack, I would have shot him in the head myself." The young man, like the Beduin soldier's family, requested not to be named. He used his hand to hide his face from the camera. He too, was intimidated. He too feared he would be attacked for voicing his condemnation of D'heim and his implied support for Israel.

WHAT IS going on in Israeli Arab society? What are the implications of the tangible fear among those Arabs who support Israel and the unabashed willingness of the Israeli Arab leadership to defend the likes of Hamas, Fatah and D'heim in their terror war against Israel? Is Israel's Arab minority - which comprises 20 percent of the population -

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lost? In the 1996 electoral campaign which pitted Binyamin Netanyahu against Shimon Peres, Netanyahu appointed former foreign and defense minister Moshe Arens to run the party's campaign for the Arab vote. Arens succeeded in bringing the Likud candidate five percent of the overall Arab vote. His labors were credited with bringing victory to the party in that photo-finish race.

In the aftermath of Thursday's massacre, Arens warns that it is wrong to view Israeli Arabs as a monolithic block. Indeed they are an ethnically and religiously diverse population.

To start with, Israel's 100,000 Druse, who accepted compulsory military service for their young men in 1949, are fully integrated in Israeli society. Indeed, the rate of Druse military service is higher than it is among Jews. Another sign of Druse societal integration is their birthrate. Whereas in 1948, the Druse birthrate was higher than the Muslim birthrate, today it is equal to the Jewish birthrate.

Like the Druse, Arens notes that the Circassians also accepted obligatory military service for their sons and they too are integrated into Israeli society. Many of the members of the Israel-allied South Lebanese Army who fled to Israel in the aftermath of Israel's precipitous withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000, have been welcomed in Circassian villages in the North even as they were blackballed in Muslim Arab villages.

Then there are the Israeli Beduin. Although Beduin are Muslims, due to their unique cultural traditions, Beduin have historically perceived themselves as distinct from the other Arab Muslims in Israel.

Their unique traditions are in the process of disappearing however. Arens recalls that 20 years ago, most Beduin encampments had no mosques. But today, every encampment has at least one mosque. And they are all run by the pro-Hamas Israeli Islamic movement. Similarly, the teachers in Beduin schools are overwhelmingly non-Beduin Israeli Arabs. Like the preachers in the mosques, they educate the youngsters to view themselves as Palestinian Arabs and to abandon their Israeli identity and loyalty to the state.

Although the Beduin have never been obligated to serve in the IDF, traditionally, the majority of their male youths volunteered for service, both as trackers and as regular combat soldiers. Due mainly to the indoctrination of the Islamic movement, the number of Beduin youth volunteering for military service has been decreasing drastically in recent years. Radical imams and teachers bar IDF recruiters from speaking to the youth.

Numbering 200,000, Beduin comprise some 25 percent of Israel's Muslim population. Most live in the South but some 70,000 live in the North and they have been less affected by the Islamic indoctrination campaign. In the North, traditional levels of Beduin enlistment in the IDF have been maintained.

Then there are the Christian Arabs. As one Israeli Arab colleague, (who also asked not to be identified), notes, Israel's Christian Arab population is the only flourishing Christian community in the Middle East. From Iraq to Syria to Jordan to Egypt to the Palestinian Authority, Christians find themselves under assault by authorities and Islamic gangs. In Israel, in contrast, the Christian population has grown steadily in recent years.

FINALLY THERE are the Israeli Arab Muslims. Since the 1994 establishment of the PA, the Israeli Muslim leadership has been radicalized. That leadership currently consists of Arab members of Knesset, the Israeli Arab Higher Follow-up Committee, the Islamic Movement and so-called Arab human rights organizations. All of these leaders and organizations have worked steadily to undermine the Israeli Arab Muslims' sense of attachment to the State of Israel and to intimidate dissenting voices into silence.

While their intimidation efforts have been successful, it is far from clear that their indoctrination efforts have won over the Israeli Arabs. Recently, the government announced its intention to encourage Israeli Arabs who don't serve in the military to perform national service. The organized Israeli Arab leadership has worked studiously to undermine the program.

Yet a poll carried out by University of Haifa last month revealed that 75 percent of Israeli Arabs between the ages of 16 and 22 support voluntary national service. The poll also found that the vast majority of the Arab public is unaware of the national service. 77.4 percent overall and 79.6 percent of youth said they know little or nothing

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about the program. Moreover, the poll found that once given basic information about conditions in the national service and its goals, not only were Israeli Arab youth supportive of the idea, but so were 71.9 percent of all Arab men and 83.8 percent of all Arab women. In contrast, some 80 percent of members of Arab political parties opposed national service.

Arens believes strongly that the government must launch a serious, directed hearts and minds campaign among Israeli Arabs. The very fact that nearly 80 percent of Israeli Arabs know nothing about the government's national service initiative is proof that the government is neglecting the Arab sector.

Arens contends that the place to direct such a campaign, at least in the short term, is among the Beduin. Israeli Beduin are the most impoverished ethnic group in Israel. Particularly in the South, they lack basic sanitation services. Their education system is appalling. And economic and academic opportunities for advancement are largely absent. Beduin who serve in the army receive no post-army assistance from the government.

Arens spearheaded a private initiative with Ben-Gurion University in the Negev to provide them with post-army educational opportunities, but the program was cancelled. In short, demobilized Beduin soldiers come home with nothing to show for their service to the country and so have no way of countering the Israeli Arabs who indoctrinate the youth to pan-Arabism and jihad. Indeed, often their only choice is to join Beduin crime rings that run smuggling and protection networks throughout the South.

Arens suggests that at a minimum, the IDF should set up day care centers and kindergartens for Beduin children staffed by soldiers from the IDF's soldier-teacher's unit which works in underprivileged communities. As defense minister, Arens sought to make military service compulsory for Beduin and he believes that such an initiative would still meet with success among the northern tribes. But his successors, bowing to the Arab political leadership, scuttled his initiative.

Obviously, for Arabs loyal to Israel to feel comfortable expressing their support for the state, the current atmosphere of intimidation must end. The Knesset must pass laws outlawing the openly treasonous Islamic Movement and Arab political parties that reject the authority and legitimacy of Israel. Arab leaders who incite violence must be dealt with harshly by the legal system.

As Arens notes, the natural pull of Israeli Arabs is towards the Palestinians. But that doesn't mean that their loyalty to Israel has been lost. It has not. To stem the tide, Israel must launch a twin campaign to help those Israeli Arabs who support the state and to encourage them to intensify their integration into Israeli society. And it must take concerted action against those radical leaders and organizations that work to undermine those bonds.

The current situation, in which Israeli Arab heroes fear attack, and Israeli Arab traitors are extolled must be turned on its head.

Graphic

Photo: BEDUIN WHO serve in the Israel Defense Forces receive no post-army assistance from the government. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

WITH CAIR, COMPROMISE COMPLICATED - Correction Appended

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

September 23, 2007 Sunday

0 South Pinellas Edition

Correction Appended

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Length: 2316 words

Byline: SUSAN TAYLOR MARTIN, Times Senior Correspondent

Highlight: The American Muslim group's stated goal is understanding. But some don't trust it.

Body

Two years ago on Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, Congregation Beth Shalom in Clearwater had an unusual guest speaker - a Muslim.

Ahmed Bedier, head of the Tampa chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, discussed similarities between Judaism and Islam. He answered questions about the Koran. One woman called the talk "wonderful."

Yet Rabbi David Weizman now wishes he hadn't invited Bedier.

"In hindsight I would have asked my colleagues if it was a good idea," says Weizman, who drew flak from some members of Tampa Bay's Jewish community who have long been suspicious of CAIR. "Although the intentions were good - for building bridges - the concern was with the honesty and sincerity of the other side of the bridge."

The reaction to Bedier's appearance reflects the wildly disparate views of CAIR, seen by some as a positive force for interfaith dialogue and by others as a slick front for Muslim extremism.

Without question, the oft-quoted CAIR has become the best-known American Muslim organization since the Sept. 11 attacks. Its stated goal is to increase understanding of Islam and to protect the civil rights of America's 6-million Muslims.

To that end, Bedier - one of CAIR's most media-savvy officials - is a familiar presence on TV, recently questioning the treatment of two University of South Florida students indicted Aug. 31 on explosives charges. And he was often in the news as federal prosecutors pressed their case against former USF professor Sami Al-Arian, accused by then-Attorney General John Ashcroft of being the North American leader of a Palestinian terrorist group.

Though CAIR participates in many civic activities, its association with the Al-Arian case and other controversies subjects it to blistering criticism, much of it from staunchly pro-Israel groups and commentators. They say CAIR supports anti-Israel terrorism. That it espouses the intolerant Wahhabi brand of Islam.

"It's an accumulation of things that have led many of the Jewish organizations to the conclusion that CAIR is problematic," says Martin Raffel, associate director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs in New York.

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CAIR denies the allegations, calling them attempts to "demonize" Muslims. And some prominent American Jews question whether the anti-CAIR criticism has gone too far.

"My general view is to look gently at organizations, knowing we all have complicated records," says David M. Elcott, executive director of Israel Policy Forum, a Manhattan think tank. "There have been real issues with CAIR, but at the same time there are ways CAIR could be worked with."

Rabbi Michael Paley says he has been looking into CAIR for months and "so far I cannot find any egregious activities."

"We should be concerned that we are alienating moderate Muslims and Muslims who are struggling to get a foothold in American society," says Paley, scholar in residence at the United Jewish Appeal Federation in New York. "If we do the one thing that has been so important to Jews in America, it will be to compromise."

Surge in prominence

Much of the controversy over CAIR stems from its roots in the Palestinian struggle against Israel. The Washington-based council was founded in 1994 by leaders of the Islamic Association of Palestine, a now-defunct U.S. organization accused of supporting Hamas, but never designated a terrorist group itself.

Most Muslims support the Palestinian cause, making it hard for CAIR to be detached, says Ihsan Bagby, a CAIR board member and University of Kentucky professor.

"CAIR tries to stay out of international issues, but they are dragged into it partly because the American Muslim community wants their voice to be heard on this issue because it is so important," Bagby says.

CAIR soared in prominence after the Sept. 11 attacks and the increased scrutiny that left many Muslims feeling under siege. But paradoxically as its profile went up, CAIR's revenues went down - from \$3.7-million in 2002 to \$2.25-million three years later.

Some critics see the decline as evidence CAIR doesn't have much support even among the people it claims to represent. But the drop in money going to the national CAIR has been offset by contributions to its 33 local chapters. CAIR-Florida took in \$802,000 last year, compared to \$16,000 when it started in 2001, according to statements filed with the IRS.

"I think it shows we're a more grass-roots organization - bottom up, not top down," Bedier says. "Ask the NAACP where they were 12 years into their start. Or the ADL."

The Anti-Defamation League, with revenues 10 times those of CAIR, was founded 74 years ago to fight anti-Semitism. Today it is one of CAIR's biggest critics, alleging it hasn't done enough to distance itself from Hamas and other groups committed to destroying Israel and killing Jews.

"CAIR is out there saying it is the organization that represents the Arab-Muslim community in the United States on human rights issues, on civil rights issues," says Abraham Foxman, the ADL's national director.

"What we're saying is that if you want to be there, there is a very high standard in terms of your position on terrorism. You either oppose it or not. I want to hear them condemn the terrorism of Hamas and Hezbollah."

CAIR condemned the 2002 Passover bombing by Hamas that killed 29 Israelis, and has denounced terrorism in general without naming groups other than al-Qaida. It has also spoken against anti-Semitism including Iran's Holocaust denial conference.

In an open letter to Foxman last month, CAIR accused the ADL of "smearing" it with "defamatory assertions." It also questioned why the Jewish organization didn't criticize Israel for harming innocent civilians during last year's war with Lebanon.

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To some observers, the contentiousness reflects the opposing ways Jews and Muslims see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - as Israel's fight for survival or Palestinian resistance to Israeli oppression.

"The reason (CAIR) can't condemn Hamas with precision is because Hamas has social services aspects," says Paley of the United Jewish Appeal Federation. "And it should not be the job of CAIR to support Israel. That's my job, I'm a rabbi, I love Israel. But that's not the role of CAIR. CAIR is a Muslim organization."

'Nothing nefarious'

A frequent CAIR critic is historian and commentator Daniel Pipes. Soon after the Sept. 11 attacks, he reportedly told the American Jewish Congress that he worried that the "increased affluence and enfranchisement of American Muslims ... will present true danger to American Jews."

CAIR says that Pipes' writings are full of distortions and innuendo.

In a March 2006 article, "Islamists Fooling the Establishment," Pipes said there is a "side to CAIR that has alarmed many people in positions to know. The Department of Homeland Security refuses to deal with it."

Yet less than six months later, CAIR's Tampa chapter hosted a meeting of law enforcement personnel that included three top Homeland Security officials. The FBI's Tampa chief also attended.

In the same article, Pipes tried to link CAIR to Palestinian terrorism by way of \$250,000 it received from the Islamic Development Bank to build its Washington headquarters.

"CAIR's decision to accept (the bank's) funding is unfortunate," Pipes writes, "given the bank's role as manager of the Al-Quds and Al Aqsa Funds, established by 12 Arab countries to fund the Palestinian intifada and provide financial support to the families of Palestinian 'martyrs.'"

The article does not mention that the main purpose of the bank, based in Saudi Arabia, is to finance roads, dams, hospitals and other projects throughout the world.

Pipes also criticizes CAIR for accepting \$500,000 from Prince Al-Waleed Bin Talal of Saudi Arabia that was used to buy books about Islam for U.S. libraries. That contribution and the bank financing belie CAIR's claim that it does not receive support from any foreign group or government, Pipes writes.

Communications director Ibrahim Hooper says CAIR was referring to terrorist groups and state sponsors of terrorism, not individuals and banks.

"It's just a plain statement that we're not a government-supported entity," he says. "There's nothing nefarious about it."

'Urban legends'

The Pipes article also alleges that CAIR has a "key role in the Wahhabi lobby" - what Pipes calls a network of organizations, usually supported by Saudi donations, "whose aim is to propagate the extreme version of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia."

As evidence of CAIR's role, Pipes continues, its "affiliates regularly speak at events sponsored by the Islamic Society of North America, an umbrella organization of the Wahhabi lobby."

CAIR members do attend society events. But so do non-Muslims. At the society's recent convention, one of the main speakers was a rabbi who heads America's largest Jewish denomination.

Ingrid Mattson, president of the Islamic Society, says her organization recognizes Islam's many schools of thought, whereas Wahhabism considers most other Muslims nonbelievers and puts severe restrictions on women. And the society's only connection with Saudi donors since 2001 was partnering with Indiana University on a fellowship program funded by Prince bin Talal.

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One of the world's richest men, the prince "is the least Wahhabi Saudi," says Mattson, a professor at Hartford Seminary. "He has an all-female staff who he forbids from wearing a head scarf even in the middle of Riyadh."

To counter claims by Pipes and other critics, CAIR recently issued a rebuttal of "urban legends." Among them: CAIR supports terrorism because its Web site linked in 2001 to the Holy Land Foundation, a now-defunct Muslim charity on trial in Texas for allegedly funneling millions of dollars to Hamas.

Critics say CAIR steered donors to Holy Land under the guise of helping victims of the Sept. 11 attacks. But the foundation was not under investigation then and "to claim intent other than a sincere effort to aid victims of tragedy is dishonest," says CAIR, noting it has linked to the Red Cross, too.

Critics have also made much of the fact CAIR is among 300 Muslim organizations and individuals named as "unindicted co-conspirators" in the Holy Land case, a move that permits prosecutors to introduce statements that might otherwise be considered inadmissible hearsay. CAIR has asked the government to remove it and others from the list, saying it "damaged their reputations" without legal recourse.

Al-Arian spokesman?

When South Carolina deputies arrested two Muslim USF students Aug. 4 after finding what appeared to be an explosive device in their car, Bedier downplayed suggestions of terrorism.

"Had they been two white kids, nobody would be asking those questions," he told reporters. But when the pair were indicted on federal charges, Bedier took a more neutral tone.

"Evidence doesn't lie," he said Aug. 31. "Evidence will also lead to the truth."

The Egyptian-born Bedier knows critics are eager for any sign CAIR condones terrorism. Although he says they never met, he's been called a "spokesman" for Al-Arian, the former USF professor accused of supporting Palestinian Islamic Jihad. After a federal jury acquitted Al-Arian of eight counts and deadlocked on nine others, he pleaded guilty to a single count of conspiring to provide services to the PIJ and received a 57-month sentence.

"We never came out and necessarily defended him, but our position was that people should have their day in court," says Bedier, 33, who managed a dental clinic before joining CAIR in 2003.

Shortly after the sentence, though, an anti-CAIR blog jumped on Bedier for his televised comment that there was "nothing immoral" about Al-Arian's association with the PIJ. Bedier later said he meant there was nothing illegal because the PIJ had not yet been designated a terrorist organization.

The Al-Arian case focused an often harsh spotlight on CAIR. But it also helped make CAIR's Florida affiliate the organization's second largest, after California.

Bedier, who earns \$48,000 as executive director of the Tampa chapter, works out of a free-standing office in Temple Terrace, not far from USF. CAIR raised \$60,000 and borrowed the rest of the building's \$300,000 cost from a local group headed by a Brandon doctor.

The chapter's main job is helping Muslims who feel they've been victims of hate crimes or discrimination. But Bedier's activities have included raising money to rebuild churches burned by Muslims angry at Pope Benedict XVI's allegedly pejorative comments about Islam.

As for Bedier himself, "I found his words always directed toward peace and reconciliation among peoples," says Rev. Robert Gibbons, former vicar general of the Roman Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg.

CAIR has been far less successful building bridges to Tampa Bay's Jewish community. Barry Augenbraun, a guest with Bedier on a recent radio show, says he was "shocked" when Bedier insisted that Arab armies did not invade Israel after it declared independence in 1948.

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"That set back any attempt I have to continue a dialogue with him," says Augenbraun, co-chair of the local Jewish Community Relations Council. "It's very difficult to talk to someone if I can't rely on them relating to historical fact."

After the show, Bedier acknowledged that Arab nations "attacked" Israel while still disagreeing they "invaded." But the real issue, he says, is that some critics will never accept CAIR unless "we put Israel first and we're not willing to do that."

Nor is that surprising, says Rabbi Weizman, whose Clearwater synagogue hosted Bedier for the first - and perhaps only - time in 2005.

"I think CAIR's mission is something like that of the Anti-Defamation League," Weizman says. "And there is a need for that because it is American to have a voice in this country and prevent persecution of a certain group. It's just human nature that these groups have some conflict with each other."

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

Correction

The Anti-Defamation League was founded 94 years ago. A story Sunday gave the wrong age of the organization.

Correction-Date: September 25, 2007

Graphic

PHOTO, Courtesy of the Tampa chapter of CAIR: Building bridges? In August 2006, CAIR's Tampa chapter hosted a meeting with local law enforcement and Homeland Security officials to discuss travel security issues. Carl Whitehead, then the FBI's Tampa chief, spoke; Ahmed Bedier is at left. PHOTO, Courtesy of the Anti-Defamation League: Burning bridges? The ADL says this photo of CAIR executive director Nihad Awad speaking near a Hezbollah flag at a large 2002 antiwar rally in Washington shows CAIR endorses "rallies where support for terrorist groups was undeniable." Other Jewish leaders say that is an overstatement. PHOTO, JOHN PENDYGRAFT - Times: Ahmed Bedier is often sought out to comment on cases like that of two Muslim USF students arrested on explosives charges. PHOTO, Philadelphia Inquirer: Daniel Pipes says CAIR propagates an extreme version of Islam. CAIR says his writings contain innuendo and distortions. PHOTO: Ibrahim Hooper is CAIR's national communications director. PHOTO: Abraham Foxman is the national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

Load-Date: September 25, 2007

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian (Australia)

June 28, 2007 Thursday

All-round Country Edition

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Body

Pearson's support should be good enough for the rest of us

MOST TALKED ABOUT HOWARD'S BLUEPRINT

SOME people just can't let their personal dislike of John Howard allow them to acknowledge good leadership when it's so clearly on display. Well might they continue to wring their hands over such matters; meanwhile the Government is simply getting on with it. Noel Pearson has effectively created a climate whereby previous state inaction can be seen for what it is -- all assistance given short of actual help.

Pearson has endorsed the Prime Minister's proposed actions to intervene in dysfunctional Aboriginal communities. That should be good enough for the rest of us, including the hand-wringers who should heed the advice of Jacques Chirac in another context and not miss a perfectly good opportunity to keep their mouths shut.

Max Heinrich

Prospect, SA

SOME see paternalism in the Prime Minister's policy regarding remote Aboriginal settlements. But history shows us that great reforms have come about in exactly this way. It was not the slaves who abolished slavery nor children who redeemed themselves from the drudgery of the mines. No, it was wealthy, comfortable upper and middle-class people compelled by a burning compassion to raise up others who could not help themselves. Who now would naysay those interfering

do-gooders?

Barry Lamb

Cairns, Qld

I HAVE recently worked as a doctor in a remote Central Australian indigenous community. It was a peaceful place, as attested by the proximity of the nearest police station, which was more than 200km away. Alcohol had been banned by the elders, a largely respected ruling. Sexual abuse was certainly not a major problem. The most pressing issue was undoubtedly health, particularly the health of the children. The incidence of skin and ear disease was appalling. While access to healthcare was remarkably good, these problems were primarily caused by inadequate essential infrastructure, particularly housing.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The thing that struck me most during my time in the community was the "can't do" attitude that I encountered on every single occasion I had to deal with the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and other service providers. These incredibly bureaucratic institutions would not release funds to repair a bore; they refused to build new housing despite desperate overcrowding; the budget allocated to the local council was pathetic and, consequently, essential services such as garbage collection were not provided.

My dealings with organisations such as Telstra were equally as frustrating. I was forced to go to ridiculous lengths to have a telephone service connected to the home of a sick elderly man at a remote outstation. I was given no assistance to rectify faulty telephone lines, and the process of reporting a fault was very complicated.

The reactionary measures imposed by John Howard are likely to be short-lived and do more harm than good in this community and many others like it. He has hijacked the real story of long-standing government neglect and pointed the finger of blame for the current woes at Aboriginal men.

Simon Quilty

Darwin, NT

FACING mounting criticism from some indigenous leaders that he is ignoring their concerns about his interventionist policy, John Howard reacts by declaring that, "We will maintain our position very strongly (because) we believe it is right."

Clearly, criticism of this policy by some of the people it is meant to be helping has brought out Howard's worst political quality: his stubbornness. This is not the behaviour of someone whose intentions are pure and not politically motivated.

Timothy Wilson

Albert Park, Vic

IN many of the instances of sexual abuse outlined in the Little Children Are Sacred report on indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, the perpetrators were non-indigenous. Would it not therefore be a logical, smaller task to test the criminal history and sexual health of non-indigenous men on Aboriginal land? Surely it's better to infringe on the civil liberties of adults rather than children?

John Howard's sudden concern for sexually abused children seems one-eyed. Given that statistically one in four Australian women are molested as children, and one in 10 men, would it not be consistent for the Government to diagnose our society, culture-wide, as dysfunctional and in crisis?

The only protection that Aboriginal communities have from the vices of modern society and those that peddle them is the permit system of the land councils. To restrict the supply of alcohol and pornography to the communities while doing away with that system is completely self-contradictory. Sadly, I too have to conclude that the protection of children is far from the only motive that Messrs Howard and Brough have at heart.

Charlie Ward

Nightcliff, NT

AREN'T we fortunate to have Democrats leader Senator Lyn Allison, whose reference to "jackboot" intervention in Northern Territory indigenous communities was incredibly astute and perceptive, as well as sensitive to those Australians who have been victims of real military torture and worse. Any chance she might apologise, resign and slink away with whatever dignity she has left?

Richard Sicree

Armadale, Vic

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A government works for the people, not for itself

CAMERON Stewart ("Silencing our basic freedom", Features, 27/6) writes that federal Attorney-General Philip Ruddock "will not support protection for public servants who break the law to reveal government secrets". Well, sometimes the law has to be amended.

Obviously issues that have to do with national security and/or the national interest should be protected by tough laws. But issues of government coercion, incompetence, ineffectiveness or inaction must be dealt with in the public arena and the whistleblowers who bring them to light must be protected. A government is in the business of doing the work of the people, not the work of itself.

I laud the media companies for uniting in addressing the prohibitions limiting the release of public information in Australia. Freedom of the press must be protected, otherwise we become a society of dullards not interested in asking the age-old questions -- who, what, when, where, why and how -- and instead accept as gospel anything fed to us by the powers that be.

I say thank you to Allan Kessing for disclosing the breaches in Sydney Airport security. It affects me and my family, and you and yours. It's in the public interest. And I sincerely hope that enough uproar and outrage is generated in the defence of this man that his conviction is overturned and that he can resume his plans for the life he had hoped for.

Johanne Rondeau-Wall

Leura, NSW

THE hypocrisy in the suggestion by Philip Ruddock that the Victorian Government pardon the two Herald Sun journalists convicted of contempt of court is breathtaking ("Pardon reporters: Ruddock", 27/6). As the federal Government's principal legal officer, Ruddock was responsible for the prosecution in the first place.

It would be a test of the man's integrity if he took his own advice and pardoned Allan Kessing, the ex-customs official prosecuted for blowing the whistle on security weaknesses at Sydney Airport. But integrity is in short supply in the current political landscape.

Greg Angelo

Balwyn North, Vic

THE federal Government spent taxpayers' money pursuing Herald Sun journalists

Michael Harvey and Gerard McManus through the courts for refusing to name their source for information that, while embarrassing to the Government, was correct. Then it sends the Commonwealth Solicitor-General to court to ask for leniency for the journalists because the Government has recently introduced new laws to make what they did legal.

Not even the writers of Yes Minister could think up that plot line.

Doug Steley

Maroochydore, Qld

Tom Cruise lacks the stature

FOR Tom Cruise to play the role of Claus von Stauffenberg, a valiant German hero ("Germans fear Scientology plot in Tom Cruise film", 27/6) is ludicrous, even for Hollywood. While there are A Few Good Men who can deal with fictional Days of Thunder, and operate cinematically as some kind of Top Gun, for Cruise to personify von Stauffenberg is, surely, even with Eyes Wide Shut, Mission Impossible. What next: Goldie Hawn as Florence Nightingale, Chevy Chase as Mahatma Gandhi?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bruce Dawe

Caloundra, Qld

Democrats need forgiveness

STEVE Lewis ("Poll plan to restore balance to Senate", Opinion, 26/6) reminds us that the "democratic process works best when the government of the day is forced to negotiate its reforms with the Senate", adding that this is "not to sanction blanket opposition to the government" but rather to provide "a steely set of checks and balances" to parliamentary processes. This standard has been lost since the Government won the balance of power in its own right.

The Galaxy poll cited by Lewis shows that the Greens, currently with four senators, look set to gain two extra senators, while the Democrats, also with four senators, are likely to be annihilated. The problem with this is that a total of six Greens and zero Democrats (where once upon a time there were nine) may well fall short of what is needed to deprive the Coalition of its Senate majority. Historically, the Democrats have been placed to take votes from both sides of politics, while the danger is that the Greens will only take support away from Labor.

Some years ago, the Democrats made some controversial decisions, but in doing so they were simply embodying the process of constructive debate and compromise that many voters are now missing. Voters have since been punishing the Democrats, but if they continue to do so, then ultimately they'll only be punishing themselves.

Daniel Berk

Oakleigh, Vic

Outrage and negativity

IT was entirely predictable that all five letters (25/6) you published in response to the pro-Hezbollah comments of Sheik Kamal Mousselmani should be full of outrage and negativity.

In Australia, the mainstream media view is that Israel is good and its opponents are bad, so people tend to accept that. The major grievances of Israel's opponents stem mainly from incidents long ago and these are rarely given an airing here, so people are unaware of them. We often hear of Palestinian refugee camps but we hear nothing of how they arose or of the vast numbers of displaced people trapped within them. We are shown Israeli settlements on the West Bank, and yes, they are often beautiful, but they are built on Palestinian land.

Most Australians have no idea how these things came about but they are running sores in the Palestinian psyche and also in the psyche of other Arabs such as members of Hezbollah. The Australian would do everyone a major service by publishing a series of articles that give an unbiased explanation of the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Tom Downs

Kenmore, Qld

Monolithic bureaucracy

RECENT claims by the state Labor governments that the Commonwealth is responsible for a \$1.1billion funding shortfall in public hospitals are vacuous. It is the states which have jurisdiction over public hospitals, and it is about time they desisted from appeasing the powerful public sector unions and supplemented funding for frontline services with savings derived from applying liposuction to the monolithic bureaucracy. Then again, perhaps some Labor mates are more important than our veterans and the elderly receiving essential treatment expeditiously.

Nicholas Tam

Traralgon, Vic

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A nose for nonsense

JOHN Stone (Letters, 27/6) has got to be kidding. It was a turn up for him, but a Labor government, barely a few months old, decided that the managed exchange rate system of Australia was distorting the economy and making it impossible to run an effective monetary policy.

The period between that effective decision and the actual float of the dollar in December 1983 was simply taken up with choosing the best time and circumstances to introduce the change. Outside of Bob Hawke and me, the only people in the bureaucracy who supported the float were the then Reserve Bank governor, Bob Johnson, his deputy, John Sanders, and his financial market adviser, John Phillips. Not at any stage did the Treasury support the float. With the mammoth implications inherent in a floating exchange rate, it never even provided the monetary policy committee of cabinet with a formal submission with which ministers could have acquainted themselves with the issues involved.

At the ministerial meeting on December 9, 1983, which considered the float, Stone opposed it, telling Hawke and me that Australia "would be thrown around like a cork in a bath" if we floated the dollar. When I did the press conference to announce the float, I asked Bob Johnson to accompany me and not Stone, because Stone not being for it, was likely to let his views call into question the advisability of the float.

As to my reading habits, I should have thought 20 or 30 cabinet submissions a week for one and a half decades would keep anyone in form. It certainly gave me a nose for

the kind of nonsense John Stone threw about yesterday.

Paul Keating

Sydney, NSW

----- FIRST BYTE -----

letters@theaustralian.com.au

Was John Howard's Hurricane Katrina analogy chosen to forestall the obvious comparison with storming into Iraq?

Marie Dow

Hawks Nest, NSW

Last month, the PM said he had no

more rabbits to pull from his hat. He lied -- and it's black.

Jonah Jones

Carlton, Vic

A whisper to Alan Carpenter, Malcolm Fraser and the Aboriginal industry -- to paraphrase Michael Moore (who pointed out to President Bush that both the Pope and the Dixie Chicks opposed the invasion of Iraq), if you have got Ken Henry and Noel Pearson against you, you might have a problem.

Chris Smith

Braddon, ACT

With the exception of Cape York's Noel Pearson, could it be said the term "Aboriginal leader" is an oxymoron?

John Sumner

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Deviot, Tas

Paul Keating's encores, after a decade of sulking over his sacking, only reminds us of his failed duty to stick it out in parliament and beat the Howard Government with policy, not personal argumentation.

L. Leroux

Acton, ACT

According to a newly released 700-page dossier, the Central Intelligence Agency hired three mobsters to try to assassinate Fidel Castro in the early 1960s. I'd never have guessed.

Mike Dower

Gundaroo, NSW

So we're being asked to entrust this nation, for three more years, to men so weak that they treat the slightest dissent so brutally ("Silencing our basic freedom", Features, 27/6).

Murray Browne

New Farm, Qld

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Load-Date: June 27, 2007

Review: A life in writing: 'A circle of madness': Lebanese author Elias Khoury gives voice to refugees and dissolves boundaries through fiction. One year after the 33-day war, he feels his country is hurtling towards chaos again.

The Guardian - Final Edition

July 28, 2007 Saturday

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Section: GUARDIAN REVIEW PAGES; Pg. 12

Length: 1825 words

Byline: Maya Jaggi

Body

It was Elias Khoury's birthday when Israel's 33-day war with Lebanon began on July 12 last year. "I forgot my birthday at that moment," he says. His home in east Beirut soon shook with the bombardment of the city's southern suburbs less than a mile away, bringing echoes of the invasion by US marines during the 1958 Lebanese civil war, when Khoury was 10. "I've never felt I was living in something stable," he says. "You're not just a witness, but a possible victim."

He worked with volunteers to help refugees, and later travelled to the Israeli border, to witness villages and towns in southern Lebanon reduced to rubble. Recalling the Israeli invasion of 1982 and the 18-year occupation of south Lebanon, he says: "I felt I was living in the present and the past at the same time. It was as if we're in a circle of madness, and maybe history teaches nothing. Human beings are ready to repeat the same errors."

One year on, he fears Lebanon is hurtling towards renewed chaos. Clashes between the Lebanese army and jihadist militants in the Palestinian camp of Nahr al-Barad in the north have brought the worst internal strife since the civil war of 1975-90. This has been accompanied by bomb blasts and the June 13 car bombing of MP Walid Eido, the seventh figure critical of Syrian interference to be killed since the assassination of the former prime minister Rafik Hariri in 2005. "There's a feeling that everything can collapse at any moment," Khoury says. "We have no more control over the country. We're on the edge of a huge regional explosion."

Khoury may be well placed to assess the aspirations and tensions among Palestinians in Lebanon's 12 camps, who remain "in closed ghettos, separated from Lebanese society". As a young Lebanese at the Palestine Research Centre in Beirut in the 1970s, he spent years gathering from refugees their personal histories of the mass expulsions that attended the creation of Israel. He felt the stories should be given to an Arab Tolstoy, and imagined himself in the role ("everybody laughed"), but says, "I never dared write it then because I didn't know how."

Many years later, he wove the myriad tales into his epic novel *Gate of the Sun*, the most comprehensive fictional treatment of the Palestinian nakbah, or "catastrophe", of 1948. Published in Arabic as *Bab El Shams* in 1998, it won the Palestine prize and was made into a five-hour feature film in 2003 by director Yousry Nasrallah, as well as a play staged in the West Bank city of Ramallah. The English version by Humphrey Davies won the inaugural Banipal prize for Arabic literary translation last year.

Review: A life in writing: 'A circle of madness': Lebanese author Elias Khoury gives voice to refugees and dissolves boundaries through fiction. One year after

Edward Said saw Khoury as a "brilliant figure", an "artist giving voice to rooted exiles and trapped refugees, to dissolving boundaries and changing identities". Aged 59, he has written a dozen novels, half of them translated into English, while working as a critic and journalist in Beirut, where he has been editor-in-chief of the cultural supplement of An-Nahar daily newspaper since 1992. Six years ago, he became global distinguished professor at New York University, shuttling from Beirut each spring to teach Arabic and comparative literature.

Khoury says his aim in *Gate of the Sun* was to write a great love story. As Dr Khaleel, a paramedic in the makeshift Galilee hospital in Beirut's Shatila refugee camp, keeps vigil by the bedside of Yunis, a comatose Palestinian resistance fighter of his father's generation, he tells stories from the fighter's life, and his own, like a Sheherazade trying to stave off death. Soon after 1948, when the Lebanon-Israel border was still porous, Yunis would meet his wife Naheeleh in the cave in Galilee that gives the novel its title. Along with everyday tales of flight and dispossession, the book traces the enmeshed histories of Lebanon and Palestine, from the 1930s to the 1990s, centring on the 1982 massacres in the Sabra and Shatila camps.

Khoury was astonished that no Palestinian novelist, such as Ghassan Kanafani or Emile Habiby, had written a novel about the nakbah. In the camps, it was also hard to get people to speak. "Most refused, because of the trauma and shame. But then an old woman adopted me and opened the doors," he says. "Being in a refugee camp means you're waiting: you live in the past, and to speak about the present is to accept it." Yet he feels the novel helped the generations communicate. One Palestinian student said his father revealed his past only after reading the book. "It broke the taboo."

For Khoury, Yunis is heroic in that "he crosses the border for love, not for a country. Creating and closing borders is one of the most stupid ideas of modern times." Yet, counter to what Khoury sees as a tendency in Palestinian literature - particularly poetry - to extol heroes in the service of the cause, the novel questions notions of heroism and martyrdom, allowing for a painful honesty about humiliation and defeat. "I'm writing about human beings, not heroes," says Khoury, who rather extols the women. "I don't feel literature can serve any cause. Art is to serve art. Writing is to travel towards discovering others; it's a way to listen to and love them."

In one scene, a refugee encounters the Jewish woman who now lives in her house and who has her own painful history. Khoury, who petitioned in 2001 with other Arab intellectuals against the holding of a Holocaust deniers' conference in Beirut, believes Palestinians need to understand the Holocaust. Yet his character Khaleel also fears "a history that has only one version". The Holocaust is "one of the disasters of the world that must not be repeated", says Khoury. "But at least half of Israelis come from the Arab world. It's ridiculous for a Jew from Iraq to forget his own history." There is, he believes, "always a dominant national ideology, but one role of literature is to contest that. Many stories can survive together." He adds, "the struggle with our Israeli cousins is between the story and history. The victor writes history, but stories are more important - they're about lives, not winners."

The novel's first translation, into Hebrew, brought shortlived attacks on Khoury in the Egyptian press. "To see this as dealing with the enemy is stupid," he says. "I won't work with institutions in Israel, but translating Arabic literature into Hebrew isn't 'normalisation'."

Born in 1948 into a well-off Orthodox Christian family (his father eventually worked for Mobil), Khoury grew up in Ashrafiyyeh, or "Little Mountain", in mainly Christian east Beirut. At school with Palestinian refugees, he also saw the new influx from the Israeli-occupied territories after the six-day war of 1967. As a history and sociology undergraduate at Beirut university, aged 19, he went to Jordan to enlist in Fatah, the military wing of the Palestinian liberation movement. But after finishing his studies at the Sorbonne, he returned to Beirut as an editor, working with the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and the Syrian poet Adonis.

He recalls Christian east Beirut as "open, leftist". But after a failed revolution for which Khoury fought, as civil war broke out in 1975, "the fascists began taking over the neighbourhood, so I left". His novel *Little Mountain* (1977), translated by Maia Tabet in 1989, reflects his disillusionment and describes militiamen with crosses raiding homes to root out communists, Palestinians and pan-Arab Nasserists. Said saw Khoury as "orphaned by history", in that he stood with a Lebanese national coalition of Palestinian and Muslim forces against Christian militias allied with Israel.

Review: A life in writing: 'A circle of madness': Lebanese author Elias Khoury gives voice to refugees and dissolves boundaries through fiction. One year after

Almost alone among Christian Lebanese writers, wrote Said, "he espoused the cause of resistance to the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon from the heart of (mainly Muslim) west Beirut". During his exile across Beirut's ever more rigid front line, Khoury says, "my mother got sick and died without my being able to visit her or go to her funeral". Long after the war ended in 1990, he reclaimed the family home in east Beirut, where he now lives with his wife of 35 years, Najla. They have a daughter, Abla, an actor and theatre director, and a son, Talal, a film-maker.

He grew up with his grandmother's love of Arabic literature and his favourite poet is al-Mutannabi of Basra, from the 10th century. For someone writing in the thick of civil war, the stable European novel as emulated by the Egyptian Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz became elusive, and Khoury looked to earlier Arabic inspirations for his experimental, postmodern fiction. "I didn't know what postmodern was," he says. "I was trying to express the fragmentation of society. Beirut's past is not of stability, but of violent change. Everything is open, uncertain. In my fiction, you're not sure if things really happened, only that they're narrated. What's important is the story, not the history."

Since Gate of the Sun, Khoury has written two novels, Yalo (2002), to be published by Quercus in Britain next year, and As If She Is Sleeping (2006). Yalo's main character is a jailed man who is "Syriac and Kurd, Muslim and Christian". It was banned in Jordan and the Gulf, ostensibly for its treatment of sex and religion, though perhaps also for depicting torture techniques in Arab prisons, which Khoury researched. Books are rarely banned in Lebanon, he says. "If they don't like what you write, they don't ban, they kill."

His friend and fellow journalist Samir Kassir was killed by a car bomb in June 2005. Khoury's optimism has ebbed since the Cedar revolution of March 2005, when mass demonstrations brought the withdrawal of Syrian troops. He returned from New York to find that "we're back to square one, on the edge of civil war". He sees Fatah al-Islam, the jihadist group in Nahr al-Barad camp, as "Islamist militants manipulated by Syrian intelligence - a dangerous combination of a few Palestinians, some Lebanese, and Saudi youngsters, who are isolated from the population of the camp and have been parachuted in". While Khoury sees fundamentalism as a US-sponsored product of the cold war and Israeli policies as culpable, he says: "The secular, leftist movement in Lebanon was destroyed by the Syrian army, and resistance to Israeli occupation handed to Hizbullah."

Khoury has said that Arab regimes "love Palestine and hate Palestinians", and cynically use the issue as a rallying cause. After the Lebanese civil war, "Palestinians became a scapegoat for the political class". Those in the camps are still barred from more than 70 types of job and from buying property, officially "to preserve the sectarian balance of the country - which is total racism, since they and their children were born in Lebanon". Gate of the Sun is, for Khoury, a "love letter to the Palestinians". There is, he says, "no holy place; the only holy place is the human being".

Inspirations

Poems by al-Mutannabi

The Thousand and One Nights

The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov

The Idiot by Fyodor Dostoevsky

The Book of Job

Load-Date: July 28, 2007

[A Zionist hero](#)

The Jerusalem Post

January 16, 2009 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 1662 words

Byline: LARRY DERFNER

Highlight: Last week's death of Cpl. Yousef Muadi in Operation Cast Lead underlines the remarkable patriotism of the country's 100,000 Druse, who are disproportionately represented on the front lines

Body

"I don't think there's a more Zionist home in this country," says Samir Muadi. On a cold, gray afternoon, he's sitting in the dim, high-ceilinged hall of the Galilee Druse village of Yirka, rising to meet the endless stream of visitors who come to pay their respects on the death of his son. Cpl. Yousef Muadi, 19, was killed with two other Golani Brigade soldiers on January 5 by "friendly fire" - a tank crew fired a shell at an abandoned house in the Jabalya refugee camp, not knowing that Muadi, Maj. Dagan Wartman, St.-Sgt. Nitai Stern and other soldiers were taking cover inside.

"In the last moment of his life, he was a hero," said Samir, sniffing and smiling bravely. "Last night I got a call from his platoon leader, who's in the hospital, he was wounded badly. He told me that when the shell was fired, Yossi fell on top of him to protect him. The last thing Yossi told him was, 'I love you.' He said Yossi saved his life. "

Samir, 51, who is agricultural coordinator for the Civil Administration in the West Bank, is himself a Golani veteran. "It seems that every year I was doing reserve duty in that hellhole named Gaza," he says.

He had to pull strings to get his son into Golani, enlisting a Druse IDF colonel into the cause. "I told him that whatever he wanted to do, I would back him up, and Yossi didn't want paratroopers, tanks, nothing but Golani," says Samir. "He wanted to make a contribution to the country. He told me, 'You'll be proud of me yet.' When they were on the bus going into Gaza, he called me. He said, 'If we don't do it, who will?'"

The immediate family now lives in Haifa, but for centuries the seat of the Muadi extended family, one of the Druse community's largest, has been in Yirka. The ornate stone house where mourners are visiting is some 350 years old, says Wahid Muadi, Samir's brother. Over time, smaller homes have been built nearby; in all, seven Muadi families live in the compound. Driving up and down the old stone lanes and squares of Yirka, Peki'in and other Druse villages, seeing the solid old houses that have grown massive over the generations to accommodate the expanding extended families inside, you get the sense of a very close, traditional, proud community with very deep roots.

"We played a large part in the creation of the State of Israel," says Wahid, the family historian. The walls of the hall are lined with framed photos of white-bearded sheikhs and of historic moments in Israeli Druse history. "That's our grandfather, Sheikh Sa'id Muadi, signing an agreement with [Labor Zionist leader] David Hachohen in 1929," says Wahid, adding that this marked the beginning of Druse cooperation with the Jews against the Arab majority. "We did it out of fear - we were a small minority surrounded by the Arabs," he says.

A Zionist hero

Another photo shows his grandfather signing an agreement with Haifa Labor Party leader Abba Khoushy in 1936, at the start of the Arab Revolt. "Abba Khoushy brought 400 people from Hashomer Hatzair down here. My grandfather slaughtered 42 sheep for the occasion."

There are photos of Jabbar Muadi, a Knesset member from the 1950s through the 1980s, and of David Ben-Gurion sitting with family elders. A display case features family heirlooms such as Druse ornamental swords, a bust of Ben-Gurion, a telegram from Yitzhak Rabin and a proclamation from Ottoman Pasha Abdallah granting tax-collection authority to the Muadi family in 1827.

"It's no surprise my nephew died like he did," says Wahid. "He comes from a family of heroes."

As a Druse, Yousef Muadi was ethnically an Arab whose religion was a variant of Islam. But nationally, he was an Israeli. His father refers to him as "Yossi." He was a member of an ethnic group that, as a whole, has sacrificed for the Jewish state, for the Zionist cause, out of all proportion to its numbers. The country's 100,000 Druse (not counting the 20,000 in the Golan Heights, who are loyal to Syria) are disproportionately represented in combat units, in the IDF professional ranks, in the Israel Police - on the country's front lines.

It was once said of Ariel Sharon that his definition of "who is a Jew" included "anyone who was in the Golani Brigade," and although Yousef Muadi was not a Jew, he definitely was a Zionist. In Israel, Druse are considered sort of honorary Jews because in the national struggle between Jews and Arabs, they're on the Jewish side. Their sons are subject to the compulsory military draft just like Jewish boys - the so-called "blood covenant" that the Druse community entered into in 1956.

However, this identification with the Jewish state is by no means unanimous. An Israeli Druse historian (who did not want to be identified, partly because of the sensitivity of this subject during wartime) noted that it is not uncommon for Druse boys to refuse the draft and go to prison. Sa'id Nafa, a Druse MK with the Arab party Balad (which the Central Elections Committee just banned from the upcoming elections for its allegedly seditious ideology) said he was repeatedly imprisoned for refusing the draft. "So were my four sons," says Nafa, 55, adding that six draft-age youth from his town, Beit Jann, were recently arrested by military police for draft resistance.

Disaffection with Israel and the IDF has been growing among young Druse over the last generation, and it is reflected in a growing number of draft resisters, say Nafa and the historian. Still, 83 percent of Druse boys continue to serve in the army, according to the IDF's statistics, so the resisters are far outnumbered.

This is the result of a process of "Israelization" of the Druse community beginning in 1956 with the "blood covenant" and acceptance of compulsory military service, says the historian, who served in the IDF's "Druse unit," which still operates. However, he disputes the "official" Israeli history, seconded by Druse leaders, that this covenant represented the will of the community at the time.

"There's history and there's mythology," he said, citing government archives from that era that tell a story of "manipulation" by government, army and some Druse leaders to give a false impression of assent to the military draft in the face of evidence of widespread opposition. The main reason, he insists, the Druse gradually embraced the idea of military service and ideological assimilation into the Zionist consensus was not ideological, but economic.

"Jobs are the key," he says, noting that 33% to 40% of Druse are professional soldiers, police and other types of security officials. And this disproportionate presence has naturally had a heavy influence on the community's national identity. "When you earn your bread from the state, you support the state," he notes.

Over time, however, Druse, on the whole, have sincerely come to identify with the State of Israel and its Jewish majority, and to see themselves in conflict with the mainstream of Israeli Arabs. "Living in Israel, you can't be neutral between the Jews and the Arabs," the historian points out. "The Druse are affected by the political atmosphere just like everyone else."

A Zionist hero

Yet the cracks that have always been there under the surface of the community consensus are widening, partly because more Druse are venturing beyond the village, going to university and hearing challenges to the history they've grown up with, and partly because the general socioeconomic status of the Druse - including the level of government services in the villages - remains far below that of the Jewish majority.

"More and more people are coming to the conclusion that they're taking equal responsibility as citizens of Israel, but not getting equal rights," said Nafa.

THERE'S NO trace of such sentiment, however, in the old center of Peki'in, a major attraction for families taking weekend drives through the Galilee. Druse women sit by the tabun ovens flipping gigantic pitot, the restaurants fill the tables with the best humous, labaneh and other salads. In front of the restaurants fly the five-color Druse flag, the flag of the IDF Druse unit, the Israeli flag and the American flag. At the door of Salah and Nazha Zin al-Din's restaurant hangs a signed photo of Lt.-Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, the chief of General Staff.

"We get a lot of soldiers here. But we don't get many Israeli tourists these days because of the war. They're afraid to come to the North," says Nazha, noting that during the Second Lebanon War, Peki'in was hit by more than 120 Hizbullah rockets.

"A lot of Israelis think we Druse are Arabs, but we're not Arabs. We split off from Muslims a long time ago," she continues. "All our sons go into the army; there's no such thing as a Druse boy who doesn't go into the army. My father is a disabled IDF veteran."

Pointing to the tree in the courtyard, she notes that it is featured on the NIS 100 bill. She explains the colors on the Druse flag: "Red is for the heart, for love; yellow is for the sun and the wheat; blue is for the sea and the sky; white is for purity; and green is for nature."

This is the flag, she says, of all native Druse communities. There are as many as a million Druse in the Middle East - in Syria, Lebanon, Israel and a tiny community in Jordan. "The Druse don't have their own country," says Nazha, "but we have our flag."

Outside the Muadi family house in Yirka, three young men are coming to pay their respects. Two say they are Yousef's cousins, one is a friend but describes himself as Yousef's "brother." One of the cousins is an IDF officer, another a combat soldier, another soon to be drafted.

"He loved extreme challenges," says one of the cousins. "In the ocean, in the mountains. He stood up to danger like a man."

Yousef's father agrees: "He wasn't afraid of anything."

His uncle, Wahid, a tall, grave-expressed man, says, "He was like my own son. I'll never forget when the platoon commander told me how Yossi saved his life. I've never felt anything so strong in my life. I'm very sad about what happened. But I'm also very, very proud of him."

Graphic

5 photos: Pictures of Cpl. Yousef (Yossi) Muadi in his ancestral home in the Galilee Druse village of Yirka. Yossi's father Samir Muadi. 'In the last moment of his life, he was a hero.' Samir is agricultural coordinator for the Civil Administration in the West Bank and a Golani veteran. Uncle Wahid Muadi. 'We played a large part in the creation of the State of Israel.' Future soldiers in Yirka. (Credit: Jonathan Bloom)

A Zionist hero

End of Document

'The people are really in a panic ... Gaza has no safe places' As thousands of Palestinians flee from Israel's onslaught, Damien Henderson reports on an intensifying campaign; Refugees rush to escape air attacks / Eyewitnesses tell of devastation / Rallies in UK / Political impact in Middle East / World leaders react to the crisis / Crucial history

The Herald (Glasgow)

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The Herald

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Byline: Damien Henderson

Body

PALESTINIAN refugees streamed across the border with Egypt yesterday in a desperate bid to escape the sudden onslaught by Israeli forces which claimed nearly 300 lives in the first day of a major offensive.

In a second day of intense air strikes, Israel destroyed Hamas's main Gaza security complex and prepared for a possible invasion of the territory.

Israel said the campaign that began on Saturday was a response to almost daily rocket and mortar fire that intensified after Hamas, an Islamist group in charge of the coastal enclave Israel quit in 2005, ended a sixmonth ceasefire a week ago.

Despite the air attacks, militants fired some 80 rockets into Israel, emergency services said. In one of the longest-reaching salvoes, two rockets struck near Ashdod, a main port 18 miles from Gaza, causing no casualties.

Israeli tanks deployed on the edge of the Gaza Strip, poised to enter the densely populated enclave of 1.5 million Palestinians. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's cabinet approved a callup of 6500 reservists, a government official said.

According to eyewitnesses yesterday, injured residents, including children, were being evacuated from buildings and schools in an effort to find secure places. Most people were ordered by authorities to remain indoors and people going to work were turned back.

Among the dead were seven teenage students at a UN-run school. They were killed in an air strike on Saturday while waiting for a bus, said Christopher Gunness, a spokesman for the UN Relief and Works Agency.

'The people are really in a panic ... Gaza has no safe places' As thousands of Palestinians flee from Israel 's onslaught, Damien Henderson reports on an intens....

"Death is everywhere this morning, " he said.

Rushdi Abou Alouf, a correspondent for the BBC, said that mosques in Gaza were calling on citizens to go to their hospitals and donate blood, while doctors reported that operating rooms were full and morgues had no places to put dead bodies.

"There were Israeli aeroplanes everywhere, hitting everywhere. You could see smoke from north to south, from west to east. The people are really in a panic. The main object for the people now is to find a secure place to secure their family, " he said in a report for the BBC. "Gaza has no shelters, it has no safe places."

Amid the ongoing bombing, Palestinians breached the border fence with Egypt in several places and hundreds crossed the frontier, prompting Egyptian border guards to open fire, said officials and witnesses on both sides of the border.

An Egyptian security official said there were at least five breaches along the nine-mile border and hundreds of Palestinian residents were pouring in.

At least 300 Egyptian border guards have been rushed to the area to reseal the border, the official added on condition on anonymity.

A resident of the Gaza Strip side of the border, Fida Kishta, said that Egyptian border guards opened fire to drive back the Palestinians. Residents have also commandeered a bulldozer to open new breaches. Palestinians reported several people were wounded by the gunfire.

Israeli aircraft earlier bombed the border area in an apparent attempt to destroy cross-border tunnels used to supply the Gaza Strip.

Dr Abdel Qader Higazi, a representative of the Egyptian Doctor's Syndicate in Rafah, said Egyptian authorities closed the border crossing after allowing several trucks of medical supplies into Gaza.

"Israel will continue (the campaign) until we have a new security environment in the south, when the population there will no longer live in terror and in fear of constant rocket barrages, " said Mark Regev, a spokesman for Mr Olmert.

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum urged Palestinian groups to use "all available means, including martyrdom operations" - a reference to suicide bombings in Israel - to "protect the Palestinian people".

Keeping pressure on Hamas after bombing runs that turned Saturday into one of the bloodiest days for Palestinians in 60 years of conflict, Israeli aircraft flattened the group's main security compound in Gaza, killing at least four security men. A militant was also killed in an air strike on a car in the northern Gaza Strip.

The deaths raised to 287 the number of Palestinians killed since Saturday, when Israel launched what one Israeli newspaper columnist described as "shock and awe" air strikes against Hamas facilities. More than 700 Palestinians were wounded.

"Palestine has never seen an uglier massacre, " Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said.

One Israeli was killed on Saturday by a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip. Israeli military affairs commentators said the offensive did not appear to be aimed at retaking the Gaza Strip or destroying its Hamas government - ambitious goals that could prove difficult and politically risky before Israel's February 10 parliamentary election.

Instead, they said, Israel wanted to bolster its deterrence power and force Hamas into a new truce that would bring a long-term halt to cross-border rocket salvos.

Violence spread to the occupied West Bank, where Israeli soldiers opened fire at rock-throwing Palestinian protesters. Medical officials said one Palestinian was killed.

'The people are really in a panic ... Gaza has no safe places' As thousands of Palestinians flee from Israel 's onslaught, Damien Henderson reports on an intens....

In Hebron, also in the West Bank, Palestinian forces loyal to President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah shot and wounded three people during a protest by Islamist groups in support of Hamas, a Reuters reporter at the scene said.

In the Gaza Strip, where normally bustling streets were largely empty of traffic, Palestinians stood outside their homes to chat with neighbours about dangers ahead as the roar of Israeli aircraft and thunder of explosions echoed in the distance.

"I kept my children at home. No need to study today, " one Palestinian parent said.

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak ordered schools, due to reopen on Tuesday after the Jewish holiday of Hannukah, to remain shut in southern Israeli communities.

Along the Gaza border there were reports of Israeli soldiers cleaning the barrels of their tanks and taking cover under the armoured vehicles as Palestinian rockets flew overhead.

Mr Abbas, speaking in Cairo, blamed Hamas, which seized the Gaza Strip from Fatah in 2007, for triggering Israel's raids by not extending the ceasefire that Egypt brokered in June. President George W Bush's administration, in its final weeks in office, put the onus on Hamas to prevent more violence.

Aid groups said they feared a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. Hospitals said they were running out of supplies because of a long-standing Israeli-led blockade.

Palestinian officials said 10 truckloads of flour and medical supplies were transferred to the territory through an Israeli border terminal yesterday.

Hamas, which won a parliamentary election in 2006 but was shunned by the West over its refusal to renounce violence and recognise Israel, estimated at least 180 members of its security forces had been killed with at least 15 women and some children.

In a series of protests yesterday, Israeli flags were burned in the Jordanian capital Amman, where hundreds of people led by Islamist MPs gathered to demand the closure of the Israeli embassy.

With Egypt, Jordan is one of only two Arab governments to have signed peace treaties with Israel.

The demonstrators in Amman rallied outside the Egyptian embassy, angry at Cairo's refusal to open its border with Gaza to deliveries of basic supplies to the aid-dependent territory or to civilians wishing to flee.

In the Lebanon capital Beirut, the Egyptian embassy was attacked by stonethrowing demonstrators and police used tear-gas to disperse the crowd.

In Bahrain, more than 2000 people answered a call by Sunni Islamists to take to the streets.

Key events so far

- . An Israeli air strike destroys much of Hamas's main security complex in the Gaza Strip, which holds hundreds of prisoners, killing at least four security guards.
- . Separate Israeli air strikes target a car travelling in the northern Gaza Strip and a Hamas security compound.
- . A Palestinian militant was killed in the first attack and at least three people, including two Hamas security men, were wounded in the second strike.
- . Israeli tanks are deployed in preparation for a possible ground invasion.
- . Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's cabinet approves a call-up of 6500 army reservists.

'The people are really in a panic ... Gaza has no safe places' As thousands of Palestinians flee from Israel 's onslaught, Damien Henderson reports on an intens....

- . Israeli aircraft strike a shelter near the office of Ismail Haniyeh, who is the leader of Hamas's government in the Gaza Strip. No casualties were reported.
- . Hamas fires more than 80 rockets, at least one of which hits the town of Gan Yavne, 30 km (18 miles) inside Israel from the Gaza border, causing no casualties.
- . An Israeli air strike destroys the headquarters of Hamas's al Aqsa television station. The station continues broadcasting, but from an now-unknown location.
- . A series of Israeli air strikes, targeting vehicles, Hamas government buildings and a police station, kills three Palestinians and injures around 12 others.

History of a troubled region

1948 Egypt gains control of the Gaza Strip after Arab-Israeli War. Holds the territory "in trust" for Palestinian Arabs.

1956 Israel briefly gains control of Gaza during Sinai-Suez War, fought with Britain, France and Egypt, but withdraws over international pressure.

1967 Israel regains Gaza Strip during Six-Day War. UN Security Council Resolution 242 demands the country withdraws from the territory, but Israel retains control of Gaza Strip.

1982 Israel invades Lebanon to try and destroy the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which calls for the creation of a Palestinian state.

1987 The first Palestinian intifada (uprising) starts at Jebalia refugee camp. It lasts for the next six years, with hundreds of deaths on each side.

1993 The Oslo Accord self-rule agreement is signed in Washington by Israel and the PLO, aimed at reconciling warring powers.

1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. Palestinians resume administrative control of Gaza Strip. Violence is reduced.

1995 Israel's prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, is assassinated by Yigal Amir, an ultra-nationalist Israeli who is opposed to the Oslo Accord.

2000 The second armed Palestinian intifada begins, which is led largely by Islamic militant group Hamas. Suicide bombers become the preferred method of attack against Israel.

2003 So-called "quartet powers" EU, USA, Russia and the UN publicise the "road map" to Middle East peace talks.

2004 The Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, signatory to the Oslo Accords, dies. Mahmoud Abbas will later be elected as his successor. 2005 Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas declare a ceasefire. Israel pulls out of the Gaza Strip after 38 years. Sharon dies after a stroke and is then succeeded by Ehud Olmert.

2006 Israel's war with ***Hizbullah*** in Lebanon. The Islamist movement Hamas wins the Palestinian elections, but difficulties increase between rival factions Hamas and Fatah.

2007 Hamas takes over Gaza Strip. Annapolis peace talks are started in the US.

2008 Relations break down and Israel then launches rocket attacks against the buildings suspected to be connected with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

'The people are really in a panic ... Gaza has no safe places' As thousands of Palestinians flee from Israel 's onslaught, Damien Henderson reports on an intens....

Graphic

AFTERMATH: Palestinian workmen survey the destroyed remains of the headquarters of Hamas's al Aqsa TV station following an Israeli rocket strike on the Gaza Strip yesterday. The death toll in the area has neared 300 after a series of attacks, including one on the central security headquarters and prison in the region, above. Pictures: Suhaib Salem/Reuters, Adel Hana/PA

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

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Israeli assault on Hamas kills more than 200

The Bismarck Tribune
December 28, 2008 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1A

Length: 1198 words

Byline: IBRAHIM BARZAK and AMY TEIBEL Associated Press Writer

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Israeli warplanes rained more than 100 tons of bombs on security sites in Hamas-ruled Gaza on Saturday and early today, killing at least 230 people in one of the Mideast conflict's bloodiest assaults in decades. The government said the open-ended campaign was aimed at stopping rocket attacks that have traumatized southern Israel.

Most of the casualties were security forces, but Palestinian officials said at least 15 civilians were among the dead. More than 400 people were also wounded.

The unprecedented assault sparked protests and condemnations throughout the Arab world, and many of Israel's Western allies urged restraint, though the U.S. blamed Hamas for the fighting.

But there was no end in sight. The first round of strikes began at around noon Saturday, followed by successive waves of attacks that continued into the early hours today.

Israel warned it might go after Hamas' leaders, and militants kept pelting Israel with rockets - killing at least one Israeli and wounding six.

Hundreds of Israeli infantry and armored corps troops headed for the Gaza border in preparation for a possible ground invasion, military officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity under army guidelines.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said late Saturday that the goal was "to bring about a fundamental improvement in the security situation." He added, "It could take some time."

The Israeli airstrikes caused widespread panic and confusion, and black plumes of smoke billowed above the territory, ruled by the Islamic militant Hamas for the past 18 months. Some of the Israeli missiles struck in densely populated areas as students were leaving school, and women rushed into the streets frantically looking for their children.

"My son is gone, my son is gone," wailed Said Masri, a 57-year-old shopkeeper, as he sat in the middle of a Gaza City street, slapping his face and covering his head with dust from a bombed-out security compound nearby.

He said he had sent his 9-year-old son out to purchase cigarettes minutes before the airstrikes began and could not find him. "May I burn like the cigarettes, may Israel burn," Masri moaned.

Israeli assault on Hamas kills more than 200

Militants often operate against Israel from civilian areas. Late Saturday, thousands of Gazans received Arabic-language cell-phone messages from the Israeli military, urging them to leave homes where militants might have stashed weapons.

The offensive began eight days after a six-month truce between Israel and the militants expired. The Israeli army says Palestinian militants have fired some 300 rockets and mortars at Israeli targets over the past week, and 10 times that number over the past year.

"There is a time for calm and there is a time for fighting, and now is the time for fighting," said Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, vowing to expand the operation if necessary.

In Gaza City's main security compound, bodies of more than a dozen uniformed Hamas police lay on the ground. Civilians rushed wounded people in cars and vans to hospitals because there weren't enough ambulances to transport all the dead and wounded.

"There are heads without bodies. ... There's blood in the corridors. People are weeping, women are crying, doctors are shouting," said nurse Ahmed Abdel Salaam from Shifa Hospital, Gaza's main treatment center.

Military officials said aircraft released more than 100 tons of bombs in the first nine hours of fighting, focusing initially on militant training camps, rocket-manufacturing facilities and weapons warehouses that had been identified in advance.

A second wave was directed at squads who fired about 180 rockets and mortars at Israeli border communities. Palestinians said Israeli bombs destroyed a mosque early today. The military called it a "base for terrorist activities."

Another target early today was the Al Aqsa TV station used by Hamas. Its studio building was destroyed, but the station remained on the air with a mobile unit. Palestinians counted about 20 airstrikes in the first hours this morning.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said Hamas' political leaders could soon be targeted. "'Hamas is a terrorist organization and nobody is immune," she declared.

The campaign was launched six weeks before national elections. Livni and Barak hope to succeed Ehud Olmert as prime minister, and the outgoing government has faced pressure to take tough action.

Gaza's political leaders, who have been targeted in the past, went into hiding earlier this week. In a speech broadcast on local Gaza television, Hamas' prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, declared his movement would not be cowed.

"We are stronger, and more determined, and have more will, and we will hold onto our rights even more than before," Haniyeh said. It was not clear where he spoke.

In Damascus, Syria, Hamas' top leader, Khaled Mashaal, called on Palestinians to rekindle their fight against Israel. "This is the time for a third uprising," he said.

Israel withdrew its troops and settlers in 2005 after crushing the second Palestinian uprising, but it has maintained control over the territory's border crossings.

Despite the overwhelming show of force, it was not clear the offensive would halt the rocket fire. Past operations have never achieved that goal.

Late Saturday, Gaza health official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain said 230 Palestinians were killed and more than 400 were wounded.

The lone fatality in Israel was in the town of Netivot, where a rocket killed an Israeli man. Six other people were wounded, rescue services said.

Israeli assault on Hamas kills more than 200

Netivot only recently become a target, and dozens of stunned residents, some weeping, gathered at the house that took the deadly rocket hit. A hole gaped in one of the walls, which was pocked with shrapnel marks.

"We need to finish this once and for all and strike back hard," said next-door neighbor Avraham Chen-Chatam, 57.

Streets were nearly empty in Sderot, the Israeli border town pummeled hardest by rockets. But dozens of people congregated on a hilltop to watch the Israeli aerial attacks.

The TV images of dead and wounded Gazans inflamed Arab public opinion, and protests erupted in Arab Israeli villages, the West Bank and elsewhere in the Arab world.

The campaign embarrassed moderate Arab regimes that have encouraged Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking and weakened Hamas' rival, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who has ruled only the West Bank since Hamas violently seized control of Gaza in June 2007.

Abbas condemned the attacks, but fearing violence could spiral out of control, his forces also broke up protests in the West Bank.

The offensive also risked opening new fronts, including unrest that could destabilize the West Bank and ignite possible rocket attacks by Lebanese **Hezbollah** guerrillas on northern Israel.

Britain, the EU, the Vatican, the U.N. secretary-general and special Mideast envoy Tony Blair all called for an immediate restoration of calm. The Arab League scheduled an emergency meeting Wednesday to discuss the situation.

But the U.S., Israel's closest ally, blamed Hamas. "These people are nothing but thugs, so Israel is going to defend its people against terrorists like Hamas that indiscriminately kill their own people," White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said.

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

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Comment & Debate: Israel has yet to learn the US lesson, that the war on terror was a failure: Americans now realise that aggression fuels extremism. This offers Obama the chance for a new Middle East policy

The Guardian - Final Edition

January 5, 2009 Monday

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theguardian

Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES ; Pg. 28

Length: 1169 words

Byline: Gary Younge

Body

On New Year's Day Atif Irfan boarded an AirTran flight at Reagan National Airport in Washington with seven members of his family. Edging his way down the aisle, he wondered out loud to his wife whether the back of the plane was the best place to be. As they took their seats, his sister-in-law said she thought it was the safest part, rather than being close to the engine or wings "in case something happened".

The conversation was overheard by two teenage girls, who took one look at the mens' dark skin and beards and the women's headscarves and saw a family of suicide bombers, including three small children aged between two and seven. The girls told their parents; their parents told the flight attendant; the flight attendant told the air marshals and then the captain; the air marshals called the FBI and the airport police.

The pilot asked the marshals to remove the entire family from the plane. Then officials asked everybody else to get off so they could perform a thorough sweep. The family (as well as a family friend who happened to be on the same flight) was surrounded by armed guards, detained for questioning and then released. The plane eventually took off without them. When they tried to get on a later AirTran flight the airline refused to book them, even though they had been cleared (it has since apologised).

The Irfan family's ordeal escalated according to its own humiliating logic. And yet seven years after 9/11 it was no isolated incident. Pre-emptive, presumptive, disproportionate and discriminatory, it speaks volumes about the prevailing values those two American teenagers have lived with for much of their lives. A world that confuses Muslim and terrorist, and conflates the civilian and combatant by taking popular fear and prejudice and handing them over to state power. Driven by the maxim that you are better safe than sorry, it leaves nobody safe and everybody sorry. The only thing that prevented this particular incident from becoming yet another ideal metaphor for the war on terror is that nobody was killed or disappeared.

There is nothing particularly American about this. Like Nike or McDonald's, the war on terror may have started here but it quickly got branded and went global. In the months after the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, everybody wanted a piece of the action. President George Bush found himself in illustrious company.

Comment & Debate: Israel has yet to learn the US lesson, that the war on terror was a failure: Americans now realise that aggression fuels extremism. This offer....

Among others, Zimbabwe's president, Robert Mugabe, and India's former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee sought to ride his coattails to their own version of violent despotism.

However, few nations pursued it with such consistent zeal as Israel. "You in America are in a war against terror," Ariel Sharon said after he left the White House following suicide bombings in Haifa and Jerusalem in December 2001. "We in Israel are in a war against terror - it's the same war."

The trouble is that over the last seven years, the war on terror has been thoroughly discredited - not only morally, but militarily and strategically. Nobody listens to moderates, let alone to reason, when bombs are falling and people are dying. That is as true for the rockets that have killed a handful of Israelis as it is for the barrage of bombs and now tanks that have killed hundreds of Palestinians.

By erasing any prospect of negotiation, the violence did not weaken extremists but emboldened them. Israel may want to boost the moderate Fatah faction which governs the West Bank now. But Hamas's electoral rise was a direct result of the contempt the Israeli's showed them in the past.

Meanwhile, the Iraq war has left Iran - the primary sponsor of both *Hezbollah* and Hamas - with far more influence in the region than they would have had. On almost every front in almost every part of the world, including in the US, the war on terror is now seen as a colossal mistake. Only Israel did not get the memo. And it is now set to fail for the same reasons that America has.

Diplomatically, Israeli efforts to sell its bombardment and now invasion of Gaza as a straightforward extension of the war on terror have been fairly blatant. It has described the shelling of homes, mosques and police stations as the destruction of "the infrastructure of terror". Even as the rest of the world condemns it, Israel's foreign minister, and Kadima party leader, Tzipi Livni, has been telling anyone who will listen that her country's actions place it firmly within the community of nations and leaves Gazans and their democratically elected rulers outside.

"Israel is part of the free world and fights extremism and terrorism. Hamas is not," she said. And from there we are just one small step away from putting the world on notice that either "you're with us or you're with the terrorists". "These are the days when every individual in the region and in the world has to choose a side," Livni said.

Meanwhile, Israel has been busy implementing the very tenets of the war on terror that have served the US so badly, primarily that intractable political problems can be solved solely by military means with the aim of not simply bombing your enemies into submission, but eliminating them altogether and then creating resolution on your own terms from the rubble.

"What I think we need to do is to reach a situation in which we do not allow Hamas to govern," said Vice-Premier Haim Ramon. "That is the most important thing." Who he thinks should govern when Hamas has gone, and precisely what legitimacy they would have, does not seem to bother him. He does not want to change the government of Gaza, he wants to change the people.

On this matter Livni is right. People do have to choose sides. But, so far, it has not been her side. Seven years after 9/11 the world has a good idea of what's coming next and how widespread the ramifications might be - and they want no part of it. The war on terror is over. War lost. For the first time in a long time, that even appears to be true in America.

A recent Rasmussen poll shows the American public far less indulgent of Israeli aggression than many previously believed. Opinion on the bombing of Gaza is fairly evenly divided, showing 44% supporting Israel's military action against the Palestinians and 41% saying it should have tried to find a diplomatic solution to the problems.

Given the absence of any honest or informed debate about events in the Middle East, this suggests significant room for manoeuvre for President-elect Obama in pursuing a more even-handed policy towards the region, if he should chose to take it.

Comment & Debate: Israel has yet to learn the US lesson, that the war on terror was a failure: Americans now realise that aggression fuels extremism. This offer....

The benefits could strengthen America's hand throughout the region. Majorities in seven Arab nations say their opinion of the US would significantly improve if it put pressure on Israel to comply with international law in its treatment of Palestinians - generally more than say the same about closing Guantanamo Bay, according to Gallup.

That is the change both America and the Middle East need. It's also the change most of the rest of the world wants to believe in.

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Songs of lost innocence

Canberra Times (Australia)

May 8, 2008 Thursday

Final Edition

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Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

In the wee small hours on Israeli television, they show reruns of what was once a staple form of mass entertainment: kibbutz choirs the men in pressed work shirts, the women in peasant skirts singing Hebrew folk melodies exalting the Land of Israel, while a smiling audience joins in.

The pictures were black and white, the sets cardboard, and the programs interminable a socialist-realist tableau of a simple farming nation engaged in wholesome, patriotic amusement.

Visiting Israel last month, I sat transfixed when I stumbled across the public service channel that replays those old shows. The national celebrations will be more up to date, as Israel marks its 60th anniversary with street parties and beach barbecues this week. Yet if the world is watching, trying to understand the place Israel was and what it has become, it could do worse than start with those cheesy TV specials.

For one thing, too many critics like to depict the establishment of Israel in May 1948 as little more than an act of Western imperialism, inserting an alien, European enclave into the mainly Arab and Muslim Middle East.

In this view, the Jewish Israelis of today, with their swimming pools and waterside restaurants, are no different from their counterparts in other settler societies the whites of Australia or, more painfully, South Africa. A look at the faces of Jewish Israel is one easy rebuttal: the new nation that has formed by mixing Moroccan and Russian, Ethiopian and Kurd, is one of the most ethnically diverse in the world. But there is a more substantial counter-argument, one that can be picked up even on those old TV singalongs.

A favourite in the patriotic repertoire is Ein Li Eretz Acheret (I Have No Other Land). In a way, no other sentence conveys the tragedy of Israel and Palestine more concisely because of course, and with good reason, the Palestinians feel exactly the same way. They too have nowhere else.

Yet this Zionist anthem articulates something very deep in Israelis' sense of themselves: they are a nation formed by those who had no other place to live. The Holocaust, inevitably, looms large in this: the establishment of a Jewish state just three years after the liberation of Auschwitz was no coincidence. After 2000 years, the world was finally persuaded that the Jews deserved what every other people regarded as a basic right: a place of their own.

A poignant reminder that Jews really had no other place because the rest of the world did not want them came with the death last month of Yossi Harel, captain of the Exodus, the leaking, rusting ship that carried 4500 Holocaust

Songs of lost innocence

survivors from Europe to Palestine in 1947, only to be sent back by the British first to France and then, incredibly, to Germany.

This must give the Israeli experience a different texture to the founding of New Zealand, Argentina or the United States. Those enterprises were fuelled chiefly by ambition and appetite for material resources. Even if those who landed on Plymouth Rock were fleeing religious intolerance, the circumstances of America's pioneers were not those of Jews in the 1940s.

The moral difference between the Jews and the white settlers of America, Africa and Australasia is the difference between a homeless man who needs a roof over his head and the landowner who fancies a second home. Those who lazily brand Zionism as imperialism should be able to tell the difference and to remember that those who boarded those battered ships felt less like imperialists than refugees desperate for shelter.

The old TV shows provide another, related corrective. They are a reminder that in some ways early Israel was less Rhodesia than it was East Germany, a small country with socialism as the state religion. Back in the 1970s, all Israeli floors looked the same: the tiles were mass produced and there was only one style. Every toilet seat was made by a single kibbutz. Foreign investors were told they were welcome so long as they were happy to sell a 51 per cent stake in their company to the Histadrut, Israel's trade union council.

That collectivism is all but gone.

Most of the kibbutzim have privatised: individual members now own their own houses and earn different wages from each other. The kibbutz was never Israel, but it stands as a metaphor for what is happening in the wider society.

Israel itself is privatising, as its people withdraw from the collective sphere and retreat into their own, individual lives. Many speak of the bu'ah they construct for themselves, the bubble in which they can hide away from the fears and angst of Israel's "situation". Polling reveals the dichotomy: while nearly 40 per cent believe the country faces a "serious threat of destruction" from its neighbours, around 83 per cent are "satisfied or very satisfied" with their own lives.

All of which has a bearing on the other meaning of this week's anniversary. The US Administration has set the date as a deadline for Israelis and Palestinians to show some progress in the talks launched at Annapolis last November, ahead of President Bush's visit to the region next week.

Israel insists that it is straining every sinew seeking peace, just as it has insisted for the past 60 years. I heard the Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, explain with pride last week that she has kept talking to her Palestinian counterpart, even "on days of terror".

Some of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's hawkish critics reckon the peace effort is, if anything, accelerating, in order to distract attention from the new, apparently serious, corruption inquiry just launched against him. And yet, there are few signs of a genuinely urgent Israeli desire for an accord with the Palestinians. The appearance of efforts for peace, in order to placate the legacy-hungry Bush, most certainly, but a fierce yearning for peace is harder to detect.

So when Jimmy Carter was in Jerusalem last month, carrying messages from Damascus and Hamas, no frontline Israeli minister would so much as meet him. Israel says it can't afford to legitimise Hamas, even indirectly, for fear of undermining the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas. Fine. In which case, surely, Israel would be doing all it could to bolster Abbas's credibility by, say, removing West Bank outposts deemed illegal under Israeli law, or offering compensation to those Jewish settlers ready to leave occupied territory voluntarily and return to Israel-proper. Yet Olmert has done no such thing.

In this, the PM is doing no more than follow the national mood.

Israelis have grown cynical about peacemaking. "We pulled out of Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005, and what did we get for our trouble?"

Songs of lost innocence

Katyushas from **Hezbollah** and Qassams from Hamas. No thanks."

Besides, and few Israelis like to say this out loud, they believe they can get by without peace.

Thanks, they whisper, to the separation barrier or wall, terror attacks have dwindled: Palestinian violence is contained. As for the so- called demographic factor the notion that soon Jews and Arabs in the entire land ruled by Israel will reach numeric parity that feels abstract and far away.

Israelis will party tonight, celebrating an economy that enjoyed 5.1 per cent growth last year and which provides for many a good life.

Only a few insomniacs will watch the old shows and remember the long- ago melodies, including the one that sounds more passe{aac} now than ever.

It's called Shir L'shalom and it is the song for peace.

Guardian

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Victory through air attack? It's pie in the sky; Israel imagined it could defeat Hamas though aerial bombardment. It shows it hasn't learnt the lessons of history, Correlli Barnett says

The Times (London)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

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THE TIMES

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Byline: Correlli Barnett

Body

The spectacle of Merkava tanks rumbling into the Gaza Strip last weekend served as complete proof that the massive Israeli onslaught from the air, killing hundreds of Palestinian men, women and children, utterly failed in its objective of crippling Hamas. I simply do not believe Ehud Barak's claim that Israel always planned a ground invasion as a necessary second stage of the offensive against Hamas.

Those tanks so conspicuously parked along the borders of the Gaza Strip were simply intended to put extra psychological pressure on Hamas.

Now they have been deployed in earnest - and the invaders have taken casualties.

The failure of the air onslaught to cow Hamas into surrender signifies that the Israeli leadership (including Mr Barak, a soldier who ought to know better) have yet again been deluded by the seductive fallacy that airpower (especially air power in today's hi-tech form) can win wars all on its own, and at no cost to those flying the bombers or directing the drones on TV from remote "PlayStations".

The extra seduction of PlayStation warfare (as pioneered by the Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan) lies in hitting the enemy without the slightest risk to yourself. That time and again innocent families are massacred along with the targeted al-Qaeda, Taleban or Hamas leaders, comes conveniently under the heading "collateral damage".

Instead of putting their faith in the F16 bomber and the drone, the Israeli leadership would have done better to study the history of airpower, from the Anglo-American strategic air offensive against Germany in the Second World War to Israel's own abortive attempt in 2006 to defeat Hezbollah in the Lebanon. The history clearly shows that air power alone cannot win wars. It only works as an extra dimension to land or sea warfare.

In the Second World War the

Victory through air attack? It's pie in the sky Israel imagined it could defeat Hamas through aerial bombardment. It shows it hasn't learnt the lessons of history....

Luftwaffe (a tactical air force) served as a key component of the German blitzkrieg offensives against Poland, France and in the Balkans in 1939-41, but the victories were nevertheless won by the German panzer divisions.

Later, from 1942 to 1945, the Anglo-American tactical air forces similarly gave the Allied armies in Italy, Normandy and northwest Europe a huge advantage over German armies now denuded of air cover by the destruction of the Luftwaffe. But once again, the campaigns were won on the ground, not in the air.

Meanwhile the Anglo-American strategic air offensive against Germany in 1943-45, though inflicting enormous damage, failed to fulfil the promise of the air chiefs that bombing alone could win the war without the need for a ground invasion of Hitler's Europe, costly in allied casualties. So a land campaign it had to be.

In the Korean War of 1950-53 and the Vietnam War in 1967 and after, the Americans relied on air power as a war-winner. Yet in both cases air power failed in the event to decide the issue. Vietnam especially marked a spectacular failure, with a heavier weight of bombs dropped than in the whole Second World War, and yet in the end an enemy victory.

The First Gulf War in 1991 was an exception, being really like the Battle of Omdurman updated - we had the Gatling gun (meaning mastery of the air) and they did not. But the success of the aerial onslaught on the Iraqi field army has to be balanced against the complete failure of the attacks on targets like Baghdad to decide the war. In any case, it was the allied ground forces which had to turf Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait.

Perhaps the most important, though largely forgotten, recent failure of air power to win a war on its own was in Yugoslavia in 1999, when the Anglo-Americans led by Bill Clinton and Tony Blair illegally intervened (ie, without UN sanction)

in a domestic conflict between the Yugoslav Government and the insurgents of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army.

Mr Clinton and Mr Blair believed that three days of massive airstrikes against the Yugoslav army in Kosovo would break the nerve of Slobodan Milosevic and his colleagues. In fact, the air onslaught went on for 78 days, and yet was still barren of decisive result - even though extended to targets throughout Yugoslavia, many of them purely civilian, such as bridges, power stations, and even the main TV studios in Belgrade.

Why did the Anglo-Americans resort to such extreme means? It was because of the total failure of the initial tactical bombing in Kosovo itself, and the consequent allied desperation. But even the "total war" bombing of Belgrade and other cities failed to break the nerve of the Yugoslav (really the Serb) people.

There is another lesson here that the Israelis would have done well to learn before their onslaught on Lebanon in 2006 and certainly before their onslaught on Gaza in 2008-9. The lesson is that savage air attack by a foreign enemy does not break the nerve of a civilian population, but instead only stiffens its resolve not to give in. As a schoolboy in London during the 1940-41 blitz and the flying-bomb and V2 rocket attacks of 1945, I saw this for myself.

So why did the Anglo-American leadership so grossly miscalculate the likely moral effect on the Yugoslavs of their cruise missiles and bombs? And why has the Israeli leadership just made a similar gross miscalculation despite all the earlier lessons of history? In the case of the Israelis, it may be because (according to Israel's own official spokesmen) the morale of the population in southern Israel has been shaken by Hamas's sporadic hits with mini-rockets inflicting only minor damage and relatively few casualties. Surely then the population of Gaza would buckle under the IDF's deluge of American-supplied hi-tech ordnance? Well actually, no.

So instead it had to be a ground war.

In the case of Kosovo in 1999, the Anglo-Americans had no land forces available in the Balkans capable of evicting the Yugoslav army. Clinton's and Blair's adventure was on the verge of catastrophic failure. It was only the Russians, by telling Milosevic that they would not back him in an all-out war, that compelled him to order the

Victory through air attack? It's pie in the sky Israel imagined it could defeat Hamas though aerial bombardment.
It shows it hasn't learnt the lessons of history....

Yugoslav army to evacuate Kosovo. And it was only this Russian intervention that got Clinton and Blair off the hook
- and saved Blair's premiership.

In the case of Gaza today, there has been no outsider to rescue the Israelis from the consequences of the failure of their air power. So the task of rescue falls to Israel's own ground troops - conducting a messy struggle with hate-fuelled guerrillas amid close-packed slums.

Correlli Barnett is a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge, and author of The Collapse of British Power (Pan Books)

The important recent failure of airpower was in Yugoslavia in 1999

Graphic

Despite the devastation on the ground, Britons during the blitz in 1940, left, or Gazans today did not submit

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Israel pulls back as war enters its 'final act'; Truce deal is close, says UN Secretary-General

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Byline: Martin Fletcher, , Sheera Frenkel

Body

An end to the war in Gaza appeared close last night as Israel sought to convert its three-week offensive against Hamas into a diplomatic victory before the inauguration of Barack Obama on Tuesday.

Two top Israeli negotiators were in Cairo yesterday to discuss the details of an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire agreement. In Washington Tzipi Livni, the Israeli Foreign Minister, and

Condoleezza Rice, the US Secretary of State, signed a separate agreement on ways to stop Hamas re-arming.

"Hopefully we're in the final act," Mark Regev, the Israeli government spokesman, said. "Diplomacy now is in high gear. We want this to be over as soon as possible." Ban Ki Moon, the UN Secretary-General, said that a deal on a truce appeared close and might be sealed within a couple of days.

However, Israeli leaders are also thought to be considering a unilateral halt to their offensive instead of reaching a formal deal as a way of depriving Hamas of any political gains, such as easing the Israeli blockade that has been in place since 2007.

After a week of increasing force the Israeli military pulled back yesterday.

"We have given Hamas a day of quiet to think things over but if they don't accept our ceasefire terms our troops are still there," a defence official said.

Beyond stopping Hamas rockets, Israel's priority is to stop the militants using hundreds of tunnels beneath Gaza's southern border with Egypt to smuggle in more weaponry. Another, unstated priority is to secure the release of Gilad Schalit, the Israeli soldier captured in Gaza in 2006.

Hamas, whose negotiators were returning to Cairo after the Israelis left last night, wants an immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops and the lifting of the blockade.

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Khaled Mashal, the exiled Hamas leader in Damascus, rejected the insistence by Israel that its demands be met before its troops withdraw but, beyond Israel wanting to end the fighting before the inauguration, Hamas has little bargaining power.

Even as Mr Mashal urges them on from the safety of Damascus, Hamas fighters are losing heart. Their leaders in Gaza want the fighting to stop. Muhammad Abu El-Hissi, a captured Hamas fighter, told the Israeli newspaper Maariv: "We thought the most the Israelis would do was something from the air, come in and straight out again. We never imagined anything like this. Fear eats up our hearts." One Israeli commentator compared Hamas to the Black Knight in Monty Python and the Holy Grail who "even after having both arms and one leg severed continued to hop up and down on the remaining leg, screaming and threatening".

Egypt has little sympathy for Hamas and is pressing it to agree to a ceasefire. It is also seeking to restore the influence of Fatah - the rival movement ousted by Hamas in 2007 - in Gaza. It wants the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority to help to stop smuggling across Gaza's border and to supervise other crossings jointly with Israel.

Whatever the ceasefire terms Hamas will claim that it has won just by resisting the region's strongest military power for three weeks and continuing to fire rockets into Israel. But for all its early boasts it has killed only six Israeli soldiers, brought terrible destruction on its own people and secured little support from the rest of the Arab world.

Israel's leaders argue that they have established the principle of deterrence, restored the prestige of its military after its unsuccessful attempt to crush **Hezbollah** in southern Lebanon in 2006, and served an unmistakable warning to its Arab neighbours that they attack Israel at their peril.

Domestically the war has proved hugely popular, with one poll showing 78 per cent considering it a success.

The Israeli media has been so supportive that even the leftish newspaper Haaretz relegated Israel's bombing of a UN relief agency's warehouse to a single paragraph on page 2 yesterday.

However, the prospect of peace between Jews and Arabs looks more remote than ever, and Israel's global standing has been battered by pictures of Palestinian **women** and children caught in the fire, its shelling of schools and shelters, and its defiance of UN demands for an immediate ceasefire. More than 1,100 Palestinians, half of them civilians, are said to have been killed, with about 5,000 wounded and thousands more left homeless..

The road to my house in the Tel-al Hawa neighbourhood of Gaza City is like an obstacle course. My car weaves around spent shells, rocket fragments, broken glass and the skeletal remains of burnt-out vehicles on what used to be our tidy streets. I look for the signs, anything I can recognise amid the debris. But my markers - the grocery store, the corner high-rise, the park - are gone.

Black soot licks at the windows of many buildings, marking where a flame passed through. Bullet holes dot façades, as do gaping holes where shells punched through the concrete. The air smells smoky, charred, and in some areas a pungent smell persists that nobody can identify.

All of the tall buildings have been hit, their top floors gone.

Around me, one apartment has four large holes where bombs must have landed, another has eight, the next one six. The south-facing buildings have borne the brunt of the damage, taking heavy fire from where the Israeli troops marched in.

My building is mostly intact.

Neighbours told me that my flat was one of the most dangerous because it looked directly on to the position of the Israeli troops.

We left earlier this week along with many of the neighbours.

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The few who stayed behind Who knows how long the quiet will last? First Person Azmi Keshawi, Gaza City cowered in the stairwells, hoping the slight reinforcement would protect them. Now the Israeli soldiers are gone and we will go back, but who knows how long the quiet will last.

I pass the park where my four children used to play. Donated by the city of Barcelona, it used to be the pride of the city and a joy for my children. Now the park is in ruins.

My wife and I can see that our children are frightened but they try not to show it. Like everyone here they look on silently and wait to make sense of what has happened. Yesterday a shell landed 400 metres away from the safe house where we had sought refuge. A week earlier a shell landed only 100 metres away. It is impossible to know where is safe and where isn't. We just hope, like everyone else, that we have a fifty-fifty chance of surviving.

Today people have begun to move around quietly. Most look on in silence, trying to fathom what they have lost. They tell us that a ceasefire is a few days away but we don't know if the fighting will start again.

Down the street I see that someone has rehung a Hamas flag. Most still support them; the feeling is that Hamas is holding its own and has not folded, and they admire it for that.

'My local markers - the store, the park, the high rise - are all gone'

Graphic

An Israeli fires teargas at protesters

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Lockerbie: Justice on Trial: The night death rained from the skies

The Scotsman

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Byline: Stephen McGinty

Body

HE SAT at the bar, drinking steadily and by the time he looked at his watch, it was too late. The corridors of Heathrow Airport were clogged with people - many heading home for the Christmas holidays - and so Jaswant Basuta, a passenger bound for New York, had to dodge and weave as he sprinted, on unsteady legs, towards the departure gate.

The Boeing 747 was still at the gate when he arrived, breathless and smelling of alcohol, but the plane's aluminium doors were already closed and locked. Mr Basuta pleaded with Christopher Price, the Pan Am duty manager, and explained he had been in the bar and lost track of the time. Yet Mr Price was implacable: he had missed Flight 103. The Clipper Maid of the Seas was departing without him.

For Mr Basuta, 21 December, 1988, was the luckiest day of his life.

The plane moved away from the gate at 18:04, but congestion on various runways delayed take-off until 18.25. On board, the 243 passengers, drawn from 21 nations, settled down for the seven-hour flight to JFK airport. For the 35 students of Syracuse University, the flight meant sadness at the end of their overseas exchange in London, mixed with joy at the prospect of being reunited with their families.

The Rattan family, from New Delhi, meanwhile, were simply anxious to be on their way. They had been due to fly the previous day, but their young son had become sick and the pilot returned the plane to the gate to let them off. Their young daughter, Suruchi, was wearing a bright red kurta and salwar, a tunic and matching trousers, specially bought for the journey.

In business class, two passengers had weightier matters on their mind. Matthew Gannon, the CIA's deputy station chief in Beirut, was sitting in seat 14J, while his colleague, Major Chuck "Tiny" McKee, sat behind him, in the centre aisle in seat 15F. McKee was on secondment to the Defence Intelligence Agency in Beirut and both had returned after trying, unsuccessfully, to trace Terry Anderson, an American journalist kidnapped by Hezbollah. Two other CIA officers, of a lower rank, and, believed to be acting as bodyguards, were travelling economy class.

After clearing Heathrow, Pan Am 103 moved north toward Scotland. The 16 crew members were led by the pilot, Captain James MacQuarrie. Cabin staff were already spread out across the plane, preparing to dispense drinks and, later, an evening meal. At 18:56, as it approached the Scottish Border, the 747 reached its cruising altitude of 31,000ft and, a few minutes later, was picked up by the Scottish Area Control Centre at Prestwick airport.

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The air traffic controller who first made contact with the plane was Alan Topp. He listened as Captain MacQuarrie replied: "Good evening Scottish, Clipper one zero three. We are level at three one zero." The First Officer then said: "Clipper 103 requesting oceanic clearance." It was the last contact ever made with Flight 103 and its passengers.

Mr Topp watched on his screen in air traffic control as the plane approached the corner of the Solway Firth and then, at 19:02, it crossed its northern coast, and was now above Dumfries and Galloway.

The plane was represented on the screen by a small green square with a cross at its centre, beside which sat a transponder code, "0357" and its flight level, "310". Then it disappeared. Mr Topp was not unduly panicked, at first he thought the plane had simply passed into a "zone of silence" - an area where objects are invisible to radar. He tried repeatedly to contact Captain McQuarrie and asked a nearby KLM flight to do the same. There was no response.

He looked back at the radar screen. What he saw was chilling. The single square had now been replaced by four squares, fanning out in different directions. It was the first representation of the Lockerbie bombing, a massacre, people reduced to pixels. A few seconds later the screen was covered with bright squares.

In the dark of a winter's night, those ghostly squares were, in reality, pieces of a plane, on which men, women and children were still strapped. Investigators would later put together the grim final journey of the plane and its passengers.

Three seconds after an explosion blew a 20in hole in the left-hand side of the fuselage, the cockpit and the number three engine had already separated. People were sucked into the sky, where the air temperature was -46C; mercifully the lack of oxygen would have rendered many unconscious as they began to fall from a height of six miles. It was two minutes before they struck the ground.

The comfort that their loved ones perished instantly was withdrawn from those relatives who examined the reports by forensic scientists at the public inquiry. Some passengers rendered unconscious may have awoken as they fell through the lower altitudes where the oxygen was richer. Evidence showed that, as the fuselage fell, a mother held her baby tightly, two friends held hands and other passengers, strapped into seats, gripped their crucifixes.

Below lay Lockerbie, a small picturesque town that was to be transformed into a vision of hell, a place where fires would rage, the earth smouldered and corpses littered the fields.

When the wing of Pan Am 103, containing 200,000lb of fuel, smashed into 13 Sherwood Crescent at 500mph, it did so with the force of a small earthquake, one which registered 1.6 on the Richter scale. Several houses were destroyed, wiping out the Somerville family, Jack and Rosalind and their two children, Paul and Lynsey.

The resultant fireball swept across on to the A74, Glasgow to Carlisle road, scorching cars in the southbound lane. A total of 11 of the town's residents were killed, the rest were stunned and deeply distressed to find bodies in their gardens.

Bunty Galloway found a boy - "a wee laddie with brown socks and blue trousers" - lying at the bottom of her steps. Two girls also lay dead, one in the road, another bent over garden railings.

Mrs Galloway was not alone. In the village of Tundergarth, in a field behind the church, the nose section finally came to rest. The pilot, first officer, flight attendant and a number of first-class passengers were still strapped to their seats.

Incredibly, the flight attendant was still alive when she was discovered by a local farmer's wife, but she succumbed before her rescuer could find help.

The image of the nose cone, which bore the plane's title, Clipper Maid of the Sea, in flourishing letters, would become an iconic image of terrorist atrocity.

Back at Heathrow, Jaswant Basuta was angrily awaiting another flight, still ignorant of his fortune.

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Then the police arrived to interview him. As Mr Basuta's luggage was on the plane, a breach of airline rules, he had become the first suspect in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 and the murder of 270 men, women and children.

He would not be the last.

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My Say: Palestine's Warsaw ghettos

The Edge Malaysia

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Byline: Azam Aris

Body

The only lesson of history is that
there are no lessons.

- Alan John Percival Taylor,

British historian

When discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict - notably one that involves the helpless Palestinians - with friends including foreigners, I always stress this point: the irony of this long ongoing struggle is how a race (particularly Jews who support the Tel Aviv Zionist regime) that endured so much pain and wants the world to remember the Holocaust annually continues to inflict unimaginable suffering on another race.

Perhaps, Taylor is right and in this perspective, the Zionist-led Israeli government did not learn anything from the atrocities committed by the Nazis on the Jews during World War II.

The latest Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip, which has already killed more than 1,000 people, mostly women and children, is not about neutralising the ability of Hamas to fire "primitive rockets" into Israel. Rather, it is part of a much bigger 60-year-old conflict that the US and Europe refuse to solve even though they are capable of doing it. This hostility will continue as long as the US and Europe, which helped create Israel after World War II, do not pressure Israel into making peace with its Arab neighbours.

The crisis in Bosnia and Kosovo was not allowed to prolong because it happened in the backyard of Europe, which was why the Western powers decided to intervene directly. Why can't they do the same for Palestine? Are we to believe that powerful American presidents, including Barack Obama, are powerless tools of the Jewish lobbyists in Washington to the extent that the US has to veto every effort of the UN to solve the crisis? And even if it means fuelling more hatred in the Muslim and Arab world that will affect American interests more than Israel's?

Had these problems been solved after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war - with the US and Europe pressuring Israel to accept the various resolutions passed by the UN - there would not be Hamas, Islamic jihad, Al-Aqsa martyrs or Hezbollah today. Instead, there would be economic development and prosperity in Gaza and the West Bank, no refugee camps in Lebanon and no suicide bombers and rockets on the streets of Israel.

But the US and Europe turned a blind eye and let the conflict and Israeli oppression continue. And like in many wars, the oppressed will fight back, especially when the future seems bleak. In the case of the Palestinians, notably

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those who remain in Gaza and the West Bank and have suffered for three generations, many would be proud to let their children become freedom fighters and die as martyrs.

What are Gaza and the West Bank today - deprived of basic amenities and surrounded by walls and checkpoints - if not ghettos? Gaza and the West Bank are the Palestinian version of the Jews' Warsaw ghettos. History books on the Warsaw ghettos provide a lot of similarities (which is emphasised in italics) between the Warsaw ghettos and those in Gaza and the West Bank.

"When Germany conquered Poland at the beginning of the Second World War, it issued a decree that required all Jewish residents of Warsaw to move into a designated area, which it then sealed off from the rest of the city in November 1940. The ghetto was enclosed by a wall that was over 10-feet high and topped with barbed wire and closely guarded to prevent movement between the ghetto and the rest of Warsaw.

"Unemployment was a major problem in the ghetto. Illegal workshops were set up to manufacture goods to be sold illegally on the outside and raw goods were smuggled in often by children. Smuggling was often the only source of subsistence for the ghetto inhabitants. Food allotments rationed were not sufficient to sustain life. Despite the grave hardships, life in the Warsaw ghetto was rich with educational and cultural activities conducted by its underground organisations... resisting deportation, some of them used small arms smuggled into the ghetto. They offered organised resistance in the first days of the operation, inflicting casualties on the well armed and equipped SS and police units."

Another description of life in Gaza and the West Bank was offered by former US president Jimmy Carter who brokered the Israel-Egypt peace deal in 1978. Carter, considered the last US president who had some success in solving the problem and had established contact with Hamas - who won the election in Gaza - uses the word "apartheid" to describe the plight of the Palestinians today.

He was heavily criticised in the US by Jewish lobbyists but he maintained his stand. He said: "I knew that's an accurate description on what's going on in Palestine. The confiscation of their land... they being suppressed completely against voicing their disapproval of what's happening, the building of the wall that intrudes deep into their territory, the complete separation of Israelis from Palestinians - all those things in many ways are worse than some of the aspects of apartheid in South Africa. There is no doubt about it and no one can go there and visit different cities without agreeing with what I have said."

The solutions to the conflict are all there in the form of resolutions passed by the UN and Saudi Arabia's Middle East "peace for land deal" or otherwise known as the 2007 Beirut Declaration.

UN Resolution 242 calls for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from all territories occupied in 1967 - Gaza, the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

UN Resolution 194 reaffirms the right of Palestinian refugees (who were driven out of their land in 1948) to return, including to areas in what is Israel today. Additionally, the Beirut Declaration called for Israel's acceptance of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. While the return of refugees is no longer attainable and unacceptable to Israel as this will mean turning Israel into an Arab-majority country, financial compensation could be acceptable to Palestinian refugees, just as the Jews were compensated by the German government for the Holocaust. In return, all Arab states will establish normal relations with Israel and consider the conflict "ended".

The main obstacles to peace - the status of Jerusalem, final borders and issue of Jewish settlements, the return of or financial compensation for refugees and a dispute over water - cannot be solved by Israel and Palestine alone but needs the direct involvement of the US and Europe. To establish a strong foundation for peace, there is also a need to set up an international peacekeeping force.

Despite having to overcome a severe economic crisis back home, Obama must invest in peace in the Middle East from day one of his presidency. If he lets the conflict continue unresolved, then expect more of the same - extremism, not pragmatism, will continue to rear its ugly head. Peace will help bring economic development and

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counter extremism, but continued Israeli oppression will likely provide Hamas with more recruits and support among Palestinians.

The Western world and the likes of Bush and Blair can call Hamas and those who fight Israel terrorists but in the eyes of the Palestinians and many in the Islamic world, they are freedom fighters trying to liberate their homeland. Just like the Jews in the Warsaw ghettos, expect the Palestinians to fight until the last man is standing.

Azam Aris is executive editor at The Edge. Comments: feedback@bizedge.com

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The Rule of Law

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Byline: By DEXTER FILKINS

Dexter Filkins, a foreign correspondent for The Times, covered the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq from 2001 to 2006. His book, "The Forever War," will be published this fall.

Body

THE POLITICS OF CHAOS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

By Olivier Roy.

Translated by Ros Schwartz.

167 pp. Columbia University Press. \$24.95.

THE FALL AND RISE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

By Noah Feldman.

189 pp. Princeton University Press. \$22.95.

Five years is a long time in the Middle East -- and especially the five that just passed. In early 2003, a barrel of oil cost \$30. A reform-minded president was at the helm in Iran. In Gaza, Hamas was a bunch of renegades. And a very brutal man was still ruling the region known historically as Mesopotamia.

The invasion of Iraq changed everything, if not directly; war, as Lenin said, can be the great accelerator of events. The Middle East is now in such extraordinary ferment that it is possible to imagine that the system of states carved out of the Ottoman Empire following World War I could collapse altogether.

Two new books by eminent scholars of the region offer different perspectives on the present crisis. It's a measure of how dire things are that neither one inspires much hope.

In "The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East," Olivier Roy, the research director at the French National Center for Scientific Research, takes the full measure of the state of the Middle East since the American invasion of Iraq. It's not a pretty picture. From Suez to Kashmir, the old categories have changed, or have begun to overlap. For starters, that old reliable -- the Arab-Israeli conflict -- has, in Roy's mind, passed the point of no return. "The conditions on the ground now make the creation of a viable Palestinian state impossible," he says.

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The region is now beset by armed movements, like Hamas and Hezbollah, that transcend national boundaries and pay little heed to the formal -- and invariably weak -- governments of the states where they reside. At the same time, conflicts within Islam are overshadowing the fights between states. Foremost among these is the emerging division between the Sunni and Shiite worlds, exemplified by the sectarian bloodletting in Iraq.

Behind the Sunni-Shiite conflict, of course, is the region's most troubling challenge -- that of an Iranian regime bent on challenging the status quo. With the rise of the Shiites in Iraq (enabled by the American invasion) and in Lebanon, the Iranian government is leading a fundamental reordering of the balance of power that is coming at the expense of the Sunni world -- so much so that hard-line Arab states like Saudi Arabia have even begun to move closer to Israel. "The day the United States bombs Iran," Roy says, "all the Arab capitals will protest, but more than one will be quietly jubilant."

Moving across the region, Roy asserts that entire ethnic groups, like the Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan, are becoming radicalized. And Iraq, he says, will almost certainly break apart. "Kurdistan is automatically heading towards independence," Roy writes. That doesn't mean America can leave Iraq anytime soon, Roy says -- doing so would inflame the Sunni-Shiite conflict across the region.

What is to be done? At only 167 pages, Roy's book provides a concise and penetrating summation of the current scene; it's a fine primer for anyone trying to get a sense of just how chaotic the Middle East is. But if you are looking for a way out of the quagmire, or even ways to manage the various catastrophes, you will not find much here. Roy impressively delineates the challenges, but doesn't say much about solving them. He excoriates the Bush administration for lumping all of Islam -- and all the Islamists -- into its war on terror, but half the editorial writers in America have done that. The most he can offer is a suggestion that the United States negotiate with Iran and Hamas. These are good ideas (and the United States is already talking to Iran about Iraq), but hardly ones likely to effect drastic change, if any at all.

Which brings us to Noah Feldman's "Fall and Rise of the Islamic State." The book begins in daring fashion, acknowledging the plight of the region and suggesting it might be saved by Islamic law. That's right: Shariah. "Just now, the Islamist promise of the rule of law offers the only prospect for meaningful political justice for many Muslims," he writes. "If it, too, fails, the alternative may well be worse."

Well now, that's a provocative assertion. At a glance, you might think Feldman, a professor at Harvard Law School, drew the most difficult card at a college debating tournament. But I have a personal interest: as a correspondent covering the Taliban in Afghanistan a decade ago, I witnessed a public execution and an amputation performed at the Kabul Sports Stadium on a Friday afternoon. "In revenge there is life," a voice called into the loudspeaker as the execution of a young man proceeded. (The announcer was reading from the Koran.) I saw the other tenets of Taliban Shariah in full flower as well, like the wholesale repression of women. I was eager to see how Feldman would pull off such a novel and unorthodox argument.

And he does not. Or not very convincingly, anyway. Feldman provides an interesting history of the Islamic legal system that prevailed over the Middle East and North Africa, including, in particular, the variant practiced by the Ottomans until the collapse of their empire following World War I. Feldman shows that, through a delicately balanced arrangement that relied on an unelected group of scholars to interpret the Koran and other religious texts, Shariah provided an orderly and predictable legal system that checked the power of the empire's rulers. And he shows how that system collapsed, thereby speeding the decline of the empire by removing checks on executive power.

But that was then, and this is now. In today's world Feldman's argument runs out of steam. How could it not? As Roy points out, modern attempts to impose Shariah have failed wherever they have been tried -- whether in Afghanistan or Saudi Arabia or Iran. Failed, that is, in Roy's words, at "instigating effective and legitimate political institutions and social justice, and guaranteeing economic development." Feldman is correct in pointing out that Islamist ideas will play an increasingly prominent role in the Middle East, but he avoids the critical questions. What about women? What about Muslims who leave the faith? Of these, Feldman says almost nothing.

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Maybe Shariah will save the Middle East. But based on the evidence we have, waiting for it to blossom into a humane and modern legal system is to engage in wishful thinking. Feldman seems to recognize this himself, and ends his book by calling on the West to help majority Muslim countries build "institutions that perceive themselves and are perceived by the public as committed to the rule of law." Nation-building, in other words. America and Europe are doing quite a lot of that already, in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. The chaos that engulfs both of those countries shows just how difficult it is for the rule of law to take hold, whether it's Islamic or not.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO: A billboard cutout of the Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini near Baalbek, Lebanon, 2006. (PHOTOGRAPH BY LYNSEY ADDARIO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

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Islamic reasoning, with loopholes

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Byline: Irshad Manji - The New York Times Media Group

Body

Arguing the Just War in Islam

By John Kelsay.

263 pages. \$24.95; £16.95. Harvard University Press.

Reviewed by Irshad Manji

*

Before the Iraq invasion, a young imam offered some chilling advice to Muslims at the University of Toronto: if they could not fight the jihad against America with their souls or their sons, they should fight with their money. The Muslim Students Association told campus authorities that the imam did not represent the true spirit of Islam. With that, the case was closed.

"Arguing the Just War in Islam" re-opens such debates. John Kelsay, a professor of religion at Florida State University, shows that today's freelance fatwa-hurlers rarely capture the best of Islamic thought, but are not wholly divorced from it either. Their pronouncements attempt to pass for "Shariah reasoning," a tradition of reconciling the Koran's passages and the Prophet Muhammad's examples to changing times.

For Muslim militants, however, the times do not change. Because Islam is humanity's "natural religion," evolution ended in the seventh century. That means the Islam of 1,400 years ago must be true everywhere and forever. "The militant vision," Kelsay observes, "is one in which premodern precedents are not so much interpreted as applied." No wonder a 20-something imam in the cosmopolitan West can feel utterly entitled to champion values straight out of tribal Arabia.

To his credit, Kelsay refuses to whitewash the role of religion in fostering the violence he discusses. "Those who wish to argue that Islam has nothing to do with the attacks of 9/11 or with the tactics of Iraqi 'insurgents' will find no comfort here," he warns early on.

Yet his analysis also respects the nuances of Shariah reasoning. Kelsay appreciates Islamic history and delves into detail - though it is often tedious - about how theologians, jurists and dissidents decided what constitutes a just war. Like their Christian counterparts, Muslims have asked and asked again: When may battle be waged? Can noncombatants ever be targets? How much force is proportional? Does negotiation take precedence over an easy victory?

Islamic reasoning, with loopholes

Kelsay could have brought these questions to life had he given us something - anything - about the personalities of the questioners and not merely the process they followed. Stick with him, though. By forensically dissecting the development of Shariah reasoning he illuminates the situation we now face, in which classical Islamic scholars are trumped by bloodthirsty bandits who pose as thinkers.

Osama bin Laden is hardly the first of them. Consider the assassins of Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian president who made peace with Israel in 1979. His murderers' manifesto tried to justify Sadat's killing with Shariah reasoning. Their case was weak - and they knew it. So they turned themselves into tabloid terrorists, exploiting emotion, inflating language and sensationalizing their target's crime.

In short, Kelsay points out, the thugs resorted to "emergency reasoning." According to their fevered testimonial about Sadat, "the enemy now 'lives right in the middle' of Islamic territory." Emergency reasoning jettisons the basics of justice along with logic. The charter of Hamas tells slaves they may fight Zionists without their masters' permission - thereby accepting bondage in Islam even while preaching liberation from oppressors.

By contrast, traditional Shariah reasoning is sober enough to cut both ways. Take the just-war criterion of protecting innocents. One mainstream Muslim scholar has acknowledged that, in Kelsay's words, a child's death may be "foreseeable but unavoidable, as when an enemy's military resources are deployed in the midst of a civilian population. . . . Soldiers whose actions take place under such conditions are excused from the guilt associated with unjust killing." That ruling would let Israeli defense forces off the hook for collateral damage in their 2006 war in Lebanon, since Hezbollah deliberately operated in residential Beirut.

To get out of embarrassing pickles like this, the most populist interpreters of just war in Islam go for broke. The televangelist Yusuf al-Qaradhwai is one example. Skirting both tradition and reason, he intones that "necessity makes the forbidden things permitted." The "forbidden" includes suicide, conveniently redefined as martyrdom. Deep Shariah reasoning takes another tabloid turn.

Kelsay proves that we can understand the shifting rationales behind Islamist violence without excusing that violence. But his generosity also leads him, prematurely, to proclaim Shariah reasoning an "open practice." Were this true, we Muslims would have already had our liberal reformation. As Kelsay himself notes, unconventional thinkers in Islam pay heavy tolls, from aborted careers to prolonged prison terms to outright execution. An open practice? From the author's lips to the Almighty's ears.

Kelsay would retort that mass movements like Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami were founded by ordinary folk, a schoolteacher and a journalist respectively. Each of them seemingly supported the democratizing of interpretation. After all, they benefited from it. But their campaigns did not democratize Shariah reasoning at all. As puritan movements, they further restricted who could participate in shaping Islam. Early on, the Muslim Brotherhood closed down bookstores and other dens of free thought. The Jamaat-i-Islami declared a minority Muslim sect inauthentic. To this day, the Islamic world's only Nobel laureate in science, a member of the banned sect, cannot be buried with proper religious rites in his home country, Pakistan.

Nor can moderate Muslims be counted on to rescue Shariah reasoning from militants. The sheik of Al Azhar University in Cairo, widely regarded as the highest seat of learning in Sunni Islam, never directly challenged the manifesto of Sadat's assassins. Kelsay rightly wonders, "Why not insist that militants like bin Laden or al-Zawahiri cease their advocacy of military operations, or that they confine themselves to making the case for reform through normal political channels?"

He provides a fascinating answer: moderates can share key premises with militants. The moderates whom Kelsay has studied "do not in fact dissent from the militant judgment that current political arrangements are illegitimate." Which is not to say they have sought real democracy. Some moderates agree with militants that "democracy implies a kind of moral equivalence between Islam and other perspectives. And such a situation is dangerous, not only for the standing of the Muslim community, but for the moral life of humankind."

The hope rests with "Muslim democrats" who will pluck the Koran and the Prophet out of a tribal time warp. Kelsay focuses on Muslims in America, recognizing three male scholars whose work ranges from online consultations

Islamic reasoning, with loopholes

about the future of Shariah to arguments for harmonizing Islam with women's equality and freedom of conscience. He then urges the West to prosecute its war on terror by demonstrating rather than defying democracy. Doing so will help Muslim democrats get heard within their communities - a necessity for all of us, Kelsay suggests, because these Muslims might be the only people who can rehabilitate democracy's appeal after the serial hypocrisies practiced under its banner by Washington, among others.

It is a provocative conclusion, but an incomplete one. Muslim democrats will also have to confront Koranic passages that give militants an escape hatch. The most famous verse tells believers that slaying an innocent is like slaying all of mankind unless it is done to punish villainy. Radical Muslims seize on this loophole. Moderate Muslims sanitize it. Reform-minded Muslims must reinterpret it.

How this happens could well be the next chapter in reclaiming Shariah reasoning and the richness of Islam itself.

*

Irshad Manji, a fellow with the European Foundation for Democracy, directs the Moral Courage Project at New York University.

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Vote Conservative for their record

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

October 11, 2008 Saturday

Final Edition

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Body

To say Canada's federal election campaign has been overtaken by the near train-wreck that the international financial system has become would be an understatement.

And while Canada's federal government can do little to command the economic tsunami to cease, the question of who is best equipped to limit the ensuing damage to Canada, or who would exacerbate the effects of the financial crash, is critically relevant for Tuesday's election.

During this election campaign, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been lambasted by his opponents for being "out of touch" with the world's economic situation because he repeatedly says "Canada is not the U.S." and that economic fundamentals, including the Canadian banking system, are sound.

Experts, however, agree with Harper. On Thursday, the World Economic Forum released a report saying Canada has the soundest banking system in the world, closely followed by Sweden, Luxembourg and Australia, and on the same day the International Monetary Fund said Canada will lead the G-7 in economic growth next year and avoid a recession. Nevertheless, Harper's don't worry, be happy tune hasn't done him any favours in the polls and he should have shown greater empathy toward those Canadians losing sleep or their jobs as a result of the economic downturn.

Before detailing the reasons we believe Harper and the Conservative party deserve to govern on the question of Canada's economic future, however, it is useful to first examine the Conservative government's record.

It would be troubling if Canadians chose their next government based on a five-week election campaign of smears and sound bites rather than focusing on the Conservatives' nearly three years of effective and competent governing.

The minority government led by Harper has made a significant mark in the area of foreign policy. Since coming to power in 2006, the prime minister has been consistent and coherent in his defence of human rights around the world. Several examples are noteworthy.

After the terrorist group Hamas was elected in Palestinian elections, Harper led the world in refusing to send direct aid to the radical Islamists intent on the destruction of Israel. Further, when Israel was attacked by Lebanese-based Hezbollah terrorists in 2006, and this after thousands of rockets from Gaza and hundreds of suicide bomb attacks since 2000, many in the Canadian establishment, media and in the state-funded broadcaster expected the prime

Vote Conservative for their record

minister to respond to Israel's invasion of Lebanon as Jean Chretien or Paul Martin would have responded: lay blame on both sides no matter the history of the terror Israel endured.

Instead, in July 2006, Harper said Canada was not "going to give in to the temptation of some to single out Israel, which was the victim of the initial attack."

The prime minister stayed the course in Afghanistan instead of abandoning Afghan women and children to a resurgent Taliban, which would have been the end result of what the other parties urged. But as has been symptomatic of a Conservative campaign left to constantly dodge minefields of unforeseen circumstances, a government report released Thursday showed the cost for the Afghan mission has skyrocketed.

Similarly, Harper has been resolute in his criticism of China, which surprised some (and disappointed others) who bizarrely thought a pro-market prime minister standing up for human rights was somehow contradictory. That Harper would draw a proper line was also evident when he, unlike previous prime ministers, met the Dalai Lama -- publicly and in his office. As well, Harper's tenacity in defence of Canadian values and sovereignty has also been evident in his willingness to spend money on the Canadian military and on asserting Canada's claim in the Arctic.

Beyond international matters, the Harper Conservatives have also been mostly prudent stewards of the public purse. While less spending would have been better, the reality is that Liberal claims they would have spent less since 2006 are highly suspect. After all, the Liberals vociferously opposed a minor \$45-million cut to the arts; it stretches credibility to then claim that party would restrain spending.

On economic and tax policy, the Harper government has properly begun cutting corporate taxes, which will help free up capital to survive tough times, cut the GST to five per cent from seven, allowed income-splitting for low- and middle-income seniors, and this past week moved to abolish \$350 million in tariffs on manufacturing equipment.

Also, in less than three years, the Tories have paid \$26.2 billion towards Canada's debt -- which results in about \$2 billion in debt-interest savings annually, or \$65 million per month. Such tax moves are evidence of a prudent return of public money to the actual public who pay taxes. To some, such actions are evidence of an ideological government.

Hardly. The Harper government has busily delivered tax dollars to Quebec's aerospace industry, Ontario's automotive sector and to "regional development" agencies on the Prairies and in Atlantic Canada. We oppose such corporate welfare, but if partisan opponents think those expenditures are evidence of a Dickensian world, it begs the question of how much more money the Liberals or NDP are prepared to spend in power.

The Harper government has not been perfect, though it has been mostly scandal-free -- Maxime Bernier's approach to official documents and his choice in girlfriends notwithstanding. Compare that minor tempest to the multibillion-dollar gun registry, Shawinigate or the Adscam shenanigans under the Liberals.

Harper broke his promise on income trusts and on fixed election dates, though in hindsight, preserving corporate tax revenues through ending trusts' exemptions now looks prudent for government finances.

It is to that issue that we now return. The New Democrats under Jack Layton would spend Canada back into deficits, and introduce measures that reek of 1930s-style American protectionism, which helped plunge the world into the Great Depression.

The Liberals would be an improvement on the NDP, but Stephane Dion's "Green Shift" carbon tax program, even if revenue neutral (which it won't be for most people), would pummel Canada's resource sector, undoubtedly the most robust of industries in Canada. Also, Dion's action plan on the economy -- consult with economists and convene with premiers -- would do nothing to improve Canada in the midst of an economic crisis. Dion's dithering might well make things worse.

Canadians need a prime minister who will act with clarity, thoughtfulness and foresight. In the past week, Prime Minister Harper has been accused of lacking all three as the effects of the U.S. subprime crisis became clear.

Vote Conservative for their record

The critics could not be more wrong. It was the Harper government that moved earlier this year to stop the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corp. from offering zero per cent down, 40-year mortgages. The Conservatives saw what was coming and moved to block problematic U.S. practices from being replicated en masse in Canada.

Thus, the choice is simple. The Calgary Herald endorses Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservatives. They deserve to be re-elected based on their record, competence, and on the prime minister's steady hand as Canada heads into uncharted, choppy economic waters.

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For Jewish Voters in New York, 'Almost an Embarrassment of Riches'

The New York Times
February 3, 2008 Sunday
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Byline: By GLENN COLLINS

Body

The notion that New York's Jewish electorate can be easily characterized has long been debated. But the looming primary election on Tuesday is raising new speculation about how strongly Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama will appeal to Jewish Democrats.

"I don't speak for the Jewish community," said former Mayor Edward I. Koch, "and nobody speaks for the Jewish community. The Jews, individually, speak for themselves."

And though these days he himself is speaking up for Senator Clinton, Mr. Koch acknowledges that "lots of people -- Jews and others -- will be voting for Barack."

The situation is "almost an embarrassment of riches for the Jewish voter," said Ammiel Hirsch, senior rabbi of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

"Perhaps there is a certain amount of distress that they have to choose between the two," Rabbi Hirsch said, "because they are both enormously appealing to the Jewish community."

Sid Davidoff, a lobbyist who has been involved in New York government and politics since the 1960s, said: "I think there is going to be a split between established older voters in the Jewish community, with whom Hillary will do well, and younger and more liberal Jews who see Obama as an agent of change."

Although it might be expected that Senator Clinton will win the support of more voters, including Jewish voters, in the state she represents, even the slightest shift in Jewish support is a subject of interest.

For example, some local blogs claimed recently that City Councilman Simcha Felder of Brooklyn, an Orthodox Jew, had switched his support from Senator Clinton to Senator Obama, of Illinois. According to Eric Kuo, a spokesman for the councilman, Mr. Felder has not campaigned for either candidate but said, during a radio program on Tuesday night, that he would be voting for Senator Obama.

An important reason for such intense scrutiny is that "the Jewish community tends to vote, and make contributions, far in excess of its proportion of the population," said Gary Rosenblatt, editor and publisher of Jewish Week, the nation's largest Jewish weekly.

For Jewish Voters in New York , 'Almost an Embarrassment of Riches'

Exit polls from the 2006 New York governor's race showed 87 percent of the Jewish population voting Democratic and 12 percent voting Republican; in the 2004 election, exit polls indicated about 8 percent of the New York State vote was Jewish.

Fully 83 percent of voting-age Jews were registered to vote -- about 863,000 people -- in New York City and Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester Counties, according to a report done in 2002 by the UJA-Federation of New York, a Jewish charity.

Not everyone is being swept away by the primary deadline, of course.

"Generally speaking, I am suspicious of all politicians on the Jewish issue," said Marvin Kitman, a media critic for the Web site The Huffington Post. "With friends like them we don't need enemies. The basic question we of the Hebrew persuasion tend to ask on all issues, whether it is the Giants in the Super Bowl, or Amy Winehouse, or global warming, is: Is it good or bad for the Jews?"

On Monday, trying to make it clear that he was good for the Jews, Senator Obama answered questions from reporters at Jewish news outlets in a conference call. His aim was to counter concerns about his positions like his hope for a dialogue with Iran; he said that Iranian access to nuclear weapons would pose a threat to Israeli and United States interests. He added that he had long spoken against anti-Semitism and had always denounced the views of Louis Farrakhan, the black nationalist minister.

In the Senate, Mr. Obama backed Israel during its 2006 war with Hezbollah in Lebanon, and in the conference call he said that Palestinians must restrain terrorist activity and violent anti-Israel actions before Israel made concessions.

Both senators "are supportive of Israel, and few question that," said Rabbi Steve Gutow, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, a nonprofit group that promotes consensus among Jewish groups and oversees the Israel Advocacy Initiative, which tries to communicate pro-Israel views.

The American Jewish Committee and other Jewish groups have criticized an e-mail campaign that made false claims that Senator Obama was, among other things, disguising a devotion to the Muslim religion. (He is a Christian who has attended Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago since the 1980s.)

"I think Obama has dealt effectively with those rumors that he is really a secret agent," said Mr. Rosenblatt, of Jewish Week.

And Rabbi Hirsch said that "most Jews are too sophisticated to fall for that garbage" and added, "It's almost embarrassing that there would be an attempt to sway us in that manner."

Mrs. Clinton was harshly criticized by some Jewish leaders and others over an episode in 1999, when her husband was president. She attended an event in Ramallah on the West Bank at which the wife of Yasir Arafat, Suha Arafat, accused Israel of poisoning Palestinian women and children with toxic gases. Mrs. Clinton listened with obvious discomfort but left politely, giving Mrs. Arafat a kiss.

Mrs. Arafat's remarks were denounced by Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel, and in New York, Mrs. Clinton was criticized in newspaper editorials and by several groups for her silence and the kiss. Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, then a possible Senate candidate, sharply attacked her. But last week, Mr. Koch said, "I don't think the Suha issue has any resonance anymore."

Both senators are still looking for endorsements and hoping that the ones they have will influence Tuesday's vote.

Aside from Mr. Koch, prominent Jewish politicians supporting Mrs. Clinton include New York's other senator, Charles E. Schumer; Senator Dianne Feinstein of California; and Representatives Gary L. Ackerman of Queens, Eliot L. Engel of the Bronx, Jerrold L. Nadler of Manhattan and Anthony D. Weiner of Queens and Brooklyn.

For Jewish Voters in New York , 'Almost an Embarrassment of Riches'

Among Senator Obama's Jewish supporters are several members of Congress: Representatives Steven R. Rothman of New Jersey, Adam B. Schiff of California, Jan Schakowsky of Illinois and Robert Wexler of Florida.

In the American Jewish Committee's national Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, 70 percent of Jewish Democrats said they had a favorable opinion of Senator Clinton, compared with 45 percent for Senator Obama. The survey, a telephone poll conducted in November, involved 1,000 respondents who said they were Jewish; its margin of sampling error was plus or minus 3 percentage points.

That suggests that a victory for Senator Obama on Tuesday among Jewish voters in New York would be remarkable. "In the Chicago community, Jewish voters know Obama well and like him," said Malcolm I. Hoenlein, vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, an umbrella organization. "But in New York, Jewish voters don't know him well."

Still, observers were unready last week to anoint Senator Clinton. "I think that the Jewish vote is supporting Hillary at this point," Mr. Davidoff said. "But Obama has the buzz. And with the primary less than a week away, this is very volatile."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

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Meade students tackle homeland security issues

The Capital (Annapolis, MD)

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Byline: JOSHUA STEWART Staff Writer

Body

It's a little after 7 a.m. and 14-year-old Matthew Thomas is sitting at a beige desk, trying to "climb inside" the mind of a **female** suicide bomber.

"I can't believe it, that people would do such a thing. I, I, I just ... "

"People do strange things," his classmate Mike Vietor said.

"I wonder if people ever thought about that, if God created them just to do that," Matthew responded.

It was first period on a Friday at Meade High School and Mike, Matt and 14 classmates were in Tina Edler's Homeland Security Explorations class, a part of the Homeland Security Signature Program that is new to the school this year.

For 86 minutes every other day they learn about numerous homeland security topics, including Kalashnikov assault rifles, as well as Delaware Sen. Joe Biden's reference to **Hezbollah** and Hamas in the vice presidential debate the day before.

They discuss rocket-propelled grenades, the Aryan Nation and Al Qaeda in Iraq in lessons pulled more from national newspapers than textbooks, among other issues.

"It's kind of like another history class, but with different subjects, like terrorists," said student Justen Hobdy.

While the homeland security industry is nothing new to the area - Fort George G. Meade is the state's largest employer, and a litany of defense contractors speckle the region - this class has witnessed the significance of the field; they were about 7 years old during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"These are things that are happening now, in their lifetime," Ms. Edler said.

The students in the program are now freshmen, and they're guinea pigs of sorts. They're the first class to experience the program.

Matthew said that, in comparison to other classes, his homeland security class is more in-depth. It has a narrower focus than others, giving the chance to take a more thorough look at the subject.

Meade students tackle homeland security issues

In a school of 2,250 students, about 80 students have enrolled in a homeland security course. Eight of the roughly 100 members of the faculty and staff are involved and the interest of those who work at the school seems to be growing.

This year there are only courses for freshmen, but as those students become sophomores, new courses will be added.

Any students can choose to enroll or leave the program - both classes and homeland security clubs. So any students in the school can be a part of the program if they want, said William Sheppard, the administrator who runs it.

The signature program, the first in the county and one of a few related to homeland security in the country, is designed as a first step to a career in myriad jobs devoted to protecting the country - jobs that some of the state's largest employers struggle to fill with qualified workers.

For example, such an education could lead to a position writing computer programs for the National Security Agency, located just a few miles from the school, or a job as an engineer with Northrop Grumman.

"The whole intent of the overall program is to build a workforce pipeline. (Job openings) are so numerous on the domestic front that we can't fill them now, let alone in 10 years with baby boomers retiring," said Maureen McMahon, coordinator for the county school system's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Office.

And as the country devotes more of its defense strategy to asymmetrical warfare - fighting a smaller, less-equipped, poorly-funded but particularly creative and resourceful enemy - the need for a workforce with a homeland security background increases, education and defense contractor officials said.

The need for employees who have backgrounds in homeland security is apparent as Fort Meade prepares for an influx of 22,000 new jobs on the post, many requiring advanced science degrees and analytical skills to fight terrorism.

"We talked about terrorists and them not being dumb people. They're very well-educated," Ms. Edler said.

Students at Meade High aren't learning how to find carefully concealed knives by waving hand-held metal detectors over airline passengers, or how to fill sandbags to brace for hurricanes like employees in agencies under the Department of Homeland Security. Rather, they are learning advanced physics, law and engineering, skills that are the fundamentals for college and post-graduate programs.

"When they get to 12th grade, they will be able to decide if they go to a two-year or a four-year institution," Mr. Sheppard said.

Real world practice

The teachers and administrators running the homeland security program are career-educators.

Ms. Edler doesn't come from a defense background - she's a teacher through and through. But she is in the middle of a homeland security certificate program at the University of Maryland University College and is a self-proclaimed news junkie. Mr. Sheppard is in a similar situation - he's a teacher by trade and has experience starting programs.

Simply put, a few years ago they knew nothing about homeland security.

So they brought in government agencies and defense contractors to help design the program.

"If an educator does it, you may get one product that may be adequate, but it might not reflect the true needs of the community," said retired Col. Kenneth O. McCreedy, the former installation commander of Fort Meade who helped bring the program to the school.

Meade students tackle homeland security issues

"What also attracted me was this notion of community involvement in the creation of the curriculum and the community being invested and having a stake in the output," he said.

When the program was first announced, about 200 organizations swarmed to the school to become involved. But that number started to dwindle.

Today there are about 20 companies or government agencies working alongside the school. But slowly, more groups are starting to return as the school year progresses, Mr. Sheppard said.

Northrop Grumman is one of the companies involved. And like many other defense contractors, it is struggling to fill job openings with qualified candidates, said Ted Imes, who worked for 29 years as an electrical engineer and is now director of community and education outreach.

"It's a national problem that there aren't a lot of kids going into the engineering field. This is a long pipeline problem," he said.

The homeland security program piques students' interest in the subject and helps prepare students for the college-level courses they need before his company hires them, Mr. Imes said.

"It's not a specific skill, and the skills at the homeland security program are one of many and a prerequisite for the skills you need here."

For the program, some aspects of the homeland security field are incorporated into humanities and science classes.

For example, a science class has students simulate a biological weapon attack, plan how they would respond and anticipate how a deadly substance would spread and cause damage. Lessons focus on foreign and local concerns.

In one lesson plan, students evaluate the differences between Israeli and American airport security. In another lesson, "What Happened When Baltimore Burned, Hon?" the focus is on the 1904 blaze that leveled parts of the city.

And an English lesson has students figure out which warfare principles the Trojans used against the Greeks would be effective today, as described in "The Odyssey."

"There are connections. Sometimes you have to dig for them, but they're there," Ms. Edler said.

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THE END OF JIHAD

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Byline: By PATRICK COCKBURN

PATRICK COCKBURN, A FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT FOR THE INDEPENDENT OF LONDON, IS THE AUTHOR OF "THE OCCUPATION: WAR AND RESISTANCE IN IRAQ."

Body

DREAMS AND SHADOWS

The Future of the Middle East.

By Robin Wright.

464 pp. The Penguin Press. \$26.95.

When the United States invaded Iraq and overthrew Saddam Hussein in 2003 it destabilized the whole Middle East. The American military had taken over the one Arab state with plenty of oil and a large population. Washington threatened to overthrow the governments of Iran and Syria. The first Shiite government to hold power in the Arab world in 800 years was soon installed in Baghdad. The entire region was engulfed by a tidal wave of anti-Americanism.

The reaction to the invasion in the wider Middle East should have led to a greater focus on what Egyptians, Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and Iranians were thinking. Long established autocratic regimes were discredited, less by any shining example of democracy being established in Baghdad than by their own inability to cope with the crisis. "Arab Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses, We Spit on You" read a banner carried by protesters during a demonstration in Cairo in 2006.

Though the Middle East may be shaking under the impact of the war in Iraq, most countries have been getting less rather than more attention from Western news media and governments. Almost all the focus has been on Iraq. Newspapers and television companies strained their budgets to maintain large bureaus in Baghdad. Extraordinary events, like the victory of Hamas over Fatah in the Palestinian elections of 2006, were dutifully covered, but were overshadowed by America's ever deeper troubles in Iraq. Countries like Egypt and Morocco largely disappeared off the media map.

It is one of the chief values of "Dreams and Shadows," Robin Wright's fluent and intelligent book about the future of the Middle East, that it is not solely concerned with the war in Iraq and its consequences. In describing the

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struggles of people from Morocco to Iran to reform or replace existing regimes she draws on three decades of experience in covering the region for The Washington Post and other newspapers.

Opening on an optimistic note, Wright describes how in 1983 she stood across the street from the ruins of the United States Embassy in Beirut after more than 60 Americans had been killed by a suicide bomber. At that time, she recalls, it seemed that Islamic fundamentalists had the initiative and were shaping the future of the region. "Yet a generation later," she writes, "Islamic extremism is no longer the most important, interesting or dynamic force in the Middle East."

It would be good if this were true, but in general the stories Wright relates of brave reformers battling for human and civil rights show them as having had depressingly small influence. She claims there is "a budding culture of change" represented by "defiant judges in Cairo, rebel clerics in Tehran, satellite television station owners in Dubai, imaginative feminists in Rabat and the first female candidates in Kuwait, young techies in Jeddah, daring journalists in Beirut and Casablanca, and brave writers and businessmen in Damascus." Sadly, her own research largely contradicts this thesis. Of the many opponents of the status quo she writes about, the only ones to have achieved a measure of success are religious movements: Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank and Hezbollah in Lebanon. She does not cover Pakistan, but the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in Rawalpindi in December shows that suicide bombers retain their deadly ability to shape events.

Why have moderate reformers failed so uniformly across the Middle East? Not because of lack of courage. Wright describes how in Syria, Riad al Turk, first arrested for opposing a military government in 1952, spent almost 18 years in solitary confinement in an underground cell the length of his body. He kept himself sane by making pictures on the floor out of thousands of hard and inedible grains he had taken out of the prison soup during his years of confinement. Wright also writes of heroes and heroines in a more minor, but still impressive, key, like Noha al Zeiny, a leading official in the prosecutor's office of the Egyptian Ministry of Justice, who was so disgusted by blatant official ballot rigging in an election she was supervising that she publicly denounced it in one of the few Cairo newspapers that dared to print her testimony.

Autocratic regimes in the Middle East may be sclerotic, corrupt and detested by their own people, but they are very difficult to remove. Governments in Egypt, Syria and Libya that came to power by military coups in the distant past have learned how to protect themselves against their own armies and security forces. In each of those countries the Mubarak, Assad and Qaddafi families are establishing new political dynasties. President Hosni Mubarak, jokingly known to Egyptians as the last pharaoh, has, according to Wright, now held power longer than all but two other leaders in Egypt's 6,000-year history, and is grooming his son Gamal to replace him. Political reforms have been purely cosmetic. Osama Harb, the editor of a moderate foreign policy journal, International Affairs, denounced Egypt's supposed reform efforts as a sham but found he could not withdraw from the government's inner circle without endangering himself. "It should be easy to resign, to say no," he observed. "But not here. This is Egypt."

Just one long-established regime in the Arab world has been kicked out by voters in a closely monitored election. It happened on Jan. 25, 2006, when Hamas won a victory over Fatah, Yasir Arafat's very corrupt nationalist movement. It was the first time, Wright says, that an Arab electorate ousted an autocratic leadership in a free and fair election -- a message that resonated throughout the region. The immediate response of the international community was to boycott Hamas. "The United States is like the prince in search of Cinderella," the Hamas leader Osama Hamdan told Wright. "The Americans have the shoe, and they want to find the kind of people who fit the shoe. If the people who are elected don't fit into the American shoe, then the Americans will reject them for democracy." Fatah was encouraged by the United States, Israel and the Western Europeans to ignore the results of the election and build up its military strength. An armed clash became inevitable, leading to the takeover of Gaza by Hamas gunmen in June 2007.

Wright has long been one of the best-informed American journalists covering the Middle East, and her reputation is borne out here. She is refreshingly skeptical of conventional wisdom about what is happening in the region, and her book will be essential reading for anybody who wants to know where it is heading.

THE END OF JIHAD

She is particularly good on the moribund nature of the regimes that now hold power and know they are too unpopular to allow any open expression of popular will (though some innovations, like satellite television and the Internet, have prized open their control of information). Both the Algerian election in 1992 and the Palestinian poll in 2006 showed that the West will not accept an election won by its enemies. But since the invasion of Iraq it is difficult to imagine a fair poll having any other result.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO: EGYPTIAN RIOT POLICE CLOSED OFF VOTING STATIONS IN DISTRICTS CONTESTED BY THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER 2005. (PHOTOGRAPH BY SHAWN BALDWIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)(pg. BR8)

DRAWING (DRAWING BY JOHN GALL AND NED DREW)(pg. BR1)

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Lies, kidnapping and a mysterious laptop

The Independent (London)

July 7, 2008 Monday

First Edition

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The INDEPENDENT

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Byline: JOHANN HARI

Body

Sometimes you hear a stray sentence on the news that makes you realise you have been lied to. Deliberately lied to; systematically lied to; lied to for a purpose. If you listened closely over the past few days, you could have heard one such sentence passing in the night-time of news.

As Ingrid Betancourt emerged after six-and-a-half years - sunken and shrivelled but radiant with courage - one of the first people she thanked was Hugo Chavez. What? If you follow the news coverage, you have been told that the Venezuelan President supports the Farc thugs who have been holding her hostage. He paid them \$300m to keep killing and to buy uranium for a dirty bomb, in a rare break from dismantling democracy at home and dealing drugs. So how can this moment of dissonance be explained?

Yes: you have been lied to - about one of the most exciting and original experiments in economic redistribution and direct democracy anywhere on earth. And the reason is crude: crude oil. The ability of democracy and freedom to spread to poor countries may depend on whether we can unscramble these propaganda fictions.

Venezuela sits on one of the biggest pools of oil left anywhere. If you find yourself in this position, the rich governments of the world - the US and EU - ask one thing of you: pump the petrol and the profits our way, using our corporations. If you do that, we will whisk you up the Mall in a golden carriage, no matter what. The "King" of Saudi Arabia oversees a torturing tyranny where half the population - women - are placed under house arrest, and jihadis are pumped out by the dozen to attack us. It doesn't matter. He gives us the oil, so we hold his hand and whisper sweet crude-nothings in his ear.

It has always been the same with Venezuela - until now. Back in 1908, the US government set up its ideal Venezuelan regime: a dictator who handed the oil over fast and so freely that he didn't even bother to keep receipts, never mind ask for a cut. But in 1998 the Venezuelan people finally said "enough". They elected Hugo Chavez. The President followed their democratic demands: he increased the share of oil profits taken by the state from a pitiful one per cent to 33 per cent. He used the money to build hospitals and schools and subsidised supermarkets in the tin-and-mud shanty towns where he grew up, and where most of his countrymen still live.

Lies, kidnapping and a mysterious laptop

I can take you to any random barrio in the high hills that ring Caracas and show you the results. You will meet women like Francisca Moreno, a gap-toothed 76-year-old granny I found sitting in a tin shack, at the end of a long path across the mud made out of broken wooden planks. From her doorway she looked down on the shining white marble of Caracas's rich district. "I went blind 15 years ago because of cataracts," she explained, and in the old Venezuela people like her didn't see doctors. "I am poor," she said, "so that was that." But she voted for Chavez. A free clinic appeared two years later in her barrio, and she was taken soon after for an operation that restored her sight. "Once I was blind, but now I see!" she said, laughing.

In 2003, two distinguished Wall Street consulting firms conducted the most detailed study so far of economic change under Chavez. They found that the poorest half of the country have seen their incomes soar by 130 per cent after inflation. Today, there are 19,571 primary care doctors - an increase by a factor of 10. When Chavez came to power, just 35 per cent of Venezuelans told Latinobarometro, the Gallup of Latin America, they were happy with how their democracy worked. Today it is 59 per cent, the second-highest in the hemisphere.

For the rich world's governments - and especially for the oil companies, who pay for their political campaigns - this throws up a serious problem. We are addicted to oil. We need it. We crave it. And we want it on our terms. The last time I saw Chavez, he told me he would like to sell oil differently in the future: while poor countries should get it for \$10 a barrel, rich countries should pay much more - perhaps towards \$200. And he has said that if the rich countries keep intimidating the rest he will shift to selling to China instead. Start the sweating. But Western governments cannot simply say: "We want the oil, our corporations need the profits, so let's smash the elected leaders standing in our way." They know ordinary Americans and Europeans would gag.

So they had to invent lies. They come in waves, each one swelling as the last crashes into incredulity. First they announced Chavez was a dictator. This ignored that he came to power in a totally free and open election, the Venezuelan press remains uncensored and in total opposition to him, and he has just accepted losing a referendum to extend his term and will stand down in 2013.

When that tactic failed, the oil industry and the politicians they lubricate shifted strategy. They announced that Chavez was a supporter of Terrorism (it definitely has a capital T). The Farc is a Colombian guerrilla group that started in the 1960s as a peasant defence network, but soon the pigs began to look like farmers and they became a foul, kidnapping mafia. Where is the evidence Chavez funded them?

On 1 March, the Colombian government invaded Ecuador and blew up a Farc training camp. A few hours later, it announced it had found a pristine laptop in the rubble, and had already rummaged through the 39.5 million pages of Microsoft Word documents it contained to find cast-iron "proof" that Chavez was backing the Farc. Ingrid's sister, Astrid Betancourt, says it is plainly fake. The camp had been totally burned to pieces and the computers had clearly, she says, been "in the hands of the Colombian government for a very long time". Far from fuelling the guerrillas, Chavez has repeatedly pleaded with the Farc to disarm. He managed to negotiate the release of two high-profile hostages - hence Betancourt's swift thanks. He said: "The time of guns has passed. Guerilla warfare is history."

So what now? Now they claim he is a drug dealer, he funds Hezbollah, he is insane. Sometimes they even stumble on some of the real non-fiction reasons to criticise Chavez and use them as propaganda tools. (See our Open House blog later today for a discussion of this). As the world's oil supplies dry up, the desire to control Venezuela's pools will only increase. The US government is already funding separatist movements in Zulia province, along the border with Colombia, where Venezuela's largest oilfields lie. They hope they can break away this whiter-skinned, anti-Chavez province and then drink deep of the petrol there.

Until we break our addiction to oil, our governments will always try to snatch petro-profits away from women like Francisca Moreno. And we - oil addicts all - will be tempted to ignore the strange, dissonant sentences we sometimes hear on the news and lie, blissed-out, in the lies.

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Lies, kidnapping and a mysterious laptop

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She raised our hopes - then dashed them

The Independent (London)

November 21, 2007 Wednesday

First Edition

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The INDEPENDENT

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Byline: RUPERT CORNWELL

Body

How dazzled we once were. There stood Condoleezza Rice, newly installed Secretary of State, early in George W. Bush's second term, clad in a stunning all-black outfit, complete with knee-high boots, as she addressed a gathering of US troops in Germany. The fashion-writers had a field day, and so did the diplomatic scribes. This was the new dominatrix who would re-invigorate America's foreign policy, win back allies estranged over Iraq - and who knows what else?

The apogee came a few months later, in October 2005, when she took then Foreign Secretary Jack Straw on a visit to Birmingham, Alabama, the city that was emblem of the segregated South and where she had spent her childhood. It was billed as an informal bonding session with an important professional colleague. But when she stopped at her old school to tell pupils how anything in life was possible - even that a black woman could become Secretary of State - it felt like a warm-up for a Presidential run.

When pressed, the lady smilingly demurred, but did not reject the possibility outright. We duly fantasised about an all-**female** Condi vs Hillary match-up in 2008. And fantasy it was. Some still believe that Rice could be picked as running mate by whoever does win the Republican nomination. Three years on, America remains as unpopular in the world as ever. Its foreign policy is a mess, and at least measured by those early hopes, Condoleezza Rice has been a massive disappointment.

Her close relationship with Bush, we assumed, would return the State Department to centre stage, after the pummelling Colin Powell took from Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney. Normally, a strong bond with the President has been the hallmark of successful Secretaries of State: take Henry Kissinger under Nixon, or James Baker under Bush senior. Alas, proximity to Bush junior has been at the root of Rice's problems. "We are completely in sync," the President has told foreign visitors; "When she speaks, you know she is speaking for me." Fine, except that her boss remains the most internationally disliked President in living memory.

After three years in the job, the scoresheet for Rice is not pretty. US relations with Russia, the field in which she built her reputation as an adviser to the elder Bush, are sliding back towards a Cold War freeze. True, of late the security situation inside Iraq has started to improve, but the poison the invasion spread throughout the region is no less toxic.

She raised our hopes - then dashed them

Desperately, the US and its allies try to cope with the immense strategic victory that the toppling of Saddam Hussein handed Iran, without the mullahs having to lift a finger. In Pakistan, Washington is reaping the bitter fruits of its embrace of Pervez Musharraf. Parallels are being drawn with that earlier bad bet placed by the US, on the Shah of Iran in the 1970s - except that the stakes with nuclear-armed Pakistan are even higher.

Belatedly, Rice has come to understand that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a sideshow, but the very core of tensions in the region. Not, however, before she had initially given Israel the green light to continue its 2006 war against Hezbollah in Lebanon - which ended in moral defeat for the Jewish state - on the grounds that we were witnessing "the birth pangs of the new Middle East".

Now a flurry of diplomatic activity has led to next week's scheduled Middle East "conference" in Annapolis, Maryland. Though it seems set for next Tuesday, no date has yet been formally announced. The hotel rooms in Washington have been booked, but it is still not even clear who will attend. The Arab states, whose presence is crucial for the meeting's credibility, will only make up their mind later this week.

Normally, such events are minutely choreographed in advance. This time there is no such safety net. In recent days, expectations have been prudently lowered; everything may yet go right on the night. But a failure would be a further blow to America's prestige and clout in the region. And this time Rice would not be able to escape responsibility.

As national security adviser in Bush's first term, she was central to the planning of the war and its aftermath. Yet the public, however disillusioned, placed little of the blame upon her. In part, that was because she could not stop the feuding between Powell and the rival alliance of Cheney and Rumsfeld - even though co-ordination of security policy across government was her brief.

Her tenure now looks disastrous. According to David Kay, the weapons inspector who led the post-war hunt for Saddam's non-existent WMD, she was "probably the worst national security adviser since the office was created." In *State of Denial*, his latest and most damning book on the Iraq war, the journalist Bob Woodward records that even the first President Bush thought she "was not up to the job."

So perhaps we should not have expected better when she moved to the State Department. Proximity to the President seems also to have soured her dealings with its staff - as testified by the remarkable rebellion against the possibility of forced postings to Baghdad (and the dubious reward of being protected by Blackwater, whose cavalier violence has inflicted even more damage on the US image in Iraq).

At a staff meeting last month, the dissatisfaction exploded into public view, along with a poll of members of the Foreign Service Association, essentially the diplomats' trade union, that found that only 12 per cent of its members thought Rice was "fighting for them". The outburst reflected resentment of her reliance on a small group of loyalist aides - but also an understandable anger that the State Department - which Rice had allowed to become sidelined in the run-up to the war - was now being made to carry the can.

But the shortcomings of Rice the manager are only one part of the problem. What does she really stand for? US foreign policy has always been a blend of idealism and realism, but few have zig-zagged between the two as bafflingly. Under her mentor Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser to George Bush the elder, she was a pragmatist and a realist. But under this President Bush she became an idealist, whose "evangelical tone" shocked Scowcroft.

The high-water mark was a speech at Cairo University in that heady year of 2005, espousing the cause of liberty and noting that in the past the US had "pursued liberty at the expense of democracy - and achieved neither". Two years on, the promise of change lies in rubble. A chastened realism is back. As the Iran challenge grows, the US once more embraces undemocratic regimes in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Her outfits may still be as sharp as back when she spoke to the troops in Germany. But the dreams have long since died.

She raised our hopes - then dashed them

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Cool Islam in the entrails of post-industrial Buffalo

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

January 21, 2008 Monday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

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Body

To his credit, Michael Muhammad Knight succeeds where many of his peers have failed. Literary attempts to capture modern youth haphazardly exploring itself inhabit what was once American literature's most prolific genre - one that has been wildly overpopulated and regularly uninspiring since J.D. Salinger produced Holden Caulfield.

Review

BEIRUT: To his credit, Michael Muhammad Knight succeeds where many of his peers have failed. Literary attempts to capture modern youth haphazardly exploring itself inhabit what was once American literature's most prolific genre - one that has been wildly overpopulated and regularly uninspiring since J.D. Salinger produced Holden Caulfield.

There is a healthy dosage of sex in "The Taqwacores," Knight's debut novel. There is also quite a bit of praying, punk rock and self-loathing. These over-exercised themes and devices are made notable, in Knight's case, for one reason alone. They are framed, throughout the novel, by Islam. Not the American Islam of leftist circles and 1960s militancy but the actual five times a day religion, the emigrated faith not the imported fad.

"The Taqwacores," an enjoyable, profanity-riddled read if nothing else, places a day trip's collection of college-age Muslims in a run-down house in Buffalo, New York. Yusef Ali, the novel's everyman protagonist, is by necessity the novel's least exotic character. He is a first-generation Pakistani engineering student, from a comfortable, middle-class American Muslim family. His effort to negotiate his lineage with the exigencies of college life is the novel's measuring stick, but his roommates are its fabric.

There is Rude Dawud, the Sudanese Rasta who eventually moves to Costa Rica; Fasiq Abasa, the pot-smoking Koran-studier who spends more time than not stoned on the roof; and the Amazing Ayyub who for half the novel lives in an Evangelist shelter. There is also a girl in the house, the self-liberated Rabeya who wears a full burqa and often leads Friday prayers.

And there are the figures to whom Yusef is most drawn: Umar the tattooed, straight-edge Sunni, the house's master and its most devout inhabitant, but also the novel's most tortured character, and Jehangir, the electric-guitar playing muezzin and Yusef's idol. He is a Sufi who drinks too much, smokes too much and sleeps around.

Cool Islam in the entrails of post-industrial Buffalo

The house lives in a comfortable rhythm of contradiction. On Friday, Muslims alienated by the Muslim Students Association come to pray. On Friday night, socially alienated punk-rock enthusiasts, faithful and "kafr" alike, come to party.

Knight enjoys painting the aftermath of a party more than the party itself. Rightfully so, the period of day-after guilt lends itself better to his ends than an evening of temptation.

One Saturday morning Yusef walks downstairs and finds a kid kneeling on a pizza box, cigarette ashes on his forehead, in the middle of morning prayers. He is surrounded by passed-out party-goers, empty beer bottles and cigarette butts - Yusef slips into the kitchen to avoid being invited to take part.

This is the showcase of taqwacore, Knight's premise and the cultish Islamic punk-rock scene that his novel has since inspired (including bands such as the Kominas, Vote Hezbollah and Secret Trial Five). The author throws together a genuine fear and love of God (taqwa) and the attraction of hardcore punk so forcefully that one can't help but pay attention.

"Inevitably I reached the understanding that this word 'punk' does not mean anything tangible like 'tree' or 'car,'" writes Knight. "Rather, 'punk' is like a flag, and open symbol, it only means what people believe it means ... I stopped trying to define punk around the same time I stopped trying to define Islam ... Islam is itself a flag, an open symbol, representing not things, but ideas. You cannot hold punk or Islam in your hands."

Knight wisely chooses to forefront two of the most popularly isolated groups in American life: angry hardcore fans and Muslims. And yet, while establishing a telling pas-de-deux between the apparent opposites he never equates their broader importance. For Knight, punk rock is a way of illuminating a section of modern American Islam. Both have been commodified in their own niche; both remain foreign to a large section of the population.

In this way, Knight is building a system of faith as much as he is describing one. The novel's Islam is founded on the principles of the religion but not limited by doctrinal adherence. Umar, the most pious housemate has tattoos and kicks an animal. Rabeya inks out passages of spousal abuse in holy texts. Jehangir leads prayers on Friday afternoons and sleeps with non-Muslim women on Friday nights. The novel's characters carry the flag of Islam, but they don't follow it.

This tumult is set in the dying industrial city of Buffalo with good reason. The characters are crowded around the embers of religion, through their indiscretions taint it. But from this impiety comes innovation, however profane. This is likely the reason why Telegram Books - the London, Berkley and Beirut-based publisher - chose to censor certain passages of the book, explained by the author in a footnote on page 9.

(Knight published the first, photocopied edition of "The Taqwacores" in 2003. Autonomedia, the radical Brooklyn-based press known for titles ranging from Antonio Negri to Hakim Bey, picked up a second edition in 2004. "The Taqwacores" follows Knight's previous efforts, "Where Mullahs Fear to Tread" and "The Furious C**k").

Blasphemy tends to be powerful, particularly when at its core one finds honest faith. The characters are not good Muslims. Rabeya performs oral sex on stage and Yusef masturbates in a burqa to close the novel. But however disturbing the characters gauge their actions by individual interpretations of how Islam must be practiced so that it can coexist with the rampant democratic individualism of American life.

This is Jehangir's lesson. Jehangir, the east-coast disciple of Knight's imaginary west coast taqwacore scene, is killed in a mosh pit fight at a Muslim punk show. He is slain by the movement he believes will guide Islam into the future - he is the novel's Hussein. He shows that one can subscribe to a counterculture and a mainstream faith without strictly belonging to either - realizing the consequences of his actions aren't necessarily in his hands.

In a bit of meta-commentary, Knight seems to advocate something similar. A Catholic who converted to Islam at the age of 16, Knight is wary of establishing and delineating a "progressive" Muslim movement, of confining religious and personal exploration. In a pointed statement towards the novel's end he comes close to begging followers of unorthodox movements in Islam not to lose their individual manifestations of faith.

Cool Islam in the entrails of post-industrial Buffalo

This it seems of one of Knight's guiding principles: "There is a cool Islam out there ... You just have to find it. You have to sift through all the other stuff, but it's there."

Michael Muhammad Knight's "The Taqwacores" is published by Telegram Books.

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Chasing dreams of a new era in the Mideast

The International Herald Tribune

March 1, 2008 Saturday

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Byline: Patrick Cockburn - The New York Times Media Group

Body

Dreams and Shadows

The Future of the Middle East

By Robin Wright

464 pages. \$26.95. The Penguin Press.

Reviewed by Patrick Cockburn

*

When the United States invaded Iraq and overthrew Saddam Hussein in 2003, it destabilized the whole Middle East. The U.S. military had taken over the one Arab state with plenty of oil and a large population. Washington threatened to overthrow the governments of Iran and Syria. The first Shiite government for 800 years to hold power in the Arab world was soon installed in Baghdad. The entire region was engulfed by a tidal wave of anti-Americanism.

The reaction to the invasion in the wider Middle East should have led to a greater focus on what Egyptians, Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and Iranians were thinking. Long established autocratic regimes were discredited, less by any shining example of democracy being established in Baghdad than by their own inability to cope with the crisis. "Arab Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses, We Spit on You" read a banner carried by protesters during a demonstration in Cairo in 2006.

Though the Middle East may be shaking under the impact of the war in Iraq, most countries have been getting less rather than more attention from Western news media and governments. Almost all the focus has been on Iraq. Newspapers and television companies strained their budgets to maintain large bureaus in Baghdad. Extraordinary events, like the victory of Hamas over Fatah in the Palestinian elections of 2006, were dutifully covered, but were overshadowed by America's ever deeper troubles in Iraq. Countries like Egypt and Morocco largely disappeared off the media map.

It is one of the chief values of "Dreams and Shadows," Robin Wright's fluent and intelligent book about the future of the Middle East, that it is not solely concerned with the war in Iraq and its consequences. In describing the struggles of people from Morocco to Iran to reform or replace existing regimes, she draws on three decades of experience in covering the region for The Washington Post and other newspapers.

Chasing dreams of a new era in the Mideast

Opening on an optimistic note, Wright describes how in 1983 she stood across the street from the ruins of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut after more than 60 Americans had been killed by a suicide bomber. At that time, she recalls, it seemed that Islamic fundamentalists had the initiative and were shaping the future of the region. "Yet a generation later" she writes, "Islamic extremism is no longer the most important, interesting or dynamic force in the Middle East."

It would be good if this were true, but in general the stories Wright relates of brave reformers battling for human and civil rights show them as having had depressingly small influence. She claims there is "a budding culture of change" represented by "defiant judges in Cairo, rebel clerics in Tehran, satellite television station owners in Dubai, imaginative feminists in Rabat and the first female candidates in Kuwait, young techies in Jeddah, daring journalists in Beirut and Casablanca, and brave writers and businessmen in Damascus."

Sadly, her own research largely contradicts this thesis. Of the many opponents of the status quo she writes about, the only ones to have achieved a measure of success are religious movements: Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank and Hezbollah in Lebanon. She does not cover Pakistan, but the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in Rawalpindi in December shows that suicide bombers retain their deadly ability to shape events.

Why have moderate reformers failed so uniformly across the Middle East? Not because of lack of courage. Wright describes how in Syria, Riad al-Turk, first arrested for opposing a military government in 1952, spent almost 18 years in solitary confinement in an underground cell the length of his body. He kept himself sane by making pictures on the floor out of thousands of hard and inedible grains he had taken out of the prison soup during his years of confinement.

Wright also writes of heroes and heroines in a more minor, but still impressive, key, like Noha al-Zeiny, a leading official in the prosecutor's office of the Egyptian Ministry of Justice, who was so disgusted by blatant official ballot rigging in an election she was supervising that she publicly denounced it in one of the few Cairo newspapers that dared to print her testimony.

Autocratic regimes in the Middle East may be sclerotic, corrupt and detested by their own people, but they are very difficult to remove.

Governments in Egypt, Syria and Libya that came to power by military coups in the distant past have learned how to protect themselves against their own armies and security forces. In each of those countries, the Mubarak, Assad and Qaddafi families are establishing new political dynasties. President Hosni Mubarak, jokingly known to Egyptians as the last pharaoh, has, according to Wright, now held power longer than all but two other leaders in Egypt's 6,000-year history, and is grooming his son Gamal to replace him. Political reforms have been purely cosmetic.

Osama Harb, the editor of a moderate foreign policy journal, International Affairs, denounced Egypt's supposed reform efforts as a sham but found he could not withdraw from the government's inner circle without endangering himself. "It should be easy to resign, to say no," he observed. "But not here. This is Egypt." Just one long-established regime in the Arab world has been kicked out by voters in a closely monitored election. It happened on Jan. 25, 2006, when Hamas won a victory over Fatah, Yasser Arafat's very corrupt nationalist movement. It was the first time, Wright says, that an Arab electorate ousted an autocratic leadership in a free and fair election - a message that resonated throughout the region. The immediate response of the international community was to boycott Hamas.

"The United States is like the prince in search of Cinderella," the Hamas leader Osama Hamdan told Wright. "The Americans have the shoe, and they want to find the kind of people who fit the shoe. If the people who are elected don't fit into the American shoe, then the Americans will reject them for democracy." Fatah was encouraged by the United States, Israel and the West Europeans to ignore the results of the election and build up its military strength. An armed clash became inevitable, leading to the takeover of Gaza by Hamas gunmen in June 2007.

Chasing dreams of a new era in the Mideast

Wright has long been one of the best-informed American journalists covering the Middle East, and her reputation is borne out here. She is refreshingly skeptical of conventional wisdom about what is happening in the region, and her book will be essential reading for anybody who wants to know where it is heading.

She is particularly good on the moribund nature of the regimes that now hold power and know they are too unpopular to allow any open expression of popular will (though some innovations, like satellite television and the Internet, have prized open their control of information). Both the Algerian election in 1992 and the Palestinian poll in 2006 showed that the West will not accept an election won by its enemies. But since the invasion of Iraq, it is difficult to imagine a fair poll having any other result.

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Patrick Cockburn, a foreign correspondent for The Independent of London, is the author of "The Occupation: War and Resistance in Iraq."

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U.S. arms sales preserve Israel's edge; POLITICS: U.S. Arms Sales Preserve Israel's Edge

IPS (Latin America)

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Body

So, when Egypt gets the M60A3 and M1A1 Abrams battle tanks, Israel gets the TOW-2A and Hellfire anti-tank missiles to blow up the Egyptian vehicles -- in the event of a military confrontation between the two countries currently wedded to the 1979 Camp David peace treaty.

Likewise, when the United States grudgingly provides McDonnell Douglas F-15 fighter planes to Saudi Arabia, Israel is armed either with Sidewinder and Sparrow air-to-air missiles or Hawk and Stinger surface-to-air missiles to bring down the U.S.-supplied Saudi aircraft.

Every U.S. government has ensured that no weapons sales to Arab nations would undermine Israel's traditional 'qualitative (military) advantage' over its perceived rivals.

Last week, the administration of President George W. Bush ran true to form when it announced its decision to simultaneously sell arms both to Israel and seven Arab nations: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

The package, which is also expected to include one set of weapons to counter the other, includes equipment worth some 20 billion dollars to Saudi Arabia and five other Gulf states, plus 30 billion dollars in military assistance to Israel, and 13 billion dollars in similar grants to Egypt, mostly for purchases of U.S.-made weapons systems.

The Bush administration has justified the whopping arms sales as an attempt to militarily strengthen Israel, Egypt and the Gulf states against Iran.

But academics, peace activists and military analysts see a more sinister and commercial reason for unrestrained arms sales to a politically volatile region.

'The only 'winners' from this deal are U.S. weapons contractors,' says Dr. Natalie J. Goldring, a senior fellow with the Centre for Peace and Security Studies in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

'For the U.S. defence industry, this is Christmas in July,' she added, pointing out that the Bush administration's statements that these sales will somehow deter Iran aren't convincing.

'Past attempts to label Iran as part of the 'axis of evil' only seem to have silenced moderate voices, and spurred the Iranian government's conventional and potential nuclear weapons programmes,' Dr Goldring told IPS.

U.S. arms sales preserve Israel 's edge POLITICS: U.S. Arms Sales Preserve Israel 's Edge

In addition, she pointed out, the U.S. government's record at dissuading countries from developing nuclear weapons through military means is unblemished by success.

'Our past non-proliferation successes have been the product of political, economic, and diplomatic approaches, not military measures,' she added.

During a swing through the Middle East last week, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the proposed arms sales will also 'bolster the forces of moderation and support a broader strategy to counter the negative influences of al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Syria and Iran.'

Dr Goldring said Rice fails to effectively counter the argument that these sales are more likely to promote instability in the recipient countries because of hostility toward the United States.

Meanwhile, several U.S. Congressmen, including Roy Blunt, Jerrold Nadler and Anthony Weiner, have threatened to block the sale -- particularly to Saudi Arabia because the Saudis 'have not been a true ally in further U.S. interests in the Middle East.'

Whether they will have enough clout to deter the sale against the powerful military-industrial complex is left to be seen.

Frida Berrigan, a senior programme associate with the Arms and Security Project at the New York-based New America Foundation, predicts that the proposed sale could indeed trigger a new arms race in the region.

She said new weapon sales to Egypt and Saudi Arabia will stoke Jordan's need for new advanced weaponry. The sultanates' appetite for new fly-boy weapons is almost insatiable.

'This move seeks to repair the damage wrought in the region by the disastrous war in Iraq by throwing more fuel on the fire -- introducing more weaponry in a region already wracked by a civil-sectarian conflict that ripples outward in ever widening and devastating circles,' Berrigan told IPS.

She also said this sends exactly the wrong message to the Saudi government.

'Quid pro quos in weapons sales do not work -- witness the United States trying to shape and influence the actions of the Indonesian military regime through withholding spare parts of F-16s,' Goldring said.

But the United States is not even putting conditions on these sales and grants of military aid, she added.

Asked if it was prudent for the Bush administration to sell weapons to non-democratic regimes when it is trying to spread democracy in the region, Berrigan said that of the eight nations slated for significant increases in military aid, only one (Israel) is a full democracy.

'The law provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully,' according to the U.S. State Department's 2006 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.

In Egypt -- despite its claims of democratic elections -- the State Department found 'limitations on the right of citizens to change their government' including 'a state of emergency, in place almost continuously since 1967.'

The rest of the countries are monarchies or sultanates where -- in the words of the State Department's annual report -- there is 'no right to peacefully change the government.'

Dr Goldring of Georgetown University said this sale perpetuates the myth that the U.S. government can predict the future and say with confidence that governments will be stable for two, three, four decades.

'Yet again, the Bush administration is failing to fully take into account the long-term implications of its actions,' she said.

U.S. arms sales preserve Israel 's edge POLITICS: U.S. Arms Sales Preserve Israel 's Edge

In the Middle East, she said, the United States is largely engaged in an arms race with itself. It seeks to balance its interests in the region with ever-increasing levels of weaponry and military aid.

And the U.S. government continues to argue that arms sales will stabilise the Middle East, despite the lack of evidence to support this assertion, she added.

The administration claims that the majority of weapons it proposes to sell are defensive. But if they're actually defensive, why does this deal reportedly include constraints on the weapons' range and where they can be based? Dr Goldring asked.

Adding insult to injury, she argued, the administration is buying off Israel by increasing its military aid to more than 30 billion dollars over the course of the next decade.

Berrigan countered Rice's argument that billions in military assistance will bolster the forces of moderation in the region.

Yet the military assistance will go to countries that brutally suppress their own populations.

Berrigan said all eight nations named for the aid package, that could top 60 billion dollars over ten years, have serious problems with regards to human rights including: torture (Qatar, Egypt and Israel where reputable human rights groups allege that security forces use torture in interrogation of Palestinian detainees about 20 percent of the time); unlawful killings (Kuwait); flogging and other forms of corporal punishment (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates); killings, abuse of women including female genital mutilation (Egypt). © 2007 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

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Cool Islam in the entrails of post-industrial Buffalo

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

January 21, 2008 Monday

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THE DAILY STAR

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Body

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Review

BEIRUT: To his credit, Michael Muhammad Knight succeeds where many of his peers have failed. Literary attempts to capture modern youth haphazardly exploring itself inhabit what was once American literature's most prolific genre - one that has been wildly overpopulated and regularly uninspiring since J.D. Salinger produced Holden Caulfield.

There is a healthy dosage of sex in "The Taqwacores," Knight's debut novel. There is also quite a bit of praying, punk rock and self-loathing. These over-exercised themes and devices are made notable, in Knight's case, for one reason alone. They are framed, throughout the novel, by Islam. Not the American Islam of leftist circles and 1960s militancy but the actual five times a day religion, the emigrated faith not the imported fad.

"The Taqwacores," an enjoyable, profanity-riddled read if nothing else, places a day trip's collection of college-age Muslims in a run-down house in Buffalo, New York. Yusef Ali, the novel's everyman protagonist, is by necessity the novel's least exotic character. He is a first-generation Pakistani engineering student, from a comfortable, middle-class American Muslim family. His effort to negotiate his lineage with the exigencies of college life is the novel's measuring stick, but his roommates are its fabric.

There is Rude Dawud, the Sudanese Rasta who eventually moves to Costa Rica; Fasiq Abasa, the pot-smoking Koran-studier who spends more time than not stoned on the roof; and the Amazing Ayyub who for half the novel lives in an Evangelist shelter. There is also a girl in the house, the self-liberated Rabeya who wears a full burqa and often leads Friday prayers.

And there are the figures to whom Yusef is most drawn: Umar the tattooed, straight-edge Sunni, the house's master and its most devout inhabitant, but also the novel's most tortured character, and Jehangir, the electric-guitar playing muezzin and Yusef's idol. He is a Sufi who drinks too much, smokes too much and sleeps around.

Cool Islam in the entrails of post-industrial Buffalo

The house lives in a comfortable rhythm of contradiction. On Friday, Muslims alienated by the Muslim Students Association come to pray. On Friday night, socially alienated punk-rock enthusiasts, faithful and "kafr" alike, come to party.

Knight enjoys painting the aftermath of a party more than the party itself. Rightfully so, the period of day-after guilt lends itself better to his ends than an evening of temptation.

One Saturday morning Yusef walks downstairs and finds a kid kneeling on a pizza box, cigarette ashes on his forehead, in the middle of morning prayers. He is surrounded by passed-out party-goers, empty beer bottles and cigarette butts - Yusef slips into the kitchen to avoid being invited to take part.

This is the showcase of taqwacore, Knight's premise and the cultish Islamic punk-rock scene that his novel has since inspired (including bands such as the Kominas, Vote Hezbollah and Secret Trial Five). The author throws together a genuine fear and love of God (taqwa) and the attraction of hardcore punk so forcefully that one can't help but pay attention.

"Inevitably I reached the understanding that this word 'punk' does not mean anything tangible like 'tree' or 'car,'" writes Knight. "Rather, 'punk' is like a flag, and open symbol, it only means what people believe it means ... I stopped trying to define punk around the same time I stopped trying to define Islam ... Islam is itself a flag, an open symbol, representing not things, but ideas. You cannot hold punk or Islam in your hands."

Knight wisely chooses to forefront two of the most popularly isolated groups in American life: angry hardcore fans and Muslims. And yet, while establishing a telling pas-de-deux between the apparent opposites he never equates their broader importance. For Knight, punk rock is a way of illuminating a section of modern American Islam. Both have been commodified in their own niche; both remain foreign to a large section of the population.

In this way, Knight is building a system of faith as much as he is describing one. The novel's Islam is founded on the principles of the religion but not limited by doctrinal adherence. Umar, the most pious housemate has tattoos and kicks an animal. Rabeya inks out passages of spousal abuse in holy texts. Jehangir leads prayers on Friday afternoons and sleeps with non-Muslim women on Friday nights. The novel's characters carry the flag of Islam, but they don't follow it.

This tumult is set in the dying industrial city of Buffalo with good reason. The characters are crowded around the embers of religion, through their indiscretions taint it. But from this impiety comes innovation, however profane. This is likely the reason why Telegram Books - the London, Berkley and Beirut-based publisher - chose to censor certain passages of the book, explained by the author in a footnote on page 9.

(Knight published the first, photocopied edition of "The Taqwacores" in 2003. Autonomedia, the radical Brooklyn-based press known for titles ranging from Antonio Negri to Hakim Bey, picked up a second edition in 2004. "The Taqwacores" follows Knight's previous efforts, "Where Mullahs Fear to Tread" and "The Furious C**k").

Blasphemy tends to be powerful, particularly when at its core one finds honest faith. The characters are not good Muslims. Rabeya performs oral sex on stage and Yusef masturbates in a burqa to close the novel. But however disturbing the characters gauge their actions by individual interpretations of how Islam must be practiced so that it can coexist with the rampant democratic individualism of American life.

This is Jehangir's lesson. Jehangir, the east-coast disciple of Knight's imaginary west coast taqwacore scene, is killed in a mosh pit fight at a Muslim punk show. He is slain by the movement he believes will guide Islam into the future - he is the novel's Hussein. He shows that one can subscribe to a counterculture and a mainstream faith without strictly belonging to either - realizing the consequences of his actions aren't necessarily in his hands.

In a bit of meta-commentary, Knight seems to advocate something similar. A Catholic who converted to Islam at the age of 16, Knight is wary of establishing and delineating a "progressive" Muslim movement, of confining religious and personal exploration. In a pointed statement towards the novel's end he comes close to begging followers of unorthodox movements in Islam not to lose their individual manifestations of faith.

Cool Islam in the entrails of post-industrial Buffalo

This it seems of one of Knight's guiding principles: "There is a cool Islam out there ... You just have to find it. You have to sift through all the other stuff, but it's there."

Michael Muhammad Knight's "The Taqwacores" is published by Telegram Books.

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Brian Lenihan is a Taoiseach in waiting... if he disowns Bertie

Daily Mail (London)

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Byline: Richard Waghorne

Body

HOW ODD that Brian Cowens elevation to the Taoiseachs position should still be considered a done deal. He is the Finance Minister on whose watch the Celtic Tiger ended. He funds the public sector with such disregard for taxpayers money that he might as well shovel it off the back of a speeding train.

He is about to slap tax increases on a troubled economy, with all the blissful disdain for decades of economic history that requires. His widely admired intelligence is matched by a disconcertingly low boredom threshold for the actual business of governance.

He has had recent health trouble and even if his earthy ability to let his hair down endears him to a certain class of traditional backbencher, his almost religious aversion to tucking in his shirt and cleaning up his act repels a considerable chunk of the *female* electorate.

It is not altogether a particularly compelling job application.

Only the baffling ineptness of his Cabinet colleagues has made the ascent so smooth so far.

Strange though it is to remember now, Noel Dempsey was a contender once. Presiding over two strikes and the residue of six months of almost unmitigated incompetence at the Department of Transport, he ought to be more concerned about remaining in Cabinet rather than heading it at this stage.

Micheál Martin has dropped out of the public consciousness and is a much diminished figure than he was at the time of the authoritarian triumph of the smoking ban.

Mary Hanafins hectoring head-girl persona at the Department of Education thinly masks an alarming vacuity of purpose and she has allowed herself to be captured by the institutional agenda of her civil servants, most recently in the vote-losing move to ban parents from topping up school budgets through fees.

Dermot Aherns Department of Foreign Affairs ought to be almost gaffe-proof in a country where the policy on any international question is not to have one, but he has still managed to engineer the makings of a tragedy in the reckless deployment of Irish troops to the midst of warring, backward tribes in Chad that will be finalised this week.

Considering the contenders, it is understandable that back-benchers incline towards taking a chance on Biffo.

Yet it is remarkable that the most serious opposition to the spectre of a Cowen coronation comes from a man who was not even in Cabinet six months ago.

Brian Lenihan is a Taoiseach in waiting... if he disowns Bertie

Justice Minister Brian Lenihan has done little to advertise his presence at one of the most critical positions in Government, but he mostly has done a terrific job. He has moved cautiously and prudently, content to put quiet competence before visible busyness, though that is not for want of hard graft.

When he does move, Brian Lenihan's judgment impresses.

His willingness to entertain Fine Gael's fanciful notion of deploying soldiers on the streets was best overlooked, but it at least had the merit of recognising that policing requires more heft to tackle organised criminality of today's viciousness.

His move, in recent weeks, to allow gardaí to bug suspected criminals demonstrates a willingness to find alternatives to unsustainable funding increases as a way of sharpening police performance. The modesty of its announcement and subsequent coverage strongly suggests a minister more concerned with getting on with the job than with getting headlines.

Most importantly, Brian Lenihan has amply displayed the first of the political virtues: courage.

It should not take a particularly thick skin to decree that multiculturalism will not be allowed to subvert the unity and efficacy of the gardaí, but when banning turbans from the force equates in the minds of many commentators to the thin edge of a reactionary backlash, it does require a politician who puts conviction before a quiet life to see it through.

The same could be said about the almost entirely unreported decision to ban a terrorist propagandist from Hezbollah.

Michael McDowell, for all the caricatures of heavy-handed stewardship, would likely have allowed the man back into the country and did so once before.

He would also, for that matter, have acceded to turbans in the gardaí. It is a formidable achievement of his successor to get both issues right, without being pigeon-holed by the standard epithets of leftist abuse.

The quiet combination of reticence and rigour chimes fortuitously with the emerging national mood.

A safe pair of hands, an independent mind, a willingness to win fights calmly but definitively, and a commitment to the national interest over personal approval ratings are all timelessly valued attributes, but are particularly well suited to steady the ship after greed and complacency have set in.

It has been remarked by several Leinster House insiders that there is something about him that is more appealing to Fine Gael voters than the average Fianna Fáil minister ordinarily is.

Expect that contention to be thrashed out in private polling in the months to come, should the middle classes wake up to the coming Cowen terror in time and start to bleat about rising taxes before it is too late.

Yet apart from Brian Lenihan's inexperience, which is not his fault as he was denied deserved promotions on several occasions by Bertie Ahern, two unhappy tendencies have emerged that sully his emerging, undeclared challenge.

The first is a dangerous habit of announcing policies for the consumption of a certain audience, taking the applause, and then ditching the idea entirely.

When that Fine Gael proposal to deploy troops against gangsters was mooted, Minister Lenihan promised a formal review. Where is it?

When more than 100 Roma illegally set up camp on a roundabout on the M50 and it was alleged that the State-funded Pavee Point group encouraged them to remain in Ireland in defiance of the law and the Government that pays its considerable wages, Brian Lenihan used appropriately strong language to announce an investigation.

Brian Lenihan is a Taoiseach in waiting... if he disowns Bertie

Four months on, not only has it not been, but the Irish Daily Mail learned last week that he never even lifted the phone to instigate it.

But the most dangerous trend is the latest the willingness to go to considerable lengths to intimidate the Mahon Tribunal on behalf of an increasingly isolated and discredited Taoiseach.

Just this weekend, in promoting the Governments Tribunal Bill, Lenihan remarked that it would not be used against the Mahon Tribunal unless there were cause to do so. Already the noise towards Judge Mahons team in the weeks before the Taoiseach takes the stand again has been deeply improper.

For the Justice Minister to place a legislative sword of Damocles over its work as it homes in on the last, rickety excuses for highly questionable secret cash payments is perilously close to an abuse of office.

There is coming a point when a fundamental rupture will be needed. The approach to economic management that Cowen has championed is sinking growth and mortgaging future prosperity to pay for public sector wages and pensions. The culture of secrecy and insider deals in Fianna Fáil is increasingly nauseating to an increasingly large number of people.

Brian Lenihans quiet competence and understated conviction could rescue his party and his Government from both, but he must be prepared in the months to come to face down the worst instincts of his Cabinet colleagues to earn his right to the challenge.

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We are losing this war

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All-round Country Edition

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Byline: GREG SHERIDAN FOREIGN EDITOR

Body

Liberal states such as Australia don't have the mechanisms we need to confront this threat

THE thwarted terror attacks in London and Glasgow show us just how poorly we are doing in the war on terror. The salient fact about these attacks is that six years after 9/11, after all the relentless efforts every moderate has allegedly made to condemn extremism and violence, the hate-filled and murderous ideology of al-Qa'ida is able to recruit even doctors to its cause.

Britain was lucky that the detonators did not go off in the London cars. This has allowed commentators to adopt an almost mocking tone about the amateurism of the terrorists. The armchair critics, ever ready to accuse Western governments of overreacting, have slipped into their customary voice of supercilious condescension.

But had the detonators gone off, and hundreds of young British women been killed in the nightclubs targeted, the talk today would be of how sophisticated the plot was. The line between amateurism and sophistication is very narrow.

But the real point is something different. It is the protean nature of contemporary Islamist terrorism. This is a sublimely fluid and adaptable movement. In Iraq and Lebanon it is sponsored by a state, Iran. In Saudi Arabia it is entirely home grown. As it is in Indonesia, the southern Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan, now terror central.

In the West it can draw in home-grown young men of Islamic background whose ethnic make-up provides some confusion of identity, as with the London Tube bombers.

But it can recruit Westerners of Anglo-Saxon background, such as Jack Roche or David Hicks. Or, apparently, it can draw in highly educated Muslim professionals from Muslim countries, such as the doctors allegedly at the centre of the British plot, or Mohammed Atta and the other 9/11 hijackers.

How can it do this? The answer is obvious and utterly resisted by most commentators. The terrorist movement represents a powerful, coherent ideology with an appeal to millions of people across the world.

As the Arab encounter with modernisation has proved such a dismal failure, the only ideology left standing in the Arab world is Islamism of one kind or another. The key ideological figure in the development of modern Islamism is Sayyid Qutb, who was the intellectual leader of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the fountainhead fundamentalist organisation, in the middle of the 20th century.

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Central to Qutb's development was a trip he took to the US in 1948, on which he completed a postgraduate degree. He was wildly disturbed by the sexual licentiousness of the US. He described American churches as "entertainment centres and sexual playgrounds".

Is it so astonishing that the London doctors wanted to attack a nightclub on ladies' night? Is this really the result of Iraq?

An authentically gifted writer, Qutb is the Marx and the Lenin of modern Islamist fundamentalism. Understanding that the enemy is an ideology, not a sociological dysfunction, is central to beating it. You beat an ideology with military force where necessary, relentless police work, cogent argument and good education. The question, though, is whether the liberal state really has the ability to answer the challenges al-Qa'ida and similar ideological movements pose.

The British security authorities are at absolute maximum effort. They are flat out all the time.

Yet they apparently did not know these bombers at all.

It seems that it is harder, after all, to learn bomb-making on the internet than at a training camp, for which much thanks. But do we really think this adaptable, clever movement will be stopped permanently by this inconvenience? Might not the next group of doctors recruited to the al-Qa'ida cause decide they can do more by attacking a water supply, blowing up a hospital or using biological agents?

There is another particular problem that liberal societies face in responding to the terrorist movements. There is a large overlap between the Muslim Brotherhood-Sayyid Qutb-al-Qa'ida world view and the world view of Wahhabi and other extreme but non-violent Islamic movements.

Wahhabism is the literalist, fundamentalist style of Sunni Islam favoured in Saudi Arabia.

The Australian revealed some weeks ago that the Saudi embassy and other Saudi sources were still funding many Wahhabi groups and individuals within Australia and that an agreement the Saudis had made with Canberra to tell the Australian Government what it was doing was so full of loopholes as to be meaningless.

Australia's national security establishment knows that it has no idea how much Saudi money there is sloshing around Australia.

It is not illegal to be a Wahhabi Muslim. As Paul Berman, the brilliantly insightful author of *Terror and Liberalism*, has argued: "Al-Qa'ida upholds a paranoid and apocalyptic world view, according to which Crusaders and Zionists have been conspiring for centuries to destroy Islam. And this world view turns out to be widely accepted in many places."

Wahhabism, while many of its adherents reject al-Qa'ida's violence, embodies the same paranoia and apocalyptic world view.

So does the extreme Islamism of Iran. Anyone who has read the speeches of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad can readily identify the "paranoid and apocalyptic world view".

Here is where it becomes hard for a liberal society. One of the most influential leaders of Shia Islam in Australia told The Australian that his community overwhelmingly supported **Hezbollah**, though he was opposed to violence in Australia.

An important Sunni Muslim figure, Mustapha Kara-Ali, a former member of John Howard's Islamic advisory board, who received \$200,000 from the Immigration Department to research the subject, believes 2000 to 3000 young Muslims in Sydney alone stand on the brink of radicalisation, which he defines as "[acting] on your extremist teachings".

We are losing this war

These figures are automatically dismissed by commentators, but perhaps this man is not a complete idiot. Perhaps he is telling the truth.

Here is another dilemma. In 2005-06 we took 6500 immigrants from the Middle East, 5000 from North Africa, 2000 from Pakistan and Bangladesh, 2700 from Central Asia and 10,000 from sub-Saharan Africa, about half from mainly Muslim countries. That means probably 20,000 Muslims. They are all absolutely welcome if they want to live according to the basic compacts of Western liberal societies. I have campaigned all my life for non-discriminatory immigration.

But statistically it's likely that, say, 10 per cent will be attracted to Wahhabi-style Islam or Iranian clericalism, or some other version of extremism. That doesn't make them terrorists but it means there is a big hinterland of the terrorist precursor, the same soup of the "paranoid and apocalyptic world view" from which it is a short step to active support of al-Qa'ida style activities.

How does a liberal society reconcile the contradiction between its liberalism and its national security?

Senior figures in our national security establishment believe we are drifting into a situation like London, in which our security agencies simply cannot cope. And all the while the capabilities of terrorists are growing. I have no answers to these dilemmas, but it is foolish to think our enemies are not doing very well indeed.

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Ivory tower chutzpah

University Wire

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Body

Here's a thought experiment. Try it on some friends today, preferably your less intelligent ones. Inform them that of the 6.6 billion people in the world, there are 2.1 billion Christians, 1.3 billion Muslims, 900 million Hindus and 350 million Buddhists. Then ask them to guesstimate the number of Jews.

The answers I get (from Cornell students) usually range from 100 to 500 million, sometimes higher. The real number, of course, is orders of magnitude lower - somewhere in the neighborhood of 13 million, or .2 percent of the world's population - though even I sometimes have trouble believing it.

That people overshoot the mark on this one is understandable. Jews have always been disproportionately visible in the world (winning at least 1/5 of Nobel Prizes, for example), and thus many fall prey to the illusion that Jews are more numerous and powerful than in reality. In America, home to the largest Jewish population outside Israel, the illusion is particularly acute. Among American academics, who find themselves surrounded by Jewish colleagues, it's unavoidable.

Consider the new book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, by Harvard's Stephen Walt and UChicago's John Mearsheimer (W&M), based on an article of the same name that the duo published last year in the *London Review of Books*. The book and the original article, which better resembles a college term paper, allege a loose cabal of Zionist organizations and individuals that has somehow managed to hijack American foreign policy to Israel's exclusive benefit (and America's sole detriment) for four decades without anybody noticing (except, of course, the perceptive authors).

W&M's chain of reasoning goes something as follows: Surely nobody but the most ardent Zionist is convinced by the bogus moral and strategic arguments for America to support Israel; thus, most professed supporters of the Jewish state must be either willing or unwilling dupes of the Israel lobby - how else to explain American backing of this racist colonialist apartheid Nazi state? (If you, dear reader, aren't Jewish and yet support Israel, W&M are talking about you. You fool.)

As always, there's a grain of truth in every lie, and this one is no different. Jews are active and successful players in the realm of American politics (as they are in pretty much every realm but sports). And Jews in America tend to pay special attention to Israel - just as blacks do to racism, Latinos to immigration, women to abortion, senior citizens to social security and gays to same-sex marriage. (The only difference, according to polls, is that Jewish Americans seem to care less about "their" issue than the other groups do about theirs.)

Ivory tower chutzpah

Each of these demographics (or at least the majority thereof) leverages whatever resources it has, be that in money or votes, to steer American policy in its direction. For many women, it means lobbying their senators to vote against bills (and Supreme Court justices) that threaten a woman's right to choose; for many Latinos, it means showing up at rallies calling for the legalization of undocumented workers from Latin America; for many blacks, it means voting for candidates who support affirmative action. And for many Jews, it means doing all of the above to preserve and strengthen America's relationship with the Jewish state. Nothing remarkable about any of it -- just democracy at work.

Nobody writes academic papers and hardcover books about the "black lobby" or the "gay lobby" and expects to be taken seriously. But W&M consider the Jewish lobby alone worthy of such scrutiny. Their prime target: The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

AIPAC, for the uninitiated, is the primary pro-Israel organization in America. In terms of political muscle, it's in the same league as the AARP, the NRA and the AFL-CIO. But it's not somehow unique among those and other interest groups, as W&M insinuate. While its policy objectives are different from the AARP's or the NRA's, its tactics are not. Read the following paragraph from W&M's paper and, for fun, mentally substitute "Planned Parenthood" for "AIPAC" and "choice" for "Israel."

Cue ominous music:

"AIPAC's success is due to its ability to reward legislators and congressional candidates who support its agenda and to punish those who challenge it. Money is critical to U.S. elections (as the recent scandal over lobbyist Jack Abramoff's various shady dealings reminds us), and AIPAC makes sure that its friends get financial support from the myriad pro-Israel political action committees. Those seen as hostile to Israel, on the other hand, can be sure that AIPAC will direct campaign contributions to their political opponents. AIPAC also organizes letter-writing campaigns and encourages newspaper editors to endorse pro-Israel candidates."

Groundbreaking scholarship, indeed. What's more noteworthy: the fact that AIPAC organizes letter-writing campaigns, encourages newspaper editors to endorse pro-Israel candidates and directs money to opponents of those hostile to Israel, or the fact that W&M actually find this noteworthy?

Alan Dershowitz said it best in *The Case for Israel*:

"A good working definition of anti-Semitism is taking a trait or an action that is widespread and blaming only the Jews for it. That is what Hitler and Stalin did, and that is what former Harvard University president A. Lawrence Lowell did in the 1920s when he tried to limit the number of Jews admitted to Harvard because 'Jews cheat.' When a distinguished alumnus objected on the grounds that non-Jews also cheat, Lowell replied, 'You're changing the subject. I'm talking about Jews.'"

W&M aren't just talking about Jews, to be sure. The lobby, they note, includes many Christian evangelicals and other non-Jewish supporters of Israel. They also implicate a vast network of supposedly pro-Israel accomplices, such as the Brookings Institution and The New York Times (to the editorial board's surprise, I'm sure).

And W&M are also correct that the overwhelming majority of elected officials across America (save Berkeley, Dearborn and Ithaca) would identify themselves at some level as pro-Israel. That is, they support Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and to defend itself from terrorist organizations (i.e. Hamas, Hezbollah) and rogue nations (i.e. Iran, Syria). Some may disagree with this or that Israeli policy, but still believe at the end of the day that for America to ally itself with the only democracy in the Middle East is in line with both its interests and values.

One need not imagine the invisible hand of some nefarious lobby to account for that. Most congressmen are pro-Israel because most Americans are pro-Israel. According to a recent Gallup poll, 63 percent of Americans view Israel favorably, making the country more popular than Barack Obama, Rudy Giuliani or any other American politician. And that support cuts across party lines.

No conspiracy here. Just democracy.

Ivory tower chutzpah

And in this democracy, W&M are free to publish whatever they please, no matter how vile or unfounded. Such is their prerogative under the first amendment, as they're apt to remind us. It takes real chutzpah to begrudge others for exercising the same rights.

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Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Annapolis, Maryland; MIDEAST: High Stakes for Annapolis Peace Meet

IPS (Latin America)

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Body

But many critics fear that the hastily thrown-together meeting has greater inherent risks than the participants are willing to acknowledge.

'The failure of this gathering, which will be the last effort of [the Bush] administration on this issue, will have serious consequences,' said Rita Hauser, the former head of Bush's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board and the current chair of the International Peace Academy, at a think-tank conference about the upcoming meetings.

Citing the start of heavy violence associated with the Second Intifada -- touched off after the failure of then-president Bill Clinton's 2000 Camp David summit -- many fear that the collapse of the talks, or even frustration with a mere token gesture towards some progress towards peace, will reignite large-scale violence both between Israel and Palestine and within the two warring factions that split the two Palestinian territories.

Rice twice referred to the upcoming negotiations as a 'launch pad' for future negotiations in her press appearance with Mahmoud Abbas in the centre of power in the West Bank on Monday morning.

'They will define whatever happens in Annapolis -- a photo-op, statement, or kisses on both cheeks -- a success,' said Hauser. 'We in the real world will know it is a failure.'

The tentative scheduling of the conference -- planned for late November, though increasingly looking like early December, with Rice only committing to having the talks by the end of 2007 -- is emblematic of the criticisms that it is poorly organised and bound to fail.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Abbas -- also known as Abu Mazan -- will both attend the meeting, which is aimed at hashing out some of the preliminary details of agreements working towards a Palestinian state.

But both sides have already expressed concerns about the specifics of any agreement. Last week, Palestinian negotiators stated that they were seeking a timeline for the establishment of a Palestinian state, with a specific plan of implementation towards that end. That announcement prompted a response from Israeli officials that they would conduct negotiations behind closed doors and not in the press.

Israel is reported to be seeking only a vague statement that shows a joint desire of taking the initial steps towards establishing a process, rather than making concrete commitments on any of the issues that have thus far held up talks and the 'final status' agreement that would shore up the existence of a Palestinian State.

Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Annapolis , Maryland MIDEAST: High Stakes for Annapolis Peace Meet

Some analysts thought that negotiations would fail before they started when Olmert announced publicly last week that he has prostate cancer, but Olmert has reportedly spoken to both Rice and Abbas and assured them that he plans to attend the Annapolis conference before undergoing surgery.

‘Nothing will happen now between the two parties,’ Hauser said about the lack of broad-based participation in the conference by neighbouring Arab countries with considerable interest in the negotiations. ‘You have to engage the bigger picture.’

Not one of neighbouring Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt are scheduled to attend the conference. Jordan, Syria and Lebanon host a combined 2.5 million Palestinian refugees for which the ‘right-of-return’ to a future Palestinian state has been a major point of contention between the two central negotiating parties.

‘You can't disaggregate these problems anymore,’ said Hauser, also citing the recent mysterious Israel Defence Forces incursion into Syria and last summer's war between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah faction.

Another notable player that was not invited by the U.S. is the Islamic movement Hamas. Deemed a terrorist organisation by the U.S. and others, the group's political wing gained power in January 2006 elections, but took up arms against Abbas' Fatah faction after a period of heightened tensions culminated in failure to reach an agreement for shared power.

The resulting conflict between the two factions culminated in June when Hamas used force to seize control of the Gaza Strip, effectively dividing the Palestinian Authority in two, with Hamas controlling Gaza and Fatah the West Bank.

Keeping Hamas away from the table only to have the talks fail could result in increased support for Hamas, as Abbas' conciliatory theme will have again failed to bear any significant fruit.

‘If it collapses, the biggest loser will be Abu Mazan and Fatah,’ said Paul Scham, an adjunct scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington and the former director of research at the Truman Institute for Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. ‘They put forward a moderate agenda to gain concessions from Israel and the U.S. Hamas can then say that Israel is not going to give anything up through negotiations.’

Scham was cautious to say that Hamas is still ‘bottled up in Gaza’, and that a failure to hash out many of the specifics of a final status will not necessarily result in killing, observing that the situation is vastly different from 2000.

A group of women from both Israel and Palestine who had gathered at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, a Washington policy think tank, for a meeting about the upcoming summit also refrained from criticising the negotiations before they see what the results are.

This group and Scham both feel that although Olmert and Abbas are too politically weak to make serious concessions, and Bush is entering the lame duck stage of his presidency, there can still be a positive outcome based on the rekindling of a peace process that has been largely stalled for the past seven years.

‘It is easy to be cynical and say it's not going to work,’ said Palestinian women's activist Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas, ‘There are great risks, but there are also opportunities.’

Shamas lamented the international community's isolation of Hamas and said, ‘Hamas is starting to have a split in their ranks -- the pragmatists versus the ideologues.’ This split could prompt Hamas to acknowledge Israel and open the door to negotiations.

Asked by IPS if she felt that it could be beneficial to wait to organise a conference at a later time when some of the shortcomings of Annapolis can be better dealt with, she said, ‘I am losing my society. Any colonial group in control will first break down the social connections. These are classic colonial tactics. We can't sit on the sideline anymore. If the talks collapse we have to go back to square one.’

Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Annapolis , Maryland MIDEAST: High Stakes for Annapolis Peace Meet

“We are looking at a one or one-and-a-half year window before the two-state solution falls by the wayside,” said Naomi Chazan, an Israeli professor and former deputy speaker of the Knesset. “This is not a time for pessimist or optimist. This is not a time to wallow in disbelief. This is a time to suspend disbelief.” © 2007 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

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Coming through the shells

The Jerusalem Post

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Byline: LARRY DERFNER

Highlight: Over 3,000 IDF veterans have been recognized by the Defense Ministry as sufferers from chronic combat stress, but the actual number is unknown because many victims live in their nightmares without seeking treatment. We spoke with a few who did. Thanks to Koby Yitzhak, head of the Tel Aviv branch of the Disabled IDF Veterans Organization, for facilitating most of the interviews for this article.

Body

Walking through Sadnat Gal, the main rehabilitation center for IDF victims of combat stress - what used to be called "shell shock" - you get an idea of the price this country has paid for a history of war. The outpatients here in a section of Tel Hashomer's Sheba Medical Center are mainly in their 50s - quiet men whose expressions, seen up close, tell you something is wrong with them.

In the lunch room, Roni Yarkoni, 53, grips the napkin holder, squeezing the napkins in and out, as he tells his story. When he gets to the especially difficult parts, he lets out a little nervous laugh through a cockeyed grin.

His memories of battle go back to the Yom Kippur War. "But I don't think any of that stayed with me," he says. His problems began with the Lebanon War. "We were going on missions into villages in 'Fatahland' every night for about four months. Once we were surrounded for 24 hours - about 100 RPGs were fired at us. I saw children burned. There were a few other situations that I really don't want to talk about - things I was forced to do that change your moral character."

One morning in 1994, he was having a cup of coffee at work on Tel Aviv's Rehov Dizengoff when a bus exploded nearby - a suicide bombing that took 22 lives. "I went down to see," he recalls, "and then I went home. I didn't leave my room again for a year and a half."

He was thrown into violent rages and paralyzing fears. "I was afraid to cross the street. I was afraid to go into open areas where there were tall buildings around - it reminded me of the cities in Lebanon where I fought. Once I went to the Tel Aviv Museum and it took me five hours to get out of there. I went from being a paratrooper to being afraid to take an elevator past the fifth floor."

His wife left him, taking his two children. Luckily, a friend gave him a form to sign to apply for psychological help from the Defense Ministry. After going through what experts in the field describe as the "Via Dolorosa" that the Defense Ministry puts combat stress victims through before recognizing their condition - Yarkoni began treatments. That was in 1998.

Today, he is in close touch with his children, but lives alone in Ramat Gan. For the last seven years, he has been spending every day at Sadnat Gal, passing the hours mainly by creating huge, colorful paintings and sculptures.

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Several of them hang in the lobby of Sheba's auditorium, others at a branch of Bank Hapoalim and at Bar-Ilan University, still others have been bought by collectors including Shari Arison, Aviv Geffen and Ofer Nimrodi. He also donates some of his works to charity auctions.

"This is really what saved me - being able to create," he says. Yarkoni could be called Sadnat Gal's showcase outpatient - the most accomplished, the most demonstrably improved. But like all the 115 outpatients here - whose psychic wounds go back as early as the Six Day War - Yarkoni stays heavily medicated. "God forbid if I fall asleep without taking my medication, I wake up in a panic," he says.

Like 90 percent of the inpatients, he suffers from insomnia. "The only good sleep I usually get is for about two hours around sundown," he says. "But this is already a part of life. You get used to living with your limitations."

People who know Yarkoni's story are often surprised at how bright and optimistic his paintings look. "I lie when I paint," he explains. "I force myself to see things that are good, comforting, sympathetic, and I paint that. I don't want to show all the poison inside me - I want to create a world that's better than the one I'm in."

OVER 3,000 IDF veterans have been recognized by the Defense Ministry as sufferers from chronic combat stress, but the actual number is unknown because many victims live with their insomnia, nightmares, bouts of rage, extreme anxiety, flashbacks and such without seeking treatment. Many others wait years, or decades, until they get help.

Psychiatric treatment can lessen the effects of combat stress, make it more "manageable." But for all except a small minority of victims, the affliction never completely goes away.

"It's as if a person's spiritual spinal cord has been severely damaged. It may take him a long time to recover, he may never recover, but the thing is to try to hold him up," says Dr. Michael Polliack, head of Sheba's treatment clinic for post-traumatic stress syndrome. (PTSD may develop in someone exposed to life-threatening danger and violence, but in about 80% of such cases, the symptoms disappear shortly. If they persist, however, over the course of several months, the condition becomes chronic and usually requires indefinite treatment. PTSD that results from war experience is called combat stress.)

As for the best approach to treating battle stress, Polliack says there is "no consensus" among psychiatrists. There are several new methods, including "prolonged exposure," which seeks to desensitize the patient to the traumatic incident, and EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing), which aims to drive away debilitating memories.

Dr. Rakefet Rodriguez, a psychiatrist at Be'er Ya'acov Hospital, says experiments are being conducted with psychedelic drugs; she and her colleagues are administering the drug Ecstasy to combat stress victims in psychotherapy.

Michael Hershkowitz, an activist on behalf of combat stress sufferers who developed the malady after the horrific Chinese Farm battle of the Yom Kippur War, says, "Prozac is the mildest medication I've taken."

Not too surprisingly, Israel is a world leader in the treatment of combat stress, says Polliack. Since the Second Lebanon War, he says, the military has been trying to "catch" the disease early by keeping tabs on that war's fighters. But this is no guarantee of prevention. I ask Polliack if even immediate psychological treatment on the battlefield for combat stress victims could prevent the disease from becoming chronic, and he replies, "Not necessarily. We're not even sure about the best Emergency Room treatment for trauma victims. In some cases, the best thing to do for battle stress may be to just leave them alone for awhile and make sure they have a lot of family and friends for support." In some cases, psychotherapy not only doesn't help, it hurts.

"Without question, I was doing better before I started seeing a psychiatrist," says Hershkowitz. "I suffered, sure, but it came and went, it wasn't so close to the surface like it is now, I could push it down, it wasn't in front of me. I could work full-time. Now, since I started bringing up all those memories, it's with me all day. I can't work anymore."

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"But on the other hand," he adds, "I don't know what would have happened by now if I didn't start seeing a psychiatrist. Maybe sooner or later I would have exploded. You can't know."

HERSHKOWITZ, 56, was recognized by the Defense Ministry for combat stress and began seeing a psychiatrist in 2000 - for a disability that dates back at least to the Yom Kippur War, but which, in his opinion, really began a year earlier in the army, then was worsened by his experiences in some of the most savage fighting of the October 1973 war - the battle at the Chinese Farm.

Since coming to grips with his problem, he has written a book, *A Broken Mirror*, about his struggle with combat stress, and has founded an organization, Matzdi'im (We Salute), on behalf of sufferers like himself.

Sitting one evening at the kitchen table of his Rosh Ha'ayin home, Hershkowitz says he came from a "fighting family" - his father was an Irgun man who fought the IDF during the battle over the Altalena arms ship. After reading heroic stories about tank battles in the Six Day War, he enlisted as an IDF tank driver. But about two years after he joined the army, he was stripped of his rank for what he considered a negligible infraction at worst.

"In a room on the base in front of all the officers," he says, "the commander took scissors and cut off my stripes."

Afterward, Hershkowitz went back to his room and shot himself in the side; he pulls up his shirt to show the scars from the bullet's entry and exit. Eventually he was released from the army with a low medical profile. But a few months later the Yom Kippur War broke out and he wheedled an IDF medical panel into raising his profile back to combat-ready level. In the near anarchy of those first days of the war, he joined up with a tank unit going into the Sinai.

"For me it was a suicide mission," he says. "I wanted to come back in a plastic bag as a way of getting back at that commander who humiliated me."

He ended up at the Chinese Farm. "It was a killing ground," he says. "On one side was hills, on the other side was the Suez Canal, and we were on the plateau in the middle, fully exposed."

While describing the battle, Hershkowitz's gaze becomes distant, his words are broken by long silences, his face contorts, and shivers run through him.

"The Egyptians started firing missiles at us. There were two Egyptians with Kalachnikovs shooting at us - I ran them over. The Egyptians were firing [rifles] from 20 meters away. We got out of the tank and ran for cover with the paratroopers. We were hiding in the irrigation ditches... They were shelling us for seven, eight hours... There were missiles falling all around."

Hershkowitz cries quietly, but gathers himself together and continues. "We called for help. Help came in the afternoon. I saw paratroopers wandering around barefoot, their uniforms were in shreds. We were the last to be rescued."

Later, on a winter night at a base back in Israel, he first realized something was wrong when a crash of thunder sent him diving to the ground, scurrying for cover. From then on, sudden loud noises would jolt him back to the Chinese Farm. Once, while giving a talk about the battle, he broke down completely. He became manic-depressive, and his business fortunes reflected his moods - from boom to bust.

Hershkowitz says he's luckier than most combat stress victims in that his wife and three children have stuck close by him through the unending ordeal. His daughter became an IDF tank instructor and she's now studying to become a psychologist to treat veterans like her father. I ask him if this compensates somewhat for his suffering, if he's able to take some satisfaction from his family's devotion. Hershkowitz sort of shrugs. He says he doesn't have the emotional capacity. "I can smile, but it's fake. Since the army, I've basically stopped living."

ON HIS WAY into the Sadnat Gal rehab center, Gabi Kait, who deals with combat stress sufferers for the Disabled IDF Veterans Organization, exchanges a few words of survivor's humor with every outpatient he passes. He hugs

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one of the two women at the center - ex-policewomen who developed combat stress from dealing with intifada terror attacks.

"How am I?" the woman says. "I got out of bed this morning, so I guess I'm all right."

Kait, who developed combat stress in the Yom Kippur War, goes into the outpatients' greenhouse where a veteran about 60 years old is tending to the plants. The man takes a small orange off a branch and starts eating it, peel and all. "Isn't that bitter?" Kait asks him. "I've tasted things more bitter," the man replies in a slurred voice, and Kait smiles and nods his head on the way past.

Sadnat Gal, one of eight Israeli rehab centers for combat stress victims, is for hard cases - men (and two women) who had been too withdrawn, anxiety-ridden and out-of-control to fit into any other rehabilitation routine they'd tried.

"Before they came here, they were either sitting at home staring at the four walls, or they were on the street," says Niza Regev, director of the center. Some combat stress victims are homeless to this day; Regev knows of one who lives in a Rishon LeZion park, and Kait knows another - a former colonel - who lives on the street in Jerusalem.

When Sadnat Gal opens at 7 a.m., many outpatients are already waiting outside the door. "Insomnia," explains Regev. Besides getting psychiatric counseling, they can paint, play snooker, sing in a choir, work at the computer or learn English. Occasionally an outpatient will be overcome by memories and begin to sob, but usually it's enough for one or two of his fellows to come talk to him and bring him out of it.

"Sometimes we have to call a psychiatrist, and in rare cases we have to send them to the ER. When we first opened the center 11 years ago, those sorts of crises were happening just about every day. Now it's an unusual thing," says Regev.

On days when there's bloodshed in Israel, the atmosphere inside Sadnat Gal changes. "During the intifada, you could feel the tension in here. We would try to keep the television off," she says.

Several of the outpatients here have improved dramatically. Regev tells of a Six Day War veteran who spent 15 years alone in his room, going out only to see his psychiatrist for counseling and medications. "Now he's writing his life story here on the computer. He drives a car, he's traveled overseas. He helped build the synagogue in his neighborhood," Regev says. A Yom Kippur War veteran who suffered violent rages before coming to the center is now a reflexologist treating expectant mothers.

"Some of the younger men here have gotten married and had children," Regev says happily. On the other end of the scale, two Sadnat Gal outpatients have committed suicide.

I ask if the center was getting a lot of veterans from the Second Lebanon War, and she says it is still too early. "It takes time for soldiers, who are usually so macho, you know, to admit they've got a problem, and then it takes a long time for them to go through all the procedures and evaluations by the Defense Ministry before they're recognized as disabled. The combat stress victims from the last war in Lebanon still haven't really surfaced."

LIRON NIR-LASHOVITZ is an exception among veterans of that war, but then he had a head start, so to speak: He first developed combat stress in 2002 in Hebron, then four years later volunteered to go back into battle in the Second Lebanon War, where the disease struck him a second time, only much worse than before.

At 26, Nir-Lashovitz looks like a young Brad Pitt. In an interview at his Jaffa apartment, he was fidgety, absently squeezing a pillow, tapping a pen, although such excess energy might be natural for him; his hobby is playing drums. His drum-playing ability, though, has been hampered by the mild neurological damage he suffered when a bullet grazed his skull in Lebanon. Earlier, in Hebron, he had been wounded in the leg by shrapnel. But from the way he tells it, his combat stress didn't result from his own brushes with death, but rather with the deaths of his comrades.

He was a combat medic. "My father was a colonel, my mother was a major, my older brother was a paratrooper - for me, there was no other option except going into a combat unit," he says.

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Six years ago, Nir-Lashovitz was the first medic on the scene in Hebron where 12 Israeli soldiers and civilians were killed and 15 wounded in an ambush.

"I treated a lot of the wounded that night. I carried the corpses of soldiers on stretchers," he says. "The feelings I had of seeing my friends killed, the sights, the sounds, the smells - all that stayed with me for a long time." He had flashbacks and nightmares, and "every little noise made me jump," he says.

After getting out of the hospital, he began seeing a psychiatrist at Sheba Medical Center's Combat Stress Treatment Unit. Still in the army but allowed to stay at home, he could have just sat it out until his enlistment duty was over, but his conscience was bothering him.

"I joined the army because I wanted to make a contribution, and I didn't feel I was doing it, so I lied to my psychiatrist - I told him I was recovered, that I was okay. He wrote a letter to the army saying I was fit to go back to my unit, and they took me back." Two months later, Nir-Lashovitz was demobilized.

Over the next couple of years his symptoms worsened - nightmares, anxiety, crying jags. He began seeing the psychiatrist again and started taking medication. Then, in July 2006, he received an emergency call-up notice to report to his base for duty, and five days later he was in Lebanon. He thought he could tough it out during the fighting. "I treated a lot of wounded soldiers. I was cool. I was trying to be, anyway," he recalls with a wry grin.

He wasn't having any flashbacks to Hebron. He was actually all right until the last, bloodiest day of the 33-day war, when his unit was waiting outside a village and Hizbullah guerrillas spotted them and fired a missile into their midst, killing one soldier and wounding five others.

"I decided to move the wounded soldiers over behind a house about 150 meters away. But Hizbullah was watching us all the time, and they fired another missile at us when we got there. This time three soldiers were killed. Fifteen other soldiers were wounded, including me and the other medics."

He was bleeding heavily from the head, and had to bandage himself because his fellow medics were so badly wounded. "I don't know how I remained conscious," he says. He remembers being taken by helicopter to the hospital in Haifa. He had just seen three of his comrades killed, and then, after undergoing a lengthy surgery, he woke up and saw a picture on TV of a fourth soldier who had died meanwhile of his wounds.

"These weren't just acquaintances. These guys had been my friends for 10 years," he says.

After returning home, his combat stress escalated. "Not always, but sometimes, when I'd be walking on the street, I'd feel that someone was chasing me. I dreaded being in crowds, so I stayed away from them. I couldn't handle loud, sudden noises - the winter storms drove me crazy. Mainly what I felt was fear."

At home with his long-term girlfriend, he was having crying jags, and he'd wake up at night and turn on all the lights in the apartment because he thought an intruder was there. He had outbursts of rage. "I never became physically violent, thank God, but I wasn't very far from it." After a while, his girlfriend left. "I can't blame her. I wasn't easy to live with," he says.

He'd studied Chinese medicine for nearly four years, but decided he had to give it up. "I'd be treating somebody lying down on the table in front of me, and I'd feel like I was handling the corpse of one of my friends."

That was about a year ago. Today Nir-Lashovitz takes medication to help ward off insomnia, anxiety and depression. He sees a psychiatrist once a week. He's studying photography four days a week, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. - a major accomplishment for someone with combat stress, which tends to disrupt concentration.

From his sessions with the psychiatrist, he's learned to gain a measure of mental control over his symptoms. "If I'm standing in a room and somebody comes in and shuts the door behind me, I'll react, but at the same time I'll tell myself: Take it easy. It's just a door."

Coming through the shells

He stays in touch with the families of his comrades killed in Lebanon. "I had a camera with me during the war, and I took the last photos of those soldiers about 10 minutes before the missiles hit, and their families have put those photos up in their homes. It's very important to me that I was able to give those pictures to them."

He has a new girlfriend. "My ex-girlfriend was always comparing me to the 'old Lior,' the guy I was before I got hurt. My girlfriend today only knows me for who I am now - with her, I'm starting off with a clean slate." For all his hardship, he prefers the new Lior to the old one.

"I'm a more thoughtful person. Things have more meaning to me now. Most of my friends these days tend to be quite a few years older than me, and some of them are going through the same thing I am. The friends I used to have - I'd have nothing to talk about with them now. We used to talk about parties, and girls, and drinking - and I'll still go to parties now, but that's not what's important to me anymore."

He says he still has anxiety attacks, but much less frequently and severely than before. "I'm a lot better than I used to be. My psychiatrist says I'm on the high road."

Laughing and shaking his head, Nir-Lashovitz says there will be no third time for him in the army. He realizes he made a terrible misjudgment going back after his trauma in Hebron. But even now, there are moments when he'd like to be a soldier again.

"Sometimes I'll be watching the news and I'll see our soldiers in the field, and I'll think: I wish I was back out there. In some part of me, I miss it - not the fighting, but the feeling of making a contribution. But then, after a couple of seconds, I'll say - no, no more for me. I've done enough."

Graphic

5 photos: Michael Hershkowitz, an activist on behalf of combat stress sufferers. 'Prozac is the mildest medication I've taken.' Roni Yarkoni. Years after losing his family to the affects of combat stress, Yarkoni began painting as therapy. Now he is again a part of his children's lives. Since the Second Lebanon War, he says, the military has been trying to 'catch' the disease early by keeping tabs on that war's fighters. Although now 'functional,' Yarkoni stays heavily medicated. 'God forbid if I fall asleep without taking my medication, I wake up in a panic,' he says. (Credit: Jonathan Bloom; Ariel Jerozolimski)

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Letters

South China Morning Post
August 29, 2007 Wednesday

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Body

Fact-finding trip is no junket for Legco members

I refer to Jake van der Kamp's Monitor column, "Legco junketeers make an exhibition of wasted funds" (August 22).

To do justice to the proper procedure followed strictly by the Legislative Council as well as to the members on the visit, I must set the record straight and correct his inaccuracies.

The purpose of our visit ("a 12-day overseas duty visit to Dubai, Europe and the United States") is to study in depth the development of cruise terminals and conference/exhibition facilities in internationally-recognised successful centres of such services. Study visits enable Legco members to have more in-depth discussions and deliberations on government policies in Legco relating to issues of public concern. This visit is no exception. We need first-hand information of and exposure to established successes of others in order that we can generate informed public debate before taking important decisions.

This visit proposal was fully discussed and endorsed by members of the two panels. Its schedule and budget proposals were scrutinised and passed by Legco's House Committee. No member questioned the purpose of this visit in any of the meetings.

In addition, this visit was not restricted to members of the two panels.

Participation was open to all Legco members.

It is indeed curious for van der Kamp to suggest that members' first-hand research efforts by conducting duty visits can be substituted by our simply looking it up on the web.

Can he not appreciate the need for direct dialogue with professionals and experts in order to gain in-depth knowledge through face-to-face discussions?

Is he indeed advocating that no one, whether it is Legco members or government officials, would need to conduct any duty visits so long as they have access to a computer?

Most people would agree that such a research method would be too superficial to benefit intelligent discussion. Legco duty visits have become a necessary part of our work. For instance, in 2005, the subcommittee on the West Kowloon Cultural District, chaired by Alan Leong Kah-kit, went to Bilbao, Spain, to study its museum operations. The list goes on.

Letters

Why would van der Kamp make unfounded accusations of members' seriousness of purpose on this particular visit?

Vincent Fang, leader, Legco joint-panel duty visit to study cruise terminals and convention and exhibition facilities

Pay-TV users get raw deal

I think Garmen Chan from i-Cable ("All the rugby will be televised", August 23) is missing the point.

While i-Cable may be televising the Rugby World Cup, Mr Chan seems to be ignoring the reasons why sports fans are increasingly angered by the people who run pay-TV services in Hong Kong.

ESPN/Star Sports broadcast the Six Nations rugby, most of the European internationals, most of the Sevens Circuit and the Heineken Cup, with the Tri-Nations being televised on another Now TV channel, Australia Network. The 2003 World Cup was also broadcast on ESPN/Star Sports if I remember correctly. Was it fair for rugby fans in Hong Kong to assume that either ESPN/Star Sports or another Now TV channel would broadcast the 2007 Rugby World Cup? Strangely, ESPN/Star Sports are broadcasting it in other Asian countries.

Secondly - and this is more of a general sports gripe - what does Mr Chan have to say about the division of major sporting events across two different pay-TV providers? To see all four tennis grand slams and all the golf majors, you have to subscribe to both Now TV and i-Cable.

Now we find out that a 12 plus month subscription to i-Cable is necessary, in order to watch the premier tournament of a sport that is primarily televised on Now TV.

With pay-TV services run by companies rolling about in cash, they don't need to rely on subscribers to fund the purchase of further broadcasting rights, and it is this sad fact that makes the consumer the ultimate loser.

Montgomery Pawson, Pok Fu Lam

No need for us all to rush home

Regarding the letters on the storm warning signal, the No 8 signal is just a reference for us.

Our response will vary depending on our circumstances.

If we are in the urban area, where the strength of the wind is minimised by tall buildings, we don't need to rush back home. We can go to the cinema, or relax in a coffee shop.

If we do not need to, it is foolish to try and squeeze on to buses and trains, to get home quickly. People whose homes are in the countryside, should stay in the urban areas, or find a shelter.

Shannon Lee, Tsing Yi

Muslims must embrace peace

I refer to Pauline Bunce's letter ("Many Muslims preach peace", August 21).

In answer to her first question, I have been fortunate, "as a male" to travel extensively within Islamic society and I have been treated with nothing but respect and hospitality. Secondly my letter was not about comparing the tragic history of religious conflict throughout history.

I said there would be no peace until all the people of Islam demand it. It seems that when it comes to the crunch, it is the voice of radicals who control the actions of the masses. When we see the peaceful leaders of Islam, walking up to and disarming the gunmen of Hamas or Hezbollah and mothers leading their children away from martyrdom, we might see a beginning to the end of sectarian violence in the Islamic world. Only then, will we see peace and prosperity in the Islamic world. This can only happen when the people of Islam take action themselves.

Letters

Finally, some day women in Islamic society may be allowed to be more than just second class people ferreted away, simply for being the wrong gender.

Stephen Anderson, Wan Chai

Simple solution

May Wong's response ("Travellers have plenty of choice", August 22) to my concern about the MTR Corporation's inconsistent discounting policy ("Octopus and MTR must end price anomaly", August 16), tries to misdirect readers into believing that the MTRC provides users with a wonderful plethora of choices.

If passengers truly have plenty of choice then why not allow Octopus users on the Airport Express the 10 per cent discount given to non-Octopus users? This is only fair, if the Octopus card holders choose not to use the little-known free rides on other MTR lines, that non-Octopus users are denied. This can be easily programmed into the system, along with many other discount schemes that are little-advertised by the MTRC.

What Ms Wong is saying is that the MTRC and Octopus control what the public should pay, and will do pretty much anything to keep things the way they are.

Will Lai, Western

Club says sorry

Following my letter regarding my disappointment at not being able to visit the Hong Kong Football Club, while on holiday in the city ("Disappointed by club's snub, August 10), I received a phone call from the club's honorary secretary, extending his and the club's apology for this incident which I accepted in the spirit that it was given.

I was further assured that should I visit Hong Kong in the future I would be more than welcome at the club's premises.

John Taylor, Runaway Bay, Queensland, Australia

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Readers Write

Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN)

September 23, 2007 Sunday

Metro Edition

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Body

A SLAP AT MOVEON.ORG

And the Constitution

Last week's U.S. Senate condemnation of a political advertisement in a newspaper is a blatant effort to use the power of the federal government to stifle dissent. Whatever you think of the MoveOn.org ad, this vote should frighten you.

Last I checked, the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution forbids Congress from passing laws like this. Do we really want to become a country where the citizens are afraid to challenge the military? Where citizens are afraid to speak out at all?

I am especially ashamed of my Sen. Amy Klobuchar for supporting this bill.

Bob Treumann, St. Paul

POVERTY IN THE U.S.

Lewis isn't looking

It's not too difficult to find poverty in Minnesota, let alone the United States. Thank goodness there are organizations like the Heritage Foundation, cited by Jason Lewis ("Give us your poor - if you can find them," Sept. 16), to manipulate figures and tell us that starvation doesn't actually exist in our country. In fact, it's a relief to hear that most poor people can actually afford a VCR (I sold mine at a garage sale last summer for 25 cents).

Now that we have the real information about poverty in the United States I can sleep soundly, knowing the next time I drive by, I can just smile and wave at those people holding cardboard signs at every busy intersection in Minneapolis and St. Paul. But I'm wondering if there are outlets under the bridges where they can plug in their VCRs.

Aaron Blechert, Minneapolis

A white advantage

Readers Write

Notable in Jason Lewis' good news review on poverty is the absence of data on people of color. The historic advantages of whites, built in no small measure on the enslavement of blacks and the genocide of American Indians, are still visible in the form of gross disparities in our welfare, education, child protection, shelter and corrections systems.

If we are to have an accounting, let's at least be honest about it. For some segments of America, poverty is still ugly and real.

Greg Owen, Minneapolis

BEING GAY

In religious community

God bless Charlotte Sullivan. Her column of Sept. 16 ("An unavoidable truth") was one of the best written articles about coming out and being authentically gay I have ever read.

But it saddens me deeply to also read her statement, "Some churches make it clear that simply being a homosexual or daring to fall in love as a gay person is a horrid perversity. The option is to remove yourself from your religious community or to seek to destroy one of the most integral parts of yourself."

This couldn't be further from the truth, not in Minneapolis. Belonging to a religious community and being gay are not mutually exclusive.

For example, last year Plymouth Congregational Church in Minneapolis had on staff five ministers: a "G" (gay), an "L" (lesbian), a "B" (bisexual), a "T" (transsexual) and an "A" (ally). My sister was on the search committee back when we were wondering whether we could hire a female minister who was a lesbian when we already had a male minister who was gay. I said to her, "Hire the best one for the job." And she did. Doing so did not hurt our church. To this day Plymouth remains a vibrant, God-loving church of 1,600.

I could list over 20 churches in the Twin Cities that are happy to open their doors to GLBT people, just as they are. These lovely churches would accept every integral part of Sullivan because they are "doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God."

Beverly Gores, Minneapolis

Or 'doing' gay

It's arguably base for Charlotte Sullivan to assume that Larry Craig - and anyone experiencing a homosexual feeling - is "oriented" in an unchangeable direction. Consider that Craig chose to both marry a woman and to solicit homosexual activity in a public restroom. Though these two instances are monumentally different in extent, Craig could have chosen otherwise.

Anyone who has felt physical or emotional attraction to someone of the same gender can attest to the fact that he or she did not choose the feelings over heterosexual ones. But a matter of choice does exist. That is the most freeing thing to understand.

Benjamin Frank, Minneapolis

Spouses left behind

Charlotte Sullivan's description of the heartbreak caused when gay and lesbian folks are driven into marriage with members of the opposite sex was a moving statement about the devastation that occurs to entire families by the attitudes fostered by the "conservative cultural movement" and the religious right.

Readers Write

As the ex-spouse of a gay man, I watched as the grip of denial was gradually broken and he became aware that he could no longer "live a lie." His need to be honest threw me into despair, with the inference that 17 years of marriage had been a lie. It is far more complex; I know that now.

It's estimated that up to 2 million straight Americans are/have been in marriages to a gay or lesbian spouse. That's a lot of anguish caused by the fears of the homophobes among us. Straight Spouses needing to talk with someone who "has been there" can go to www.straightspouse.org.

Mary Austin, Duluth

Spouses in waiting

Kudos to Charlotte Sullivan for sticking up for her true self as a lesbian, and to a Sept. 17 letter writer for standing up for her gay son against Star Tribune columnist Katherine Kersten.

We, in case Kersten is interested, are an opposite-sex couple who exchanged vows in a lovely church ceremony. But just as we would not join a country club that excluded on the basis of race or religion, we won't be applying for a government marriage license until the institution is open to same-sex couples.

When that day arrives, the supposedly fragile tradition of male-female marriage will be bolstered by the participation of many who feel as we do.

Anne Hamre and Gerald Hopkins, Roseville

LETTER OF THE DAY

Terrorist has U.S. platform for propaganda

On Sept. 24, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will speak at the United Nations and Columbia University. Distinguished audiences will listen politely to a terrorist who supplies weapons and training to Hezbollah, Hamas and insurgents who kill civilians and U.S. soldiers in Iraq. They'll applaud a despot who is illegally pursuing nuclear weapons, has repeatedly called for Israel to be destroyed and denies that the Holocaust happened.

It's doubtful that in his remarks, Ahmadinejad will mention how he has initiated an intensive crackdown on human rights on his own people with more than 150,000 women and men arrested for violations of the compulsory Islamic dress code. Or even more ominous, that there have been dozens of "disappearances" of opposition figures, from journalists to students to labor union leaders; or that women are treated as second-class citizens.

Providing Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a platform to spout propaganda does nothing to promote peace and security in the Middle East. It only legitimizes his dangerous agenda.

Steve Hunegs, Minneapolis; executive director,

Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas

Graphic

PHOTO

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End of Document

The Kingdom is a compelling counter-narrative to anti-US films

Irish Examiner

October 10, 2007 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION

Length: 1110 words

Body

After the predictability of *Syriana*, *Three Kings* and *The Bourne Supremacy*, you sit there and wait expectantly for the twist. Surely, at any moment, there will be a scene in which it is revealed that the bombing of a US housing compound in Saudi Arabia - *The Kingdom's* central event - was not the work of Islamic terrorists but rather of an evil oil company?

Surely the conspiracy will go as high as President George Bush himself? What happened to the pivotal scene when the war on terror is revealed as an evil travesty and US troops as psychopathic murderers? Why didn't the Yanks make a horrific mess of things? Where's the hero asking, "Why do they hate us?" - that stock-in-trade of liberal Tinseltown directors? *The Kingdom* is indeed a very odd movie. Right down to its spot-on ending that recalls the beheading and dismembering of Wall Street Journal correspondent Daniel Pearl, the expected never happens.

It's in the nature of present-day geopolitical thrillers that all the bad guys appear to be sworn enemies of the United States. But, in the fullness of time, we discover the truth behind the Big Lie: the US is the sworn enemy of everyone else too, the master puppeteer pulling the strings while all others stand around helpless and powerless.

So *The Kingdom* is truly a surprising movie. It does not take this approach, and unapologetically depicts a heroic crew of good guys going into Saudi Arabia in pursuit of those who slaughter innocent Americans in Allah's name. Needless to say, this is controversial: *The Guardian* gave it one star out of five, as did *The Irish Times*, which called it "as simplistic as it is jingoistic as it is irresponsible". But the fact that all the right people hate it will make this terrifically entertaining thriller a must-see for others.

True, we don't know the names of the terrorists at the receiving end of US retribution, but when did you hear anyone complain that we don't know the names of the Nazi soldiers in *Saving Private Ryan*?

The film opens at the living quarters of US oil workers in Riyadh just as a softball game turns into a bloody, explosive massacre, one that's compounded when another bomb goes off after first responders hit the scene. The inspiration is very clearly the real-life horror of the Khobar Towers bombing in 1996, when 19 US servicemen and one Saudi were killed by *Hezbollah*, possibly with al-Qaida's connivance.

At that time, the Saudi government showed an unprecedented degree of co-operation in the immediate aftermath. FBI forensic teams were permitted to scour the grounds in search of evidence.

The Kingdom is a compelling counter-narrative to anti- US films

The team we see in The Kingdom has a personal motivation: one of their own, a universally admired FBI agent, is among the dead.

After the double-bombing sets the pace, the rest of the film comes in three distinct but equally engaging parts. Each details a different set of difficulties in responding to a terrorist attack. For the first hour, the FBI crew attempts to navigate both bureaucratic hurdles and various Saudi strictures in the hope of actually being allowed to investigate the case.

The US Department of Justice worries that more boots on the ground will simply provoke further action (resulting in the pleasingly dry riposte that "not to go after criminals because they might harm you is not a policy of the FBI"). Nor is the State Department keen on the idea of a US presence on the scene. The film's director, Peter Berg, is clearly deeply cynical about Washington's commitment to anything but mealy mouthed self-promotion.

Eventually, the crew get to the Middle East, win over their Saudi hosts, and begin combing the bomb site in order to decipher what went down and who might be responsible. For about 40 minutes in the middle of the movie, the frustrations of trying to do police work in a police state are the focus. The action cuts back and forth between the team members as each turns up scraps of evidence.

Then there's a riveting, shoot-'em-up finale as the team finds itself under extreme duress in a Riyadh slum; the hardware comes out and the bullets start to fly.

But this is no simple action movie. Not only is it perfectly paced but the difficulties presented by the Saudis' defining brand of Islam are subtly explored. The film deftly conveys a chilling sense of a society frozen in repression. The problem here is not only terrorism but Saudi culture itself, unalterably opposed to the independence of mind that is the FBI crew's best weapon.

Where else would we see a **female** medical examiner, on the verge of a breakthrough, suddenly, hysterically, interrupted when she reaches over to touch a Muslim victim? Or young children being schooled in murder as they play with dolls and marbles? Or, for that matter, a US State Department official so craven that he tailors his every word and gesture to avoid offending those who embrace this culture?

So as the sequence whips by in a frenetic, gut-tightening frenzy, swift and brutal, it serves as an announcement of the film's central premise: Islamic terrorism is a genuine, serious threat after all. The question is, what's to be done about it?

THE State Department man is played, with toothy obsequiousness, by Jeremy Piven, part of a terrific cast led by Jamie Foxx, Jennifer Garner, Chris Cooper, and Jason Bateman. But perhaps the most arresting performance of all is by Ashraf Barhom, playing a Saudi colonel who comes to appreciate that US investigative methods are superior to those of his own closed society.

Ultimately, of course, for all its clever disguises, The Kingdom is really nothing more than a satisfying fantasy - but as geopolitical fantasies go, The Kingdom is pretty close to the mark.

Yes, many of the film's initial questions go unanswered. There's always a tension inherently embedded in any movie like this: which is more important, action or ideas? Ideas are given a healthy amount of play but, in the end, at least in Hollywood, the gun is mightier than the word. By the time the film ends, the screen is filled with the bodies of dead terrorists and no apologies are made for the thrills provided by taking them out.

Still, to his credit, Berg doesn't merely dish out cinematic justice and call it a day. Instead, his film suggests, for once, that killing terrorists might be the right thing to do but, even if it offers plenty of temporary gratification, it doesn't address - and may even exacerbate - the root problems.

In The Kingdom, even justified vengeance is no solution. It's a crisp, well-shot and moral movie that deserves more serious treatment than it has received from some reviewers who seemingly cannot bear to see the US rendered as anything but the evil empire of this century.

The Kingdom is a compelling counter-narrative to anti- US films

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End of Document

From cedars of Lebanon to waters of Jordan

Sunday Tribune (Ireland)

May 27, 2007

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Section: BUSINESS; Pg. 6

Length: 1232 words

Byline: Business nomad, David Horgan

Body

20 May: Lebanon

We were eating excellent fish with chilled Lebanese red wine when the bomb detonated. A sudden flashback to 1970s Belfast. The Iraqi official didn't break sentence. The retired French diplomat and waitress ignored it. We stayed for fruit but not coffee - telltale strain undermining traditional hospitality.

We drove hard on a carpet of broken glass over metal chunks and masonry - the Lexus must have solid tyres. The army waved us through stunned bystanders nursing superficial wounds. Only the fast drive and hurried goodbyes marked the incident.

Should I text people to assure them we're OK, or is it better to ignore the incident and hope they don't worry?

Every visit shows a different Beirut: early 2006 was buzzing and tolerant - the civil war politely ignored as history. I stayed in the beachside Muslim west without concern. Everyone from waitresses to beggars seemed delighted to be addressed in Arabic.

Last July, smart money considered an attack on Iran - using Israel as a proxy - likely. The attack came - on Lebanon - and backfired. Last November many Shia neighbourhoods were smashed and infrastructure destroyed even in posh Christian areas, to which we retreated. Now Arabic greetings are answered in French.

My run takes me through the southern part of the city, where I get odd looks. Partly to make a point, I chat to a scowling Hezbollah guard outside a damaged but official-looking building. He ignores my query about what happened but relaxes when I say we're Irish - he's from southern Lebanon and fondly remembers Irish troops playing football and their gifts. Apparently they invited him to Galway - imagine the immigration officer's face when this bearded warrior appears at the airport!

By day we drive around the city. Many locations were bombed by the Israeli air force. Now army bridges have been erected and life goes on.

Pragmatic optimism returns. Security staff look closely at passport stamps. People sit within earshot in restaurants. But Lebanon is again open for business. Now the consensus is that attack plans on Iran are thankfully off. Negotiations between the US and Iran open in Baghdad soon. Risk has fallen, but it's quicker to destroy than build.

19 May: Dead Sea, Jordan

From cedars of Lebanon to waters of Jordan

King Abdullah lends gravitas to our signing ceremony. He manages to be simultaneously friendly and formal.

We congratulate his minister on \$2.5bn of investment. They reply that they're emulating Ireland!

Jordan thrives despite a dearth of water and resources. Even regional problems are turned to advantage: entrepreneurs and capital enter from every troubled neighbour. The Jordanian flag's starburst seems apt.

Though Jordan is liberal, it remains male-dominated. Women are well groomed but confined to clerical duties.

The venue is the world's deepest point: 300 metres below sea level. Nearby is where John the Baptist immersed Jesus in the River Jordan. No fish can survive the salt content, but the Dead Sea is alive economically. At night you can see the lights of Jericho, whose walls tumbled doubtless due to earthquake and shoddy construction. Similar builders operate today. No one knows how to get to Sodom and Gomorrah!

Security is tight but intelligent: my bags are not searched.

18 May: Amman

Newstalk's Eamon Keane calls for a comment on Wolfowitz's resignation from the World Bank. He seems surprised at my take that Wolfowitz was suckered into undoubted ethical and governance breaches. He was targeted because he was a neocon who wanted to reform international aid. Incumbents are for progress as long as it doesn't involve change. It's hard to build consensus for a shake-up.

When Wolfowitz was appointed, his girlfriend's job was affected through no fault of hers. Mistresses shouldn't 'yell, swell or tell' - but they were single.

Normally you would recuse yourself from a conflict and whatever sweetheart deal your girlfriend could cut would be nodded through. Here, apparently, Wolfowitz had alienated everyone to the point where no peer would play ball.

He tried to recuse himself, but was saddled with the problem. When, naively, he solved it too generously, he was ambushed.

Wolfowitz's was not a hanging offence. If he's guilty of war crimes, then prosecute him for war crimes.

Ironically, Wolfowitz had the interest and experience to drive through necessary reform. He could have become another McNamara, who used the post to make amends for Vietnam.

The battle to fire Wolfowitz was really a proxy fight against the Bush White House - but also against change.

Sound familiar? Would-be Irish semi-state reformers had similar experiences: At Eircom, Brendan Hynes and even Michael Smurfit were isolated and outmanoeuvred. At Aer Lingus, Michael Foley was forced out while Willie Walsh was corralled. There were ethical cover stories in each case. The system is most effective at protecting itself. But organisms survive only by adaptation.

The record of tough businesspeople inserted into semi-states with a mission to change is not a happy one. One by one their mission impossible is undermined by vested interests.

Our own monoliths need shaking up but history warns commercially-driven managers not to get involved. As secretary of state Roy Jenkins used to say of British ministers trying to improve Northern Ireland, the system will destroy you. It took Hume-Adams to change the calculus - against strident opposition.

The use of formal procedures to settle management differences is an established art. Clever players, such as Bernie Cahill, took care to follow the rules.

14 May: Dublin

From cedars of Lebanon to waters of Jordan

A researcher extracts my views on global warming: Climate is complex and poorly understood. Environmental debates are more about politics and emotion than science. Human activity is energy-intensive. People will not give up growth or reduce overall energy consumption. Greater efficiency cuts consumption per unit of work but increases overall consumption.

Geological evidence shows periods of global warming and cooling, of surging and falling sea levels. There are complex feedback loops, but the earth's orbits seem the main factor. Nearly all of this happened before humans evolved.

We are emerging from an ice age so you'd expect long-term temperature increases. That will melt glaciers and flood plains. Has human activity exacerbated that trend?

Overall CO2 levels fell as plants produced oxygen - till the evolution of animals reversed this trend. Humans are a small factor in the mix - but flipped the earth from a marginal CO2 consumer to marginal CO2 producer. This was first argued in the 1970s. Since then the evidence has grown.

We can do little about nature.

If you can halt emissions easily, as with CFCs and the ozone layer, it would be foolish not to. It's like an insurance policy. Ozone was a serious problem, successfully addressed cheaply and quickly.

Stern argued that it's in our long-term, overall interest to address the problem. But it's unlikely that his proposals will be implemented. Some might, but the world will not.

We may end up surrendering growth without much benefit.

When prohibitively expensive, it's more practical to adapt to inevitable change rather than to try and fail to halt emissions. Build less on flood plains and low-lying areas. Build sea walls.

What is practically achievable? Cap emissions as an insurance policy but not at excessive cost; China will swamp Ireland's efforts.

Survivors adapt.

businessnomad@tribune.ie

Load-Date: May 30, 2007

Israeli offensive in Gaza

The Irish Times

January 15, 2009 Thursday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 15

Length: 1952 words

Body

Madam, Alan Shatter (January 13th) is correct to assert that the only meaningful long-term solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict is a two-state strategy. I can empathise with his frustration over the lack of debate surrounding the behaviour of Hamas in the run-up to the current conflict. However, I believe that Israeli actions over the past two weeks constitute a retrograde step in the search for a peaceful settlement.

If anything, the current conflict has strengthened the hand of Hamas leaders, whose democratic mandate in Gaza, as Mr Shatter points out, is tentative at best. As with the conflict two years ago with Hizbullah in Lebanon, Israel must realise that this kind of trigger-happy diplomacy will only condemn it to another decade of conflict in the region. Israel has yet to accept that a majority of Palestinians do wish to live in peace and to live normal lives. In Richard Nixon's term, they are a great silent majority. These people are the most frustrated when Israel rises to the provocation of Hamas by returning violence with violence, perpetuating conflict and strife.

I don't see a final goal for Israel in this current military operation and I don't believe there is one. Nor will this violence end with a conclusive victory for either side. For Israel to find a solution it must see the Palestinian people not as foot-soldiers for either Fatah or Hamas but as human beings with the same hopes, dreams and aspirations that they have. President Kennedy said in a famous speech during the height of the Cold War in 1963 that in its relations with the Soviet Union the US had to ask itself: What kind of a peace do we mean and what kind of a peace do we seek? Israel should not look for a peace with Palestinians that is imposed by armed stalemate or mutually assured destruction but a durable peace that, as Kennedy said, makes life on earth worth living.

I join the growing calls for an end to the current violence by both sides, but I hope for a peace that will mean more than a cessation of violence. A two-state solution is the only solution but it will never thrive under fear, suspicion and contempt. Yours, etc,

PAUL MAC FLYNN,

Bristol,

England.

Madam, As reported in your edition of January 14th, Sinn Féin TD Aengus Ó Snodaigh described the contributions of Ireland's only Jewish TD and the Israeli ambassador at an Oireachtas committee as being worthy of Joseph Goebbels. Mr Ó Snodaigh is described as his party's spokesman on justice, equality and international affairs, surely the ultimate oxymoron.

Israeli offensive in Gaza

One might have thought that he would steer clear of Nazi references, given his political forebears' connections with that evil regime. Sean Russell sought the help of the Nazi murder machine and in fact died on a Nazi U-boat. Some IRA members illuminated parts of Belfast so that the Luftwaffe could carry out their bombing missions over an Irish city. And some Nazis who landed here were given succour by various IRA members throughout the land.

Maybe Mr Ó Snodaigh is not aware of those facts or is he exhibiting the usual SF sins of amnesia and arrogance? Yours, etc,

BRENDAN CAFFERTY,

Ballina,

Co Mayo.

Madam, Alan Shatter says there is a tragic inevitability of civilian deaths in the current conflict. That is true if military tactics such as Israel's are used. After 121 soldiers were killed in Lebanon in 2006, Israeli public opinion would not allow their soldiers to be killed on foreign battlefields in such large numbers again.

The Israeli army unites the state: all the sons and daughters of Israel must serve and the protection of those lives is paramount. So in Gaza, Israel has adopted the American shock and awe tactics which were so devastating for civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan but resulted in relatively few casualties for the coalition of the willing.

The deaths of women and children are not inevitable unless, for instance, you shoot tank rounds into a UN school. Shock and Awe, second edition. Yours, etc,

CIARAN O CARROLL,

Maynooth,

Co Kildare.

Madam, We, the undersigned, are united in seeking the immediate expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to Ireland, Dr Zion Evrony. We believe the ambassador must leave Ireland until such time as there is a complete end to Israel's war on Gaza and its continued slaughter of the Palestinian people. Yours, etc,

MAIREAD MAGUIRE, Nobel Peace Laureate; KATHY SINNOTT MEP; MARGARET CONLON TD; MAGGIE RONAYNE, NUIG; GERRY GREHAN, Chairman, Peace People; RAYMOND DEANE, BRENDAN BUTLER, NGO Peace Alliance; ROBERT BALLAGH, JACK O CONNOR, general president, Siptu; Dr FINTAN LANE, RICHARD BOYD BARRETT, IAWM; KIERAN ALLEN, SWP; Dr STEVEN LOYAL, UCD; M.J. NOLAN TD; Dr THERESA URBAIN CZYK; UCD; JOE HIGGINS, SP; MARGARETTA D ARCY; BRIAN O CONNOR, Labour Youth; Prof MARY GALLAGHER, UCD; JOHN WADDELL, CHRIS ANDREWS TD; SHANE CULLEN; Dr SABER ELSAFTY, AILBHE SMYTH, UCD; TREASA NÍ CHEANNABHÉIN; PATRICIA McKENNA MEP; JOHN ARDEN; CHARLIE CULLEN, Senator IVANA BACIK; COLIN COULTER, NUIM; MICHAEL KILEMADE, TERENCE BROWNE, Dr FERGAL GAYNOR, UCC; NINA McGOWAN; TIM REDFERN, UCD; MAIRÉAD NI CHUIG, TG4; EAMON McCANN; MHAIRI SUTHERLAND; MICHAEL MOYNIHAN TD; BRIAN HAND; SEAMUS KEALY; Dr ANDY STOREY, UCD; PAUL MURNAGHAN; KATHARINA PFUETZNER, NCAD; ANNA MacLEOD, DIT; CHRISTY MOORE.

Madam, I disagree strongly with current Israeli policy in Gaza and with most of what the Israeli Ambassador to Ireland, Dr Evrony, has had to say about the topic. I think Israel's recent actions could fairly be described as examples of state terrorism and international war crimes.

But Mr Ó Snodaigh's reported comments to an Oireachtas committee, in which he compared remarks by the ambassador and Alan Shatter TD to Goebbels, are egregious and unacceptable. Mr Ó Snodaigh does not speak for me nor, I hope, for the majority of people opposed to what is happening in Gaza. Moreover, it is a little sickening to

Israeli offensive in Gaza

be lectured by a Sinn Féin representative on violence and the impact it has on civilians. They should know more than most about it.

Mr Chris Andrews s call for the ambassador to be expelled is plain silly. The ambassador is there to represent his country s views, whether we like them or not, and to report back on Irish policy and attitudes. He deserves every respect and a courteous hearing no matter how strongly people may disagree with him. Yours, etc,

PIARAS MAC ÉINRÍ,

Model Farm Road,

Cork.

Madam, Has the time come for the whole Israeli war cabinet to be arraigned at the Hague for war crimes? How many more people have to be killed in order to protect the lives of Israelis who are occupying land which is not theirs. When does the rest of the world say stop? Yours, etc,

JOHN BIELENBERG,

Lucan,

Co Dublin.

Madam, I wish to clarify that Steven Corcoran, an Erasmus student whose letter on the Israeli offensive in Gaza you published on Monday, does not in any way represent or speak for the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris.

The views expressed are personal and those of us who represent this historic Irish College wish to explicitly dissociate ourselves from them. Yours, etc,

SHEILA PRATSCHKE,

Directrice,

Centre Culturel Irlandais,

Paris.

Madam, Critics of the ongoing military activity in Gaza seem to be essentially concerned with what is considered Israel s disproportionate response to rocket attacks by Hamas.

There are possibly other readers who share my feeling that some letter-writers are long on condemnation and short on constructive proposals. It might be helpful if they could describe, specifically, a response to Hamas that would satisfy the criterion of proportionality and at the same time allow Israel todeter attacks on its citizens.

I share the widely-felt compassion for all the victims of this long-running tragedy, both Palestinian and Israeli, but I confess that Hamas leaves me with the uneasy feeling that it has a somewhat larger agenda than the welfare of the unfortunate Palestinian people. Yours, etc,

LES SERFF,

Calvia,

Islas Baleares,

Spain.

Madam, The Israeli Ambassador to Ireland, Dr Zion Evrony, claimed to the Dáil European Affairs Committee on Tuesday that Hamas were unlike the IRA and wanted to solely live by religious terms and were not open to

Israeli offensive in Gaza

change. This is untrue. The Hamas Founding Charter of 1988 is much targeted by Israeli propaganda as proof of Hamas's extremism. And it is true that the charter contains some extreme-sounding rhetoric, such as calling for the destruction of the Israeli state (not, mind you, the Israeli people). At that time of extreme Israeli violence and confrontation, the PLO was in exile and its leaders and members the subject of Israeli assassination, and Hamas was a marginal and radical underground resistance movement.

However, not unlike Sinn Féin and the IRA in Northern Ireland, in 2005 Hamas adopted a political path, called an effective ceasefire and contested the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council of February 2006. It emerged as the largest party, winning 74 out of 132 seats.

Following their election victory, Hamas spokesmen made it clear they were seeking a long-term truce with Israel, the price being Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. The elected Hamas prime minister, Ismail Haniya, said in an interview with the BBC that Hamas would be prepared to work a two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders. This was an opportunity for a more peaceful phase in the Middle East, but was rejected by Israel, which boycotted the elected Hamas government (shamefully supported in this by the EU and US), and launched a ferocious offensive which killed 700 Palestinians that year alone.

Again, in June 2008 a ceasefire brokered by Egypt was put in place, and until November last, as confirmed reluctantly by Mark Regev, spokesman for the Israeli prime minister, not a single Hamas rocket was fired into Israel and Hamas attempted to stop rocket firing by smaller groups.

That ceasefire was cynically broken by Israel on November 4th with a military strike on Gaza which killed six people. The ensuing rocket fire by Hamas provided the casus belli for Israel's long-planned murderous onslaught of December 27th (a Hamas offer of December 23rd for a renewal of the ceasefire was ignored). This offensive has since claimed nearly 1,000 lives and injured and maimed thousands more.

Hamas and Fatah are both partners for peace, and partners for any peaceful and civilised initiative to end the terrible suffering of the Palestinian people. The bloody-mindedness of Israel is the only barrier. Yours, etc,

PHILIP O CONNOR,

Ireland Palestine

Solidarity Campaign,

Dublin 2.

Madam, Brendan Ó Cathaoir (January 13th) would have your readers believe that the one thing Israel has not displayed is a willingness to accept UN Resolution 242 and return to its internationally recognised borders. He suggests that Mr Zion Evrony [Israel's Ambassador to Ireland] is selective with the truth.

However, clearly it is Mr Ó Cathaoir who is being selective with the truth or has he forgotten Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula in 1982? And has he, in common with many of your correspondents, forgotten that this resolution called for the application of both the following principles: Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict [but not necessarily to its pre-1967 borders]; and termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for . . . every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats or acts of force.

The Israeli government, unlike Hamas, has demonstrated its willingness to abide by this resolution. Yours, etc,

DAVID M. ABRAHAMSON,

Glenageary,

Co Dublin.

Israeli offensive in Gaza

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Force Zvika

The Jerusalem Post

January 23, 2009 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 18

Length: 1912 words

Byline: ABRAHAM RABINOVICH

Highlight: The most prominent hero of the Yom Kippur War, Zvika Greengold, guided Ofakim through the war with Hamas. The writer is author of The Yom Kippur War.

Body

There were moments after the first Grad rocket hit Ofakim at the start of Operation Cast Lead when Mayor Zvika Greengold felt almost as stressed as he had that first night of the Yom Kippur War. The tank he commanded then stood alone blocking a Syrian armored brigade on the narrow road to Golan divisional headquarters.

"It was very difficult," he said this week of the rocketing. "The sirens had not gone off, so there was no warning. The rocket struck a house. There was panic. The city's emergency services were not functioning."

Greengold, the most prominent hero to emerge from the Yom Kippur War, was in command once more in a war situation, this time as the newly appointed head of Ofakim. The city of 27,000 is perhaps the weakest of the peripheral towns in the Negev with a long history of a dysfunctional municipality and nearly a third of the population supported by welfare. The city was so off the beaten path that even Hamas neglected it, raining rockets down on neighboring communities over the years but never on Ofakim, until close to midnight on the third night of the war. The city's suddenly exposed vulnerability added to the residents' sense of terror.

"He was cool," said Maj. Amir Ben-David of the Home Front Command, who witnessed Greengold's performance after the rocket hit. "He said, 'You take the family to a hotel; you clean up; you do this and you do that.' Despite the fears, he ordered the sirens retested. He was in command."

Greengold, 57, did not have heroics in mind when he took up the Ofakim appointment in September. He had had a successful career after army service as an industrial executive, including a stint as director-general of Israel Oil Refineries and a similar posting in Puerto Rico. Interviewed in his Ofakim office this week on the first day of the cease-fire, Greengold traced his path to the drab Negev town from his entry into Israeli lore as a 21-year-old lieutenant on the Golan. "I was operating then on instinct. I am acting now out of self-awareness. But the connecting line is concern about the fate of the Jewish people."

BORN IN Kibbutz Lohamei Hagetaot to parents who had survived the war in Europe, he found himself on the first night of the Yom Kippur War blocking a Syrian tank column on the Tapline road leading to Golan headquarters at Nafah. He skirmished for more than an hour in the darkness with the Syrians, who had difficulty outflanking him because of the boulder-strewn landscape. On the radio net, commanders unaware that his was a solitary tank referred to him as "Force Zvika." Among the things that passed through his mind that night, he would later say, was an awareness that the Holocaust his parents had survived was suddenly relevant again, a sense that he stood between an enemy and the prospect of his people's annihilation.

Force Zvika

When reinforcements arrived, the Israeli tanks charged and almost all were immediately hit, including Greengold's. He was wounded but took command of the only tank remaining operational. His battle ended hours later on the perimeter fence of Nafah when he and another tank knocked out the last of a large Syrian tank force which had reached the military base. When Greengold finally pulled himself out of the turret, he collapsed and was taken to the hospital. He would be awarded the country's highest military decoration.

The sense of despair that suffused the country after that war, Greengold would feel again after the Second Lebanese War two years ago. "I felt bad. The sense of national security had deteriorated. There was governmental instability, corruption."

Living in the Misgav area, where Arabs outnumber Jews, he felt the growing pressures of Arab nationalism as the Arab population in the Galilee increased and the Jewish population declined because of negative migration.

"The Zionist vision was to build a home for the Jewish people while giving the minorities equal rights," he said. "But this simple vision had been forgotten. There is in fact a battle against the Jewish state by some among the Israeli Arab community and we stand helpless."

He decided to become involved in politics and ran for office in his Galilee regional council but failed to make it. In the campaign, he opposed permitting Arabs to move into Jewish settlements in the area for fear that this would start a process which would end with the settlements becoming Arab villages.

Greengold derides his being labeled a "racist" by a writer in Haaretz for expressing such views. "I come from a family which had almost been totally destroyed by racism. But I've been to Poland and saw what happened when we didn't preserve our interests."

As Greengold came to see it, Israel had lost the sense of purpose that had driven its founders. After the Six Day War, he said, the country had polarized - "between those who believe in Messiah Now and those who believe in Peace Now." The majority of the population occupied the space in between, bereft of ideology or vision. "The earlier values like settlement on the land and a socialist society had been emptied of content. The big cooperatives had collapsed. So had many kibbutzim. Youth groups didn't succeed in creating alternative values. In an offhand way, society drifted towards Western culture, capitalism, as if we were living in Liechtenstein, not next to Gaza. This has fed the illusions of our enemies that we are about to collapse. This is what [Hizbullah leader Hassan] Nasrallah meant when he referred to Israeli society as being like a cobweb that can be blown away."

Although he had once believed peace with the Arabs to be possible, he no longer does. "There will not be peace. There will be arrangements, which will rest mainly on our strength. But strength is not just military. It has to be based as well on a healthy society and a correct dispersal of the population. Israel cannot afford to have a thinly occupied periphery."

THUS IT was that Greengold was motivated to respond to an Interior Ministry tender last summer for acting mayor of Ofakim even though he had no municipal experience. His model was another Yom Kippur War hero, Amram Mitzna, who for three years had been serving as the acclaimed acting mayor of Yeroham, elsewhere in the Negev. After being vetted by the appropriate committees, Greengold was appointed by Interior Minister Meir Sheetrit.

Greengold had never been to Ofakim, although he had trained often enough at the army base at Tze'elim, not far away. Its very innocuousness made the task more exciting for him. "I didn't see myself being satisfied with technical changes, like balancing the budget. My object was to begin an upward spiral in the quality of life. If I could make the city normative, not to say prosperous, that would be my contribution."

Ofakim had been established in the northern Negev in 1953 as a small urban center serving a hinterland of rural settlements established at the same time. The city's original settlers were from Romania and Morocco, but in later decades they would be joined by Russian immigrants and groups of haredim. In more recent years, about 100 Palestinian informers from the West Bank and Gaza were permitted to settle in the town.

Force Zvika

Ongoing political instability would be an important factor in the town's stagnation. No mayor would be elected to a second term and some would be unable to complete a single term. The intrigue-ridden municipal council was dispersed by the interior minister in August 2006 after the mayor was found to have made unauthorized appointments. A former Ashdod mayor, Arye Azoulay, was appointed in his place by the ministry but he resigned after only one year. In addition to Greengold, a new council was appointed, made up, like him, of people residing outside Ofakim but with municipal experience.

Greengold was still coming to grips with the job when he found himself caught up once again in a shooting war. The existing municipal infrastructure was totally inadequate to cope with the emergency, unlike other towns in the area like Sderot and Netivot which were well prepared. Fortunately, however, Greengold received powerful reinforcements in the form of Home Front Command, whose unsung performance in Negev communities during the war is no less noteworthy than the battlefield strategy of Southern Command in Gaza.

Under the command of Maj. Danny Alyagon, a reserve officer who in civilian life is head of the southern region of the Israel Bar Association, up to 100 soldiers took charge of emergency services in Ofakim for the duration of the war alongside Greengold. Within 48 hours, they converted a large, empty shelter into a command center with furniture, computers, telephones and with charts on the walls providing newly prepared databases on Ofakim's infrastructure and population.

Soldiers hastily refurbished some 50 public shelters. In parts of the city where no shelters existed, Home Front Command trucked in 80 enormous concrete water pipes, two meters in diameter, from the Mekorot water company and set them up on the streets to provide ready shelter for nearby residents. Volunteers painted them in cheerful hues. Only one rocket hit inside the built-up city, but several hit in open areas around it. However, the rockets fired at Beersheba, 20 kilometers to the east, passed over Ofakim so its sirens sounded 30 times during the war. Psychologists from Home Front Command counseled residents in stress, and women soldiers spent time with children in the shelters. Dozens of volunteers also came to Ofakim to offer assistance.

Other local government entities like Rishon Lezion and Gush Etzion also sent assistance, including garbage trucks, to keep municipal services going.

Greengold himself made daily rounds of the neighborhoods and delivered a recorded telephone message to residents every day. He ordered flags raised around the town and saw to it that the streets were kept clean.

The postwar depression he felt in 1973 and 2006 is not what Greengold feels now that this war is done. The coming years will be turnaround time, he believes, for this piece of Zion he has staked out as his personal project. Within three years, he says, Ofakim's isolation will be ended with the arrival of the railroad, connecting it to Tel Aviv, an hour away in one direction, and Beersheba in the other. "The budget has been allocated and there's a clear timetable."

Beyond that, he says, Ofakim will tie in to the biggest infrastructure project the country has seen - the transfer to the Negev of major military bases and other facilities. "This is going to bring billions to the Negev and new kinds of employment, not just textiles and food as in the past. It's also going to bring quality people and some will come here."

Despite Ofakim's problems, says Greengold, its educational system is sound, but the youths leave after completing army service. "My hope is that when the beautiful new people begin moving here and there is a railroad and employment opportunities, the youths from Ofakim and the surrounding villages will decide to live here too. That is my vision. This is what I'm working on. I don't rest a minute."

His appointment officially expires next September but the interior minister, whoever it will be after the coming elections, could decide to extend it for several more years. "Yes, I'm enthusiastic," says Greengold. "I found here the challenge I was looking for. My commitment is total. I will stay as long as they let me."

Force Zvika has taken the high ground and is not prepared to pull back.

Graphic

7 photos: Mayor Zvika Greengold. 'I will stay as long as they let me.' Scenes of Ofakim. Up to 100 soldiers took charge of emergency services for the duration of the war. A donkey grazes in the municipality's backyard and construction of a private residence. (Credit: Jonathan Bloom)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Israeli offensive in Gaza

The Irish Times

January 15, 2009 Thursday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 15

Length: 1952 words

Body

Madam, Alan Shatter (January 13th) is correct to assert that the only meaningful long-term solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict is a two-state strategy. I can empathise with his frustration over the lack of debate surrounding the behaviour of Hamas in the run-up to the current conflict. However, I believe that Israeli actions over the past two weeks constitute a retrograde step in the search for a peaceful settlement.

If anything, the current conflict has strengthened the hand of Hamas leaders, whose democratic mandate in Gaza, as Mr Shatter points out, is tentative at best. As with the conflict two years ago with Hizbullah in Lebanon, Israel must realise that this kind of trigger-happy diplomacy will only condemn it to another decade of conflict in the region. Israel has yet to accept that a majority of Palestinians do wish to live in peace and to live normal lives. In Richard Nixon's term, they are a great silent majority. These people are the most frustrated when Israel rises to the provocation of Hamas by returning violence with violence, perpetuating conflict and strife.

I don't see a final goal for Israel in this current military operation and I don't believe there is one. Nor will this violence end with a conclusive victory for either side. For Israel to find a solution it must see the Palestinian people not as foot-soldiers for either Fatah or Hamas but as human beings with the same hopes, dreams and aspirations that they have. President Kennedy said in a famous speech during the height of the Cold War in 1963 that in its relations with the Soviet Union the US had to ask itself: What kind of a peace do we mean and what kind of a peace do we seek? Israel should not look for a peace with Palestinians that is imposed by armed stalemate or mutually assured destruction but a durable peace that, as Kennedy said, makes life on earth worth living.

I join the growing calls for an end to the current violence by both sides, but I hope for a peace that will mean more than a cessation of violence. A two-state solution is the only solution but it will never thrive under fear, suspicion and contempt. Yours, etc,

PAUL MAC FLYNN,

Bristol,

England.

Madam, As reported in your edition of January 14th, Sinn Féin TD Aengus Ó Snodaigh described the contributions of Ireland's only Jewish TD and the Israeli ambassador at an Oireachtas committee as being worthy of Joseph Goebbels. Mr Ó Snodaigh is described as his party's spokesman on justice, equality and international affairs, surely the ultimate oxymoron.

Israeli offensive in Gaza

One might have thought that he would steer clear of Nazi references, given his political forebears' connections with that evil regime. Sean Russell sought the help of the Nazi murder machine and in fact died on a Nazi U-boat. Some IRA members illuminated parts of Belfast so that the Luftwaffe could carry out their bombing missions over an Irish city. And some Nazis who landed here were given succour by various IRA members throughout the land.

Maybe Mr Ó Snodaigh is not aware of those facts or is he exhibiting the usual SF sins of amnesia and arrogance? Yours, etc,

BRENDAN CAFFERTY,

Ballina,

Co Mayo.

Madam, Alan Shatter says there is a tragic inevitability of civilian deaths in the current conflict. That is true if military tactics such as Israel's are used. After 121 soldiers were killed in Lebanon in 2006, Israeli public opinion would not allow their soldiers to be killed on foreign battlefields in such large numbers again.

The Israeli army unites the state: all the sons and daughters of Israel must serve and the protection of those lives is paramount. So in Gaza, Israel has adopted the American shock and awe tactics which were so devastating for civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan but resulted in relatively few casualties for the coalition of the willing.

The deaths of women and children are not inevitable unless, for instance, you shoot tank rounds into a UN school. Shock and Awe, second edition. Yours, etc,

CIARAN O CARROLL,

Maynooth,

Co Kildare.

Madam, We, the undersigned, are united in seeking the immediate expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to Ireland, Dr Zion Evrony. We believe the ambassador must leave Ireland until such time as there is a complete end to Israel's war on Gaza and its continued slaughter of the Palestinian people. Yours, etc,

MAIREAD MAGUIRE, Nobel Peace Laureate; KATHY SINNOTT MEP; MARGARET CONLON TD; MAGGIE RONAYNE, NUIG; GERRY GREHAN, Chairman, Peace People; RAYMOND DEANE, BRENDAN BUTLER, NGO Peace Alliance; ROBERT BALLAGH, JACK O CONNOR, general president, Siptu; Dr FINTAN LANE, RICHARD BOYD BARRETT, IAWM; KIERAN ALLEN, SWP; Dr STEVEN LOYAL, UCD; M.J. NOLAN TD; Dr THERESA URBAIN CZYK, UCD; JOE HIGGINS, SP; MARGARETTA D ARCY; BRIAN O CONNOR, Labour Youth; Prof MARY GALLAGHER, UCD; JOHN WADDELL, CHRIS ANDREWS TD; SHANE CULLEN; Dr SABER ELSAFTY, AILBHE SMYTH, UCD; TREASA NÍ CHEANNABHÉIN; PATRICIA McKENNA MEP; JOHN ARDEN; CHARLIE CULLEN, Senator IVANA BACIK; COLIN COULTER, NUIM; MICHAEL KILEMADE, TERENCE BROWNE, Dr FERGAL GAYNOR, UCC; NINA McGOWAN; TIM REDFERN, UCD; MAIRÉAD NI CHUIG, TG4; EAMON McCANN; MHAIRI SUTHERLAND; MICHAEL MOYNIHAN TD; BRIAN HAND; SEAMUS KEALY; Dr ANDY STOREY, UCD; PAUL MURNAGHAN; KATHARINA PFUETZNER, NCAD; ANNA MacLEOD, DIT; CHRISTY MOORE.

Madam, I disagree strongly with current Israeli policy in Gaza and with most of what the Israeli Ambassador to Ireland, Dr Evrony, has had to say about the topic. I think Israel's recent actions could fairly be described as examples of state terrorism and international war crimes.

But Mr Ó Snodaigh's reported comments to an Oireachtas committee, in which he compared remarks by the ambassador and Alan Shatter TD to Goebbels, are egregious and unacceptable. Mr Ó Snodaigh does not speak for me nor, I hope, for the majority of people opposed to what is happening in Gaza. Moreover, it is a little sickening to

Israeli offensive in Gaza

be lectured by a Sinn Féin representative on violence and the impact it has on civilians. They should know more than most about it.

Mr Chris Andrews s call for the ambassador to be expelled is plain silly. The ambassador is there to represent his country s views, whether we like them or not, and to report back on Irish policy and attitudes. He deserves every respect and a courteous hearing no matter how strongly people may disagree with him. Yours, etc,

PIARAS MAC ÉINRÍ,

Model Farm Road,

Cork.

Madam, Has the time come for the whole Israeli war cabinet to be arraigned at the Hague for war crimes? How many more people have to be killed in order to protect the lives of Israelis who are occupying land which is not theirs. When does the rest of the world say stop? Yours, etc,

JOHN BIELENBERG,

Lucan,

Co Dublin.

Madam, I wish to clarify that Steven Corcoran, an Erasmus student whose letter on the Israeli offensive in Gaza you published on Monday, does not in any way represent or speak for the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris.

The views expressed are personal and those of us who represent this historic Irish College wish to explicitly dissociate ourselves from them. Yours, etc,

SHEILA PRATSCHKE,

Directrice,

Centre Culturel Irlandais,

Paris.

Madam, Critics of the ongoing military activity in Gaza seem to be essentially concerned with what is considered Israel s disproportionate response to rocket attacks by Hamas.

There are possibly other readers who share my feeling that some letter-writers are long on condemnation and short on constructive proposals. It might be helpful if they could describe, specifically, a response to Hamas that would satisfy the criterion of proportionality and at the same time allow Israel todeter attacks on its citizens.

I share the widely-felt compassion for all the victims of this long-running tragedy, both Palestinian and Israeli, but I confess that Hamas leaves me with the uneasy feeling that it has a somewhat larger agenda than the welfare of the unfortunate Palestinian people. Yours, etc,

LES SERFF,

Calvia,

Islas Baleares,

Spain.

Madam, The Israeli Ambassador to Ireland, Dr Zion Evrony, claimed to the Dáil European Affairs Committee on Tuesday that Hamas were unlike the IRA and wanted to solely live by religious terms and were not open to

Israeli offensive in Gaza

change. This is untrue. The Hamas Founding Charter of 1988 is much targeted by Israeli propaganda as proof of Hamas's extremism. And it is true that the charter contains some extreme-sounding rhetoric, such as calling for the destruction of the Israeli state (not, mind you, the Israeli people). At that time of extreme Israeli violence and confrontation, the PLO was in exile and its leaders and members the subject of Israeli assassination, and Hamas was a marginal and radical underground resistance movement.

However, not unlike Sinn Féin and the IRA in Northern Ireland, in 2005 Hamas adopted a political path, called an effective ceasefire and contested the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council of February 2006. It emerged as the largest party, winning 74 out of 132 seats.

Following their election victory, Hamas spokesmen made it clear they were seeking a long-term truce with Israel, the price being Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. The elected Hamas prime minister, Ismail Haniya, said in an interview with the BBC that Hamas would be prepared to work a two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders. This was an opportunity for a more peaceful phase in the Middle East, but was rejected by Israel, which boycotted the elected Hamas government (shamefully supported in this by the EU and US), and launched a ferocious offensive which killed 700 Palestinians that year alone.

Again, in June 2008 a ceasefire brokered by Egypt was put in place, and until November last, as confirmed reluctantly by Mark Regev, spokesman for the Israeli prime minister, not a single Hamas rocket was fired into Israel and Hamas attempted to stop rocket firing by smaller groups.

That ceasefire was cynically broken by Israel on November 4th with a military strike on Gaza which killed six people. The ensuing rocket fire by Hamas provided the casus belli for Israel's long-planned murderous onslaught of December 27th (a Hamas offer of December 23rd for a renewal of the ceasefire was ignored). This offensive has since claimed nearly 1,000 lives and injured and maimed thousands more.

Hamas and Fatah are both partners for peace, and partners for any peaceful and civilised initiative to end the terrible suffering of the Palestinian people. The bloody-mindedness of Israel is the only barrier. Yours, etc,

PHILIP O CONNOR,

Ireland Palestine

Solidarity Campaign,

Dublin 2.

Madam, Brendan Ó Cathaoir (January 13th) would have your readers believe that the one thing Israel has not displayed is a willingness to accept UN Resolution 242 and return to its internationally recognised borders. He suggests that Mr Zion Evrony [Israel's Ambassador to Ireland] is selective with the truth.

However, clearly it is Mr Ó Cathaoir who is being selective with the truth or has he forgotten Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula in 1982? And has he, in common with many of your correspondents, forgotten that this resolution called for the application of both the following principles: Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict [but not necessarily to its pre-1967 borders]; and termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for . . . every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats or acts of force.

The Israeli government, unlike Hamas, has demonstrated its willingness to abide by this resolution. Yours, etc,

DAVID M. ABRAHAMSON,

Glenageary,

Co Dublin.

Israeli offensive in Gaza

Load-Date: January 15, 2009

End of Document

5 Minute Herald

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

July 17, 2008 Thursday

Early Edition

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Section: CITY & REGION; Pg. B10

Length: 1199 words

Byline: Calgary Herald

Body

TOP STORIES

Taber storm could wipe out corn crop

Taber farmers are warning of serious corn shortages after a major storm that brought golf ball size hail, 120 kilometres per hour winds and at least one twister. What's left of the much anticipated summer treat will be late and possibly up to 50 per cent more expensive.

Page A1

Western premiers warn against cap and trade

The premiers of Alberta and Saskatchewan scuttled any hope of a national cap-and-trade program Wednesday, warning other provincial and territorial heads they consider it a thinly-disguised attempt to siphon their provinces' petroleum riches.

Page A1

Pathologists call for national testing system

The federal government should set up a system of standards for medical testing as a way to prevent errors that could lead to faulty diagnoses, the Canadian Association of Pathologists says.

Page A4

NEWS SECTIONS -- A AND B

City & Region

Tossing a lit butt could cost \$1,000

Smokers who toss lit cigarette butts could face a \$1,000 fine after a city committee voted to toughen proposed littering fines even further than initially recommended.

5 Minute Herald

"I think everyone who litters should be thrown in the clink," said Ald. Druh Farrell.

Page B1

Police chief announces new officers for downtown

The bulk of 41 officers paid for by new provincial funding will be walking the beat downtown once they're trained, police Chief Rick Hanson said Wednesday.

Page B3

Canada

Kidnapped Quebec boy rescued from oil drum

An eight-year-old Quebec boy who was grabbed off the street in broad-daylight, stuffed in the trunk of a car and later locked in an oil drum was saved by quick-thinking witnesses.

Page A7

World

China prepares to protect Olympics from rain

China's top meteorologists confirm they are on track to stop light showers from interfering with the Olympic opening ceremonies on August 8. But a full-blown downpour with thunder and lightening may just be beyond China's storied expertise.

Page A3

Israel swaps prisoners for soldiers' remains

After an exchange of the remains of two

Israeli soldiers for five Lebanese prisoners, one a notorious murderer, Wednesday, **Hezbollah** leader Hassan Nasrallah told several hundred thousand jubilant supporters "the period of defeat is over and the time of victory has arrived."

Page A6

Bishops boycott gathering

A quarter of the world's Anglican bishops boycotted a once-in-a-decade gathering of church leaders in a row over gay clergy.

Page A6

TRAFFIC

- Lane closure: The rightbound lane on 14th Street between North Haven Drive and John Laurie Boulevard N.W. southbound is closed between 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. today and Friday.

- Lane closure: Centre Street between Blackthorn Road and Tache Avenue N.W. is reduced to one lane in both directions until 3 p.m. today.

- Road closure: 13th Avenue between 6th Street and 5th Street N.W. is closed until 5 p.m. Sunday.

5 Minute Herald

- Lane closure: Northbound 14th Street between North Haven Drive and Norquay Cove N.W. is closed until about 3 p.m. Friday

COMMUTER WEATHER

6 A.M. Off to Work: Sunny. Temperature: 13 C

12NOON Lunch: Risk of thunderstorms. Temperature: 19 C

5P.M. Heading Home: Risk of thunderstorms (POP 40 per cent).

Temperature: 20 C

OVERNIGHT: Scattered thundershowers (POP 40 per cent). Low: 8 C

FRIDAY: Mainly sunny with cloudy periods. High: 23 C Low: 8 C

WednEsDAY: High: 18.8 C Low: 8.3 C

Calgary Herald.com Online Features

Sound Off: The longtime owner of the iconic Peter's Drive-in died this week. Share your thoughts on Gus Pieters life's work.

BLOGS: Injuries could play a huge role in tonight's Stamps game. Get the 411 on our Stamps Insider blog.

CALGARY BUSINESS -- E1

Markets

s TSX Composite 146.24 13,503.80

s Dow Jones 276.74 11,239.28

s Nasdaq 69.14 2,284.85

t TSX Venture 1.32 2308.76

\$7B TransCanada project to link oilsands, refineries

TransCanada Corp. is plowing ahead with a \$7-billion US expansion of the Keystone pipeline project, taking a bold step into first place in the race to build a direct link between Alberta oilsands producers and the major refinery centre on the Texas coast. CEO Hal Kvisle says the project will be constructed and operated as an integrated system.

Page E1

Canada's Hudson's Bay bought by U.S. investor

Hudson's Bay Co., Canada's oldest retailer, has been acquired by an American investor. The move will combine North America's two oldest department stores into the same corporate structure.

Page E3

EDITORIAL -- A14

Weed out questions now

5 Minute Herald

City council needs to draft a clearly worded pesticide bylaw that raises no questions over the meaning of "cosmetic" and "exemption" if the ban is going to work for homeowners. They must spell out what can be used and when.

Page A14

Letter of the day

I want a PM who will stand up to, not bow down to the Bush administration. Demand the repatriation of (Omar Khadr) who has been held as a prisoner at Guantanamo Bay.

April Vyas, Page A15

SPORTS -- F1

Stamps head coach, GM asserts authority

If there were any doubts out there John Hufnagel is in charge of the Calgary Stampeders football operation -- the entire operation -- they were dispelled Wednesday.

The first-year head coach and general manager is prepared to make a list and take down names -- even for team business that predates his arrival at McMahon Stadium last winter.

Page F1

Crazy Canuck steps down for Olympic-hopeful son

The CEO of Alpine Canada, Ken Read, of Crazy Canuck fame, announced he will be stepping down from his post because of his son. Erik, 17, has qualified for the national junior ski team.

Page F4

REAL LIFE -- C1

Marketing fun foods to kids bad for their health

Researchers found that "fun foods" -- dubbed for their use of devices such as cartoons, tie-ins with children's television shows or puzzles and games -- are harmful to children. Nine out of 10 grocery store food products marketed to kids are of poor nutritional quality because they're too high in sugar, salt or fat.

Page C1

New moms break away from old school traditions

Moms-to-be now know it's not healthy to smoke and it is healthy to exercise. A personal trainer from Edmonton, Leanna Martens, who is also 27 weeks pregnant, says women today are different from their mothers and grandmothers.

Page C4

ENTERTAINMENT -- D1

Streep dons overalls to battle Batman

The grande dame of American cinema is a shabby dervish named Donna in Mamma Mia! Meryl Streep plays an overall-wearing hotel owner who collides with her footloose past in a movie about the stage musical inspired by ABBA's greatest hits. It opens Friday.

Page D1

Tonight's TV picks:

- Rick Mercer Report: 9:30 p.m. on Comedy Channel (Ch. 41).
- jPod: 8 p.m. on CBC (Ch. 6).

IT'S AN ODD WORLD

Koala survives being struck by speeding car

A koala that cheated death after being hit by a car at 100 km per hour and dragged with his head in the car's grill for 12 km is being dubbed Australia's luckiest marsupial.

Named Ely (Lucky) Grills by rescuers, he was hit near Brisbane and found only when the car stopped after being flagged down. Lucky hung on during his ordeal with one arm and his trapped head, and was freed with household scissors used like a fireman's "jaws-of-life" to cut the mesh grill.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

I was scolded by my parents so I did this to cause them trouble

Fourteen-year-old Japanese boy after hijacking a bus at knifepoint

Graphic

Colour Photo: Ed Stelmach ;

Colour Photo: Druh Farrell ;

Colour Photo: Hassan Nasrallah ;

Colour Photo: Jeon Hyeong-Jin, AFP-Getty Images; PICTURE OF THE DAY: A South Korean protester hurls an egg toward the Japanese Embassy in Seoul on Wednesday during a protest over Japan's school education guidelines -- emphasizing Japan's claim over Korean islands. ;

Colour Photo: Hal Kvisle ;

Colour Photo: John Hufnagel ;

Load-Date: July 17, 2008

WHY DOES RUSH HATE AMERICA SO MUCH?

Wisconsin State Journal (Madison, Wisconsin)

January 24, 2009 Saturday

ALL EDITION

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Section: OPINION; Pg. A11

Length: 1325 words

Body

I heard this week that Rush Limbaugh said he wants President Barack Obama to fail. What can Limbaugh be thinking?

The failure of a president of either party is a failure for the people of America. Even non-Republicans wanted President George W. Bush to succeed. We wanted Osama bin Laden captured, terrorist organizations destroyed, a healthy economy and government budget surpluses.

Does Limbaugh want millions of Americans unemployed? Does he want increased international tensions, and fewer people with adequate and affordable health care? We should all want whoever is president to succeed.

All I can say to Limbaugh is what I believe he's said to others: "Why do you hate America - and Americans - so much?"

- Al Stauffacher, New Glarus

Free newspapers at school appreciated

Thank you to Wisconsin State Journal, Lisa Maly and the Newspapers in Education program, and community members who support the NIE program, for the copies of the special inauguration papers received at our school.

Schools could receive free newspapers on Jan. 19, 20 and 21 for teachers to use in their classrooms to study the historic presidential inauguration.

My school accepted this offer and had 455 papers delivered, free of charge, each of the three days.

Many classrooms were buzzing, reading the paper together and learning about the democratic process. Then as a bonus, the kids were each able to take a paper home.

To quote one teacher, "The children were tickled with them, the memory of a lifetime." Thank you again for such positive support of the schools and education.

- Nancy Engle, library media specialist, Frank Allis - Nuestro Mundo Elementary School, Madison

Space opened for inaugural crowd

WHY DOES RUSH HATE AMERICA SO MUCH?

On Tuesday, Jan. 20, the King Coalition held an inaugural event in the lecture hall at Monona Terrace, planned for 300 people. However, the historic nature of President Barack Obama's inauguration drew a crowd of over 1,200.

As the room began to overflow, Monona Terrace staff found additional rooms to set up for the event, complete with chairs, large screens and audio visual equipment.

We are proud to live in a community that has such a beautiful facility that is open to the public for so many free events. The flexible and competent staff happily adapted their work day to accommodate everyone who wished to view this "once in a lifetime" event.

In addition to our many sponsors, we'd like to thank everyone at Monona Terrace who made this event possible, from director Jim Hess to the staff members who opened walls and set up hundreds of chairs. Because of you, we did not have to turn anyone away.

- Mona Adams Winston and Edward Lee, co-chairs, and the members of the King Coalition Committee

Keillor's sad: No more Bush to kick around

I'm curious - now that the "great moment" is over, what will syndicated columnist Garrison Keillor write about in his weekly columns. There's no more Bush to kick around.

Perhaps he will go back to tales of Lake Wobegon, stories that were truly delightful and brought smiles to everyone. It's strange that someone with such a great sense of humor can continually write such snarly columns.

Incidentally, have any members of the press corps noted that Abraham Lincoln was a Republican?

- David G. Cooper, Madison

WWII comparisons don't hold up

From what I have read, Jewish-Americans who are anti-Israeli just don't seem to get it when they claim that what the Israelis have done in Gaza is similar to what the "persecutors" did to the Jews of Europe before and during World War II.

The Jews of Europe were a prosperous, intelligent, high-achieving society which, like the Israelis, only wanted to live in peace with their neighbors.

Unlike the Palestinians, European Jews and Israelis didn't bomb themselves to kill their neighbors. They didn't kidnap and torture their neighbors, or hurl bombs relentlessly at the schools and homes of people who never provoked them in any way other than having a religion different than their own.

One of their original commandments was to love thy neighbor; they have no commandment that says to turn their cheeks when constantly struck.

The European Jews of old and their offspring living in Israel have never sought the annihilation of their neighbors. Why do the Jews of America who oppose Israel refuse to acknowledge this and condemn Israel's attempt to control Hamas and Hezbollah so that a peaceful solution can be found?

They have become part of the propaganda machine whose purpose is to destroy what they forebears took decades to nurture and develop.

- Ernie Pellegrino, Middleton

U.N. Ambassador Rice a fine choice

As President Barack Obama's term begins, it is clear he has chosen some talented, experienced and competent Americans to work with him. Many are women, such as Susan Rice.

WHY DOES RUSH HATE AMERICA SO MUCH?

It's ironic that Rice was chosen to be ambassador to the United Nations when it has not been our nation's policy to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. Other nations will not need to convince Rice, but America will need to convince itself.

By returning the U.N. ambassador's position to membership in the president's cabinet, we have signaled to the world our intention to provide one more conduit for the voice of the world to reach the highest levels of U.S. government.

At the same time, the Obama administration has signaled deep U.S. concern about failed states, hunger in Africa, dependable U.N. peacekeeping operations in Darfur and other places, areas in which Rice has significant academic training and practical experience.

Are we sufficiently mature as a nation to want to lead the world with positions that emphasize community for all? Rice's appointment has significant implications for what we will support at the U.N. and for what the organization can expect of us. We can meet those high expectations, and set them for ourselves.

- Tom Brown, Madison

Variable fund like going to the casino

Regarding Sunday's article about state retirement problems, I take exception to the complaints of the people quoted about their variable fund losses.

Nobody held a gun to their heads and said they had to go into the variable fund. As a retired state employee, this will be the second time I have been "cut" in the 21st century, but there were also many years when I gained.

It isn't as if the Employee Trust Fund and the State of Wisconsin Investment Board didn't try to keep us informed, because they did a good job of preparing us for the possible consequences.

As for the idea that ETF could somehow tell us before Dec. 31 what was going to happen, that isn't realistic. It is set up on a calendar year and nothing is over until the market closes on the 31st of December.

Being in the variable fund is like going to the casino. I love it when I win and I hate it when I lose, but I keep going back of my own free will. After all, if the market has a miraculous recovery in 2009, as I am (tongue in cheek) sure it will, my variable account will give me an increase.

- James R. Miller, Stoughton

Avoiding pregnancy is a free choice, too

I am a mother and grandmother who is not in favor of children being born into neglect and abuse, nor am I in favor of the back street butchers who will perform abortions if they are made illegal.

What I favor is people making the choice to not become pregnant if they do not want a child.

Heaven knows there are enough ways to prevent pregnancy and most of them start with the brain. Women need to use their brains to make the choice to not create a fetus that they then decide to abort.

Second trimester fetuses often will be miniature humans who just need to mature enough to function in the world. Let's prevent these pregnancies before they happen. That's when women should use their freedom of choice.

It's time for free or low-cost contraception to be made available to every woman who wants it. As it is now, women are using abortion as a means of birth control, and that is the wrong order of things.

Nancy Currell, Waunakee

WHY DOES RUSH HATE AMERICA SO MUCH?

Load-Date: January 25, 2009

End of Document

UN appeal for truce in Gaza unheeded; Aid groups express growing frustration with poor conditions

The International Herald Tribune

January 10, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1358 words

Byline: Ethan Bronner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Reporting was contributed by Neil MacFarquhar from the United Nations; Rachel Donadio from Rome; Isabel Kershner and Steven Erlanger from Jerusalem; Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza; and Alan Cowell from Paris.

*

As the fighting in Gaza entered its 14th day unchecked Friday, the Israeli military said its forces attacked more than 50 targets in Gaza overnight despite a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for "an immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire."

Israeli warplanes attacked rocket-launching sites and missile-manufacturing facilities, the military said. One Israeli airstrike destroyed a five-story building, killing at least seven people, Hamas security officials told The Associated Press. Officials from Hamas also dismissed the cease-fire call, although one official said the UN resolution was being studied.

The developments came as international aid groups lashed out at Israel, saying that access to civilians in need was poor, relief workers were being hurt and killed and Israel was woefully neglecting its obligations to Palestinians who were trapped, some among rotting corpses, in a nightmarish landscape of deprivation.

On Thursday, the United Nations declared a suspension of its aid operations after one of its drivers was killed and two others were wounded, despite driving UN-flagged vehicles and coordinating their movements with the Israeli military. The United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki Moon, called a second time for an investigation by Israel of the more than 40 deaths near a United Nations school from Israeli tank fire on Tuesday.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, based in Geneva, reported finding what it called shocking scenes, including four emaciated children next to the corpses of their mothers, on Wednesday. In a rare and sharply critical statement, it said it believed that "the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded."

Israeli officials said that they were examining all the allegations, that they did not aim at civilians and that they were not certain that the source of fire that killed or wounded the United Nations drivers was Israeli.

UN appeal for truce in Gaza unheeded Aid groups express growing frustration with poor conditions

"We do our utmost to avoid hitting civilians, and many times we don't fire because we see civilians nearby," said Major Avital Leibovich, chief army spokeswoman for the foreign news media. "We are holding meetings with UN officials to try to work out a mechanism so that their work can go forward."

She said the army had learned of the Red Cross allegations in a media report, and that the committee had not yet presented the evidence of what she called "these very serious allegations" to the army.

Anne-Sophie Bonefeld, a spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said Thursday that when the children and others were rescued in Gaza on Wednesday, workers had to leave behind a number of bodies. On Thursday, she said, 100 civilians were rescued from the same Gaza City neighborhood. They were not wounded, but they were weakened because of being without food or water for two days.

At the United Nations itself, 14 nations approved the Security Council resolution urging a cease-fire, with the United States abstaining. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the United States abstained from voting on the resolution, which left unclear how a cease-fire would be enforced, because it wanted to see whether mediation efforts undertaken by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt succeed. The United States did not veto the resolution because Washington supports its overall goals, she said.

The resolution called for a cease-fire that would lead to the "full withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza, the passage of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians and an end to the trafficking of arms and ammunition into the territory.

Some Arab ambassadors expressed disappointment that the measure did not specifically call for a lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza, and some Western ambassadors acknowledged a long history of UN resolutions that led nowhere. "We are all very conscious that peace is made on the ground, while resolutions are written in the United Nations," said David Miliband, the British foreign secretary.

The Gaza authorities said that the death toll passed 750, with women and children making up about 40 percent of the dead. Israel held its fire for three hours Thursday afternoon, the second day in a row, to allow in aid. It was during that pause that local ambulance crews and the Red Crescent found dozens of bodies under a collapsed building. Three Israeli soldiers were killed in combat; seven other soldiers have died during the military campaign, which is aimed at stopping Hamas rocket fire, and three civilians have been killed by rockets.

More rockets flew into Israel and, for the first time since the operation against Hamas began, three Katyusha rockets were shot from Lebanon into northern Israel on Thursday. Hezbollah, which fought a war with Israel in 2006 that included thousands of rockets, said it was not responsible.

But attention was increasingly focused on the growing humanitarian crisis and on the increasing anger abroad.

Israel condemned a high-ranking Vatican official for comparing Gaza to "a concentration camp."

"Look at the conditions in Gaza: more and more, it resembles a big concentration camp," Cardinal Renato Martino, the head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said in an interview published Wednesday in *Il Sussidiario*.

He defended his comments in the center-left Italian daily *La Repubblica* on Thursday. While noting that Hamas rockets into Israel were "certainly not sugared almonds," he called the situation in Gaza "horrific."

Israel sharply condemned the cardinal's use of World War II imagery. "We are astounded that a spiritual dignitary would have such words that are so far removed from truth and dignity," said Yigal Palmor, a spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

John Holmes, a United Nations emergency relief coordinator, said in New York that the three-hour daily pause in the fighting permitted by Israel in Gaza was insufficient. He said the Gaza authorities counted 758 fatalities, among them 257 children and 56 women. The injured totaled 3,100. Of these, 1,080 were children and about were 465 women.

UN appeal for truce in Gaza unheeded Aid groups express growing frustration with poor conditions

Holmes added that the Gaza authorities reported that 20,000 were displaced but that conditions prevented officials from helping them properly. "The continuing violence is making humanitarian aid increasingly difficult and almost impossible," he said.

Antoine Grand, head of Red Cross operations in Gaza, said his group's workers came under Israeli fire on Thursday. He said a convoy of two trucks, one clearly marked as Red Cross and the other from the Ministry of Health, was taking medical equipment to the southern city of Khan Yunis, followed by 13 ambulances heading to the Egyptian border.

He said the convoy's movement was "fully coordinated with Israel. I did it myself." It was during the three-hour lull, at 3:30 p.m., he said, when they stopped in front of the checkpoint that the Red Cross vehicle was shot at from a tank.

Israeli officials said they were investigating.

The Jerusalem Post's Web site quoted an Israeli medical worker as saying that the killing of the United Nations driver that contributed to the suspension of aid delivery was the work of a Hamas sniper.

John Ging, who heads United Nations relief operations in Gaza, said by telephone that he was unaware of any information suggesting that the driver had been shot by Hamas.

"If they have evidence, let them present it," he said, adding that in none of the events of the past few days - the attacks on the school or the trucks - was there any evidence of cross-fire.

He visited the school after the shelling.

"I want an exhaustive investigation to establish all the facts," he said by telephone. "In the school, they say two of those killed were militants. But that means 41 were civilians. That is wholly and totally a very serious matter regarding duty of care and appropriate use of force. But I can't pass judgment without the facts."

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

Aid Groups Rebuke Israel Over Conditions in Gaza

The New York Times

January 9, 2009 Friday

Late Edition - Final

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Length: 1300 words

Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER; Reporting was contributed by Neil MacFarquhar from the United Nations; Rachel Donadio from Rome; Isabel Kershner and Steven Erlanger from Jerusalem; and Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza.

Body

JERUSALEM -- International aid groups lashed out at Israel on Thursday over the war in Gaza, saying that access to civilians in need is poor, relief workers are being hurt and killed, and Israel is woefully neglecting its obligations to Palestinians who are trapped, some among rotting corpses in a nightmarish landscape of deprivation.

The United Nations declared a suspension of its aid operations after one of its drivers was killed and two others were wounded despite driving United Nations-flagged vehicles and coordinating their movements with the Israeli military. The United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, called for an investigation by Israel for a second time in a week after the more than 40 deaths near a United Nations school from Israeli tank fire on Tuesday.

The International Committee of the Red Cross reported finding what it called shocking scenes on Wednesday, including four emaciated children next to the bodies of their dead mothers. In a rare and sharply critical statement, it said it believed that "the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded."

Israeli officials said that they were examining all the allegations, that they did not aim at civilians and that they were not certain that the source of fire that killed and wounded the United Nations drivers was Israeli.

"We do our utmost to avoid hitting civilians, and many times we don't fire because we see civilians nearby," said Maj. Avital Leibovich, chief army spokeswoman for the foreign media. "We are holding meetings with U.N. officials to try to work out a mechanism so that their work can go forward."

She said that the army learned of the Red Cross allegations in a media report, and that the Geneva-based committee had not yet presented the evidence of what she called "these very serious allegations" to the army.

At the United Nations, members of the Security Council voted Thursday night to approve a resolution calling for "an immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire" that would lead to the "full withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza, the passage of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians and an end to the trafficking of arms and ammunition into the territory.

Fourteen nations approved the measure, with the United States abstaining. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the United States abstained from voting on the resolution, which left it unclear how a cease-fire would be

Aid Groups Rebuke Israel Over Conditions in Gaza

enforced, because it wanted to see whether mediation efforts undertaken by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt succeed. The United States did not veto the resolution because Washington supports its overall goals, she said.

Some Arab ambassadors expressed disappointment that the measure did not specifically call for a lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza, and some Western ambassadors acknowledged a long history of United Nations resolutions that led nowhere.

"We are all very conscious that peace is made on the ground, while resolutions are written in the United Nations," said David Miliband, the British foreign secretary.

A Red Cross spokeswoman, Anne-Sophie Bonefeld, said that when the children and others were rescued in Gaza on Wednesday, workers had to leave behind a number of bodies. On Thursday, she said, 100 civilians were rescued from the same Gaza City neighborhood. They were not wounded, but they were weakened because of being without food or water for two days.

As the war entered its 14th day, and Israeli airstrike destroyed a five-story building, killing at least seven people, Hamas security officials told The Associated Press.

The Gaza authorities said that the death toll passed 750, with women and children making up about 40 percent of the dead. Israel held its fire for three hours Thursday afternoon, the second day in a row, to allow in aid. It was during that pause that local ambulance crews and the Red Crescent found dozens of bodies under a collapsed building. Three Israeli soldiers were killed in combat; seven other soldiers have died during the military campaign, which is aimed at stopping Hamas rocket fire, and three civilians have been killed by rockets.

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He defended his comments in the center-left Italian daily *La Repubblica* on Thursday. While noting that Hamas rockets into Israel were "certainly not sugared almonds," he called the situation in Gaza "horrific." Israel sharply condemned the cardinal's use of World War II imagery. "We are astounded that a spiritual dignitary would have such words that are so far removed from truth and dignity," said Yigal Palmor, a spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

The Vatican sought to play down the remarks, calling them inopportune.

John Holmes, a United Nations emergency relief coordinator, said in New York that the three-hour daily pause in the fighting permitted by Israel in Gaza was insufficient. He said the Gaza authorities counted 758 fatalities, among them 257 children and 56 women. The injured totaled 3,100; of them 1,080 were children and about were 465 women.

He added that the Gaza authorities reported that 20,000 were displaced but that conditions prevented officials from helping them properly. "The continuing violence is making humanitarian aid increasingly difficult and almost impossible," Mr. Holmes said.

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Aid Groups Rebuke Israel Over Conditions in Gaza

He said the convoy's movement was "fully coordinated with Israel. I did it myself." And it was during the three-hour lull, at 3:30 p.m., he said, when they stopped in front of the checkpoint that the Red Cross vehicle was shot at from a tank.

"One bullet passed 10 centimeters from the head of the driver," he said. He was lightly injured from shattered glass. Mr. Grand said the group would limit its operations to Gaza City.

Israeli officials said they were investigating.

The Jerusalem Post's Web site quoted an Israeli medical worker as saying that the killing of the United Nations driver that contributed to the suspension of aid delivery was the work of a Hamas sniper.

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"I want an exhaustive investigation to establish all the facts," he said in a telephone interview. "In the school, they say two of those killed were militants. But that means 41 were civilians. That is wholly and totally a very serious matter regarding duty of care and appropriate use of force. But I can't pass judgment without the facts."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: A Palestinian woman inspected the remains of her Gaza home after an airstrike Thursday, day 13 of Israel's anti-Hamas operation.(PHOTOGRAPH BY MOHAMMED SALEM/REUTERS)(A1)

Palestinians carried sacks of flour from a United Nations Relief and Works Agency warehouse in Gaza City on Thursday. The United Nations declared a suspension of its aid operations.(PHOTOGRAPH BY ALI ALI/EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY)(A8) MAP: Trucks taking supplies to Khan Yunis came under fire. (A8)

Load-Date: June 17, 2011

Soldiers of Allah - Correction Appended

The New York Times
January 6, 2008 Sunday
Late Edition - Final

Correction Appended

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Section: Section 7; Column 0; Book Review Desk; Pg. 8

Length: 1320 words

Byline: By IRSHAD MANJI

Irshad Manji, a fellow with the European Foundation for Democracy, directs the Moral Courage Project at New York University.

Body

ARGUING THE JUST WAR IN ISLAM

By John Kelsay.

263 pp. Harvard University Press. \$24.95.

Before the Iraq invasion, a young imam offered some chilling advice to Muslims at the University of Toronto: if they could not fight the jihad against America with their souls or their sons, they should fight with their money. The Muslim Students Association told campus authorities that the imam did not represent the true spirit of Islam. With that, the case was closed.

"Arguing the Just War in Islam" re-opens such debates. John Kelsay, a professor of religion at Florida State University, shows that today's freelance fatwa-hurlers rarely capture the best of Islamic thought, but are not wholly divorced from it either. Their pronouncements attempt to pass for "Shariah reasoning," a tradition of reconciling the Koran's passages and the Prophet Muhammad's examples to changing times.

For Muslim militants, however, the times do not change. Because Islam is humanity's "natural religion," evolution ended in the seventh century. That means the Islam of 1,400 years ago must be true everywhere and forever. "The militant vision," Kelsay observes, "is one in which premodern precedents are not so much interpreted as applied." No wonder a 20-something imam in the cosmopolitan West can feel utterly entitled to champion values straight out of tribal Arabia.

To his credit, Kelsay refuses to whitewash the role of religion in fostering the violence he discusses. "Those who wish to argue that Islam has nothing to do with the attacks of 9/11 or with the tactics of Iraqi 'insurgents' will find no comfort here," he warns early on.

Yet his analysis also respects the nuances of Shariah reasoning. Kelsay appreciates Islamic history and delves into detail -- though it is often tedious -- about how theologians, jurists and dissidents decided what constitutes a

Soldiers of Allah

just war. Like their Christian counterparts, Muslims have asked and asked again: When may battle be waged? Can noncombatants ever be targets? How much force is proportional? Does negotiation take precedence over a quick and easy victory?

Kelsay could have brought these questions to life had he given us something -- anything -- about the personalities of the questioners and not merely the process they followed. Stick with him, though. By forensically dissecting the development of Shariah reasoning he illuminates the situation we now face, in which classical Islamic scholars are trumped by bloodthirsty bandits who pose as thinkers.

Osama bin Laden is hardly the first of them. Consider the assassins of Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian president who made peace with Israel in 1979. His murderers' manifesto tried to justify Sadat's killing with Shariah reasoning. Their case was weak -- and they knew it. So they turned themselves into tabloid terrorists, exploiting emotion, inflating language and sensationalizing their target's crime.

In short, Kelsay points out, the thugs resorted to "emergency reasoning." According to their fevered testimonial about Sadat, "the enemy now 'lives right in the middle' of Islamic territory." Emergency reasoning jettisons the basics of justice along with logic. The charter of Hamas tells slaves they may fight Zionists without their masters' permission -- thereby accepting bondage in Islam even while preaching liberation from oppressors.

By contrast, traditional Shariah reasoning is sober enough to cut both ways. Take the just-war criterion of protecting innocents. One mainstream Muslim scholar has acknowledged that, in Kelsay's words, a child's death may be "foreseeable but unavoidable, as when an enemy's military resources are deployed in the midst of a civilian population. ... Soldiers whose actions take place under such conditions are excused from the guilt associated with unjust killing." That ruling would let Israeli defense forces off the hook for collateral damage in their 2006 war in Lebanon, since Hezbollah deliberately operated in residential Beirut.

To get out of embarrassing pickles like this, the most populist interpreters of just war in Islam go for broke. The televangelist Yusuf al-Qaradawi is one example. Skirting both tradition and reason, he intones that "necessity makes the forbidden things permitted." The "forbidden" includes suicide, conveniently redefined as martyrdom. Deep Shariah reasoning takes another tabloid turn.

Kelsay proves that we can understand the shifting rationales behind Islamist violence without excusing that violence. But his generosity also leads him, prematurely, to proclaim Shariah reasoning an "open practice." Were this true, we Muslims would have already had our liberal reformation. As Kelsay himself notes, unconventional thinkers in Islam pay heavy tolls, from aborted careers to prolonged prison terms to outright execution. An open practice? From the author's lips to the Almighty's ears.

Kelsay would retort that mass movements like Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami were founded by ordinary folk, a schoolteacher and a journalist respectively. Each of them seemingly supported the democratizing of interpretation. After all, they benefited from it.

But their campaigns did not democratize Shariah reasoning at all. As puritan movements, they further restricted who could participate in shaping Islam. Early on, the Muslim Brotherhood closed down bookstores and other dens of free thought. The Jamaat-i-Islami declared a minority Muslim sect inauthentic. To this day, the Islamic world's only Nobel laureate in science, a member of the banned sect, cannot be buried with proper religious rites in his home country, Pakistan.

Nor can moderate Muslims be counted on to rescue Shariah reasoning from militants. The sheik of Al Azhar University in Cairo, widely regarded as the highest seat of learning in Sunni Islam, never directly challenged the manifesto of Sadat's assassins. Kelsay rightly wonders, "Why not insist that militants like bin Laden or al-Zawahiri cease their advocacy of military operations, or that they confine themselves to making the case for reform through normal political channels?"

He provides a fascinating answer: moderates can share key premises with militants. The moderates whom Kelsay has studied "do not in fact dissent from the militant judgment that current political arrangements are illegitimate."

Soldiers of Allah

Which is not to say they have sought real democracy. Some moderates agree with militants that "democracy implies a kind of moral equivalence between Islam and other perspectives. And such a situation is dangerous, not only for the standing of the Muslim community, but for the moral life of humankind."

The hope rests with "Muslim democrats" who will pluck the Koran and the Prophet out of a tribal time warp. Kelsay focuses on Muslims in America, recognizing three male scholars whose work ranges from online consultations about the future of Shariah to arguments for harmonizing Islam with women's equality and freedom of conscience. He then urges the West to prosecute its war on terror by demonstrating rather than defying democracy. Doing so will help Muslim democrats get heard within their communities -- a necessity for all of us, Kelsay suggests, because these Muslims might be the only people who can rehabilitate democracy's appeal after the serial hypocrisies practiced under its banner by Washington, among others.

It is a provocative conclusion, but an incomplete one. Muslim democrats will also have to confront Koranic passages that give militants an escape hatch. The most famous verse tells believers that slaying an innocent is like slaying all of mankind unless it is done to punish villainy. Radical Muslims seize on this loophole. Moderate Muslims sanitize it. Reform-minded Muslims must reinterpret it.

How this happens could well be the next chapter in reclaiming Shariah reasoning and the richness of Islam itself.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Correction

A review on Jan. 6 about "Arguing the Just War in Islam," by John Kelsay, misstated the circumstances of the burial of the Islamic world's only Nobel laureate in science, Abdus Salam, who belonged to a banned sect. He was buried in his home country, Pakistan, with full religious rites, but the authorities later erased the word "Muslim" from his headstone. It is not the case that "to this day" he "cannot be buried with proper religious rites" in Pakistan.

Correction-Date: January 27, 2008

Graphic

PHOTO (PHOTOGRAPH BY CHANG W. LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES)

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End of Document

' Hamas has been badly beaten'; Israel says goals met, ceases fire in Gaza

Ottawa Citizen

January 18, 2009 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A1

Length: 1195 words

Byline: Richard Boudreaux, Jeffrey Fleishman, and Matthew Fisher, Canwest News Service and the Los Angeles Times with files from Reuters and the Washington Post

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Declaring that Israel had crippled Hamas, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert yesterday announced a unilateral halt to its three-week-old offensive in the Gaza Strip and said the army would remain there while Egypt mediates a long-term truce with the terrorist group.

"The conditions now exist by which our aims as we have set them out at the onset have been fully realized and beyond," Mr. Olmert said during a national television address from Tel Aviv, referring to an agreement with Egypt and the U.S. to eliminate weapons smuggling using tunnels from Egypt.

"Hamas has been badly beaten both militarily and in the infrastructure of its regime. Its leaders are in hiding. Many have been killed. The factories in which its missiles were manufactured have been destroyed. The smuggling routes, through dozens of tunnels, have been bombed. Hamas' capability to convey weapons within the Gaza Strip has been damaged. The scope of missile fire directed at the State of Israel has been reduced."

The prime minister accused Iran of using Hamas and **Hezbollah** in Lebanon to "strive for regional hegemony," but he said Hamas had been "surprised" by the launch of the offensive and by Israel's resolve.

Congratulating the country's army, air force, navy and intelligence services on "a fantastic operation," he said that it once again proved "Israel's power" and would act as a deterrent to other countries in the region.

The truce was taking effect at 2 a.m. today. Mr. Olmert put no time limit on either the truce or the presence of Israeli troops in Gaza.

Hamas' representative in Lebanon, Osama Hamdan, told the satellite TV news channel Al-Jazeera: "If the Israeli military continues its existence in the Gaza Strip, that is a wide door for the resistance against the occupation forces."

However, Mr. Olmert warned that if Hamas chooses to "continue its wild terrorist attacks, it may find itself surprised again by the State of Israel's determination," he said. "I do not suggest that or any other terrorist organization test us."

' Hamas has been badly beaten'; Israel says goals met, ceases fire in Gaza

Hamas officials in exile have been adamant throughout the past week and again yesterday that there will be no truce. But the movement's civil wing, which rules Gaza, indicated to Egyptian negotiators last week that it was ready to observe a Cairo-backed ceasefire.

"We will cease fire, but we do not have full security," said Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak, who spoke after Mr. Olmert. "Hamas can keep shooting at our forces and I have told the IDF to be ready for any eventuality and the IDF will be ready to respond forcefully and dramatically."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice yesterday welcomed Israel's announcement of the ceasefire and said Washington expected all parties to halt hostile actions immediately.

"The goal remains a durable and fully respected ceasefire that will lead to stabilization and normalization in Gaza," she said. "The United States commends Egypt for its efforts and remains deeply concerned by the suffering of innocent Palestinians. We welcome calls for immediate co-ordinated international action to increase assistance flows and will contribute to such efforts."

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon hailed the ceasefire, but also urged Israel to pull out its forces from Gaza rapidly.

In Gaza, exhausted residents said they hoped that a ceasefire would take root, but many were skeptical. Most, their nerves shredded and sleepless with fear and bereavement, just want the war to be over.

"We do not care how, we want a ceasefire. We want to go back to our homes. Our children need to go back to sleep in their beds," said Ali Hassan, 34 and a father of five, in Gaza city.

Noha Abu Jabaim, 37, a housewife whose family members were chased from their village by the fighting, said things could "still get much worse."

"We need a long ceasefire, 10 years at least," she said. "But, I don't see any light of hope with either side of this conflict. Both Israel and Hamas are losers. Hamas lost because Israel hit so many civilians. As for the Israelis, they didn't end the launching of the rockets or stop the resistance. They only killed the innocents. In the end, nobody wins."

The decision to end the 22-day war was made on the same day as UN officials in Gaza urged a war crimes investigation into what they alleged was an artillery attack with phosphorous shells by Israeli troops on a school where two young brothers had died earlier yesterday. Israel emphatically denied the UN charge.

About 1,000 children were said to have been sheltering at a UN school in northern Gaza that was allegedly hit. About 600 of them were still in the school "and there is nowhere else for them to go," said John Ging, the UN's director of refugee operations in the territory.

"We cannot return the lives of these people, but we must restore accountability," said Mr. Ging, the UN's senior representative in Gaza, as he called for the third attack on a UN school and other incidents allegedly committed by both sides to be investigated as possible war crimes.

"I condemn in the strongest terms this outrageous attack," said the UN's Mr. Ban earlier yesterday from Beirut. "The top Israeli leaders had apologized and given me their assurances only two days ago that they would respect the UN schools."

The Palestinian death toll in Gaza climbed to 1,193 yesterday, according to medical officials there. Ten Israeli soldiers and three civilians have died since the war began on Dec. 27.

Mr. Olmert and Mr. Barak spoke several times yesterday of their anguish at the large number of civilian casualties in Gaza. Both blamed them on Hamas which, they said, had used mosques, schools and hospitals as firing positions.

' Hamas has been badly beaten'; Israel says goals met, ceases fire in Gaza

"We feel the pain of every Palestinian child and family member who fell victim to the cruel reality created by Hamas, which transformed you into victims," Mr. Olmert said in a direct appeal to the 1.4-million Palestinians living in the coastal strip. "Your suffering is terrible. Your cries of pain touch our hearts."

"On behalf of the government of Israel, I wish to convey my regret for the harming of uninvolved civilians, for the pain we caused them, for the suffering they and their families suffered as a result of the intolerable situation created by Hamas."

Officials in Israel have also said they wanted to stop the fighting before Barack Obama is sworn in as president Tuesday to avoid clouding a historic day for the Jewish state's main ally and creating friction with the new U.S. administration.

One element of a truce deal fell into place in Washington, D.C., on Friday when U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni signed an agreement on steps the United States will take to help Egypt stop the weapons smuggling. Mr. Olmert thanked Egypt yesterday for its assistance in reaching the agreement.

The other element, the focus of ongoing talks in Cairo, the Egyptian capital, is that country's proposal for a longer-term halt in fighting by both sides.

Talks on the proposal centre on Hamas' demand for a reopening of Gaza's border crossings to human and commercial traffic, ending more than a year of blockade by Israel and Egypt. In return, Hamas has offered a one-year renewable truce.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Gali Tibbon;AFP/Getty Images; Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert says the army will remain in Gaza until a long-term truce is realized. ;

Colour Photo: Ibraheem Abu Mustafa, Reuters; Palestinian women mourn during the funeral of Al-Batran family members in Bureij in central Gaza Strip yesterday. Six members of the family were killed by an Israeli air strike on Friday, Palestinian authorities said. ;

Load-Date: January 19, 2009

UN appeal for truce in Gaza is rejected; Fighting unchecked as Israel and Hamas defy cease-fire call

The International Herald Tribune

January 10, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

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Byline: Ethan Bronner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Reporting was contributed by Neil MacFarquhar from the United Nations; Rachel Donadio from Rome; Isabel Kershner and Steven Erlanger from Jerusalem; Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza; and Alan Cowell and Caroline Brothers from Paris.

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Israel and Hamas rebuffed a United Nations call for a cease-fire in the 14-day Gaza war on Friday, with Israel saying continued barrages of rocket fire from its adversaries made the UN resolution "unworkable."

In a statement after a cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the Israeli military would "continue acting to protect Israeli citizens and will carry out the missions it was given," according to news reports.

Officials from Hamas dismissed the UN resolution, according to news reports, although one official said it was being studied.

As the war continued unchecked on Friday, the Israeli military said its forces attacked more than 50 targets in overnight despite the UN vote on Thursday night calling for "an immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire."

Israeli warplanes attacked launching sites and missile-manufacturing facilities, the military said, while witnesses reported seeing rockets fired out of Gaza into southern Israel. The casualty toll was not immediately known. One Israeli airstrike destroyed a five-story building, killing at least seven people, Hamas security officials told The Associated Press.

The developments came as international aid groups lashed out at Israel, saying that access to civilians in need was poor, relief workers were being hurt and killed and Israel was woefully neglecting its obligations to Palestinians who were trapped, some among rotting corpses, in a nightmarish landscape of deprivation.

On Thursday, the United Nations declared a suspension of its aid operations after one of its drivers was killed and two others were wounded, despite driving UN-flagged vehicles and coordinating their movements with the Israeli military. The United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki Moon, called a second time for an investigation by Israel of the more than 40 deaths near a United Nations school from Israeli tank fire on Tuesday.

UN appeal for truce in Gaza is rejected Fighting unchecked as Israel and Hamas defy cease-fire call

The International Committee of the Red Cross, based in Geneva, reported finding what it called shocking scenes, including four emaciated children next to the corpses of their mothers, on Wednesday. In a rare and sharply critical statement, it said it believed that "the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded."

Israeli officials said that they were examining all the allegations, that they did not aim at civilians and that they were not certain that the source of fire that killed or wounded the United Nations drivers was Israeli.

"We do our utmost to avoid hitting civilians, and many times we don't fire because we see civilians nearby," said Major Avital Leibovich, chief army spokeswoman for the foreign news media. "We are holding meetings with UN officials to try to work out a mechanism so that their work can go forward."

She said the army had learned of the Red Cross allegations in a media report, and that the committee had not yet presented the evidence of what she called "these very serious allegations" to the army.

Anne-Sophie Bonefeld, a spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said Thursday that when the children and others were rescued in Gaza on Wednesday, workers had to leave behind a number of bodies. On Thursday, she said, 100 civilians were rescued from the same Gaza City neighborhood. They were not wounded, but they were weakened because of being without food or water for two days.

At the United Nations itself, 14 nations approved the Security Council resolution urging a cease-fire, with the United States abstaining. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the United States abstained from voting on the resolution, which left unclear how a cease-fire would be enforced, because it wanted to see whether mediation efforts undertaken by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt succeed. The United States did not veto the resolution because Washington supports its overall goals, she said.

The resolution called for a cease-fire that would lead to the "full withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza, the passage of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians and an end to the trafficking of arms and ammunition into the territory.

Some Arab ambassadors expressed disappointment that the measure did not specifically call for a lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza, and some Western ambassadors acknowledged a long history of UN resolutions that led nowhere. "We are all very conscious that peace is made on the ground, while resolutions are written in the United Nations," said David Miliband, the British foreign secretary.

The Gaza authorities said that the death toll passed 750, with women and children making up about 40 percent of the dead. Israel held its fire for three hours Thursday afternoon, the second day in a row, to allow in aid. It was during that pause that local ambulance crews and the Red Crescent found dozens of bodies under a collapsed building. Three Israeli soldiers were killed in combat; seven other soldiers have died during the military campaign, which is aimed at stopping Hamas rocket fire, and three civilians have been killed by rockets.

More rockets flew into Israel and, for the first time since the operation against Hamas began, three Katyusha rockets were shot from Lebanon into northern Israel on Thursday. Hezbollah, which fought a war with Israel in 2006 that included thousands of rockets, said it was not responsible.

But attention was increasingly focused on the growing humanitarian crisis and on the increasing anger abroad.

Israel condemned a high-ranking Vatican official for comparing Gaza to "a concentration camp."

"Look at the conditions in Gaza: more and more, it resembles a big concentration camp," Cardinal Renato Martino, the head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said in an interview published Wednesday in *Il Sussidiario*.

He defended his comments in the center-left Italian daily *La Repubblica* on Thursday. While noting that Hamas rockets into Israel were "certainly not sugared almonds," he called the situation in Gaza "horrific."

UN appeal for truce in Gaza is rejected Fighting unchecked as Israel and Hamas defy cease-fire call

Israel sharply condemned the cardinal's use of World War II imagery. "We are astounded that a spiritual dignitary would have such words that are so far removed from truth and dignity," said Yigal Palmor, a spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

John Holmes, a United Nations emergency relief coordinator, said in New York that the three-hour daily pause in the fighting permitted by Israel in Gaza was insufficient. He said the Gaza authorities counted 758 fatalities, among them 257 children and 56 women. The injured totaled 3,100. Of these, 1,080 were children and 465 women.

Holmes added that the Gaza authorities reported that 20,000 were displaced but that conditions prevented officials from helping them properly. "The continuing violence is making humanitarian aid increasingly difficult and almost impossible," he said.

Antoine Grand, head of Red Cross operations in Gaza, said his group's workers came under Israeli fire on Thursday. He said a convoy of two trucks, one clearly marked as Red Cross and the other from the Ministry of Health, was taking medical equipment to the southern city of Khan Yunis, followed by 13 ambulances heading to the Egyptian border.

He said the convoy's movement was "fully coordinated with Israel. I did it myself." It was during the three-hour lull, at 3:30 p.m., he said, when they stopped in front of the checkpoint that the Red Cross vehicle was shot at from a tank.

Israeli officials said they were investigating.

The Jerusalem Post's Web site quoted an Israeli medical worker as saying that the killing of the United Nations driver that contributed to the suspension of aid delivery was the work of a Hamas sniper.

John Ging, who heads United Nations relief operations in Gaza, said by telephone that he was unaware of any information suggesting that the driver had been shot by Hamas. "If they have evidence, let them present it," he said.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

ISRAEL REJECTS GAZA CEASE-FIRE, BUT OFFERS AID

The New York Times

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Late Edition - Final

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Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER; Reporting was contributed by Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza; Steven Erlanger from Cairo; Mark Landler from Washington; Robert Pear from Crawford, Tex.; Alan Cowell from London; and Graham Bowley from New York.

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israel sought on Wednesday to fend off growing international pressure over civilian casualties from its military assault on Gaza, saying it would expedite and increase humanitarian aid and work with its allies to build a durable, long-term truce. But Israel would not agree to a proposed 48-hour cease-fire.

The government said it would push ahead with its air, sea and ultimately ground operation, which one senior military official described as "making Hamas lose their will or lose their weapons."

A strike Thursday morning included the Parliament building among its targets, news agencies reported.

During the five days of combat, Israeli warplanes have been destroying buildings once considered off limits, including mosques and government and university compounds, with officials asserting that rocket launchers and ammunition were made, stored and even operated from there. They were also hitting the homes of militants, smuggler tunnels and even money exchange shops to choke off Hamas from its suppliers.

The military official said that Gaza was limited in size and cut off from the outside and that Israel could win if it stopped future supplies and destroyed enough of what Hamas had. He added, however, that targets were running short, and that a limited ground operation aimed at destroying remaining sites was likely once the wet weather cleared.

Meanwhile, overwhelmed hospital officials in Gaza said that of the more than 390 people killed by Israeli fighter planes since Saturday, 38 were children and 25 women. The United Nations, which has estimated the number of dead to be between 320 and 390, said 25 percent of those killed were civilians. Israel said that it was still checking the numbers.

In the Jabalya Refugee Camp north of Gaza City, hundreds lined up for hours in the rain for bread and other staples as F-16 jets menaced overhead. At one point, two rockets were launched from within the camp -- among about 60 shot into Israel on Wednesday -- and an Israeli missile then hit the launcher.

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The rockets that have been sent some 20 miles into the Israeli cities of Ashkelon, Ashdod and Beersheba in recent days are known as grads. They measure nine feet in length with warheads that weigh 30 to 40 pounds and were not manufactured in Gaza but were bought abroad and smuggled through tunnels from Egypt, Israeli officials said.

In Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, emergency personnel engaged in a brutal form of triage, allowing the worst cases to fade as they found themselves unable to cope.

A senior Israeli official said the country was seeking ways to increase humanitarian aid so that its military endeavor could continue without further pressure to stop. It permitted a dozen wounded and ill Gazans into Israel on Wednesday for treatment at hospitals here and allowed in some 100 trucks of food and medicine.

He also said that one limitation on the aid was that crossing points had come under attack by Hamas. A second, he said, is that donors are not bringing enough goods. Of the donations so far, some come from United Nations agencies, but most are from private donors.

Tens of thousands of Gazans have received recorded phone calls from the Israeli Army warning them that their houses have been marked as targets because they harbored either militants or weapons facilities like rocket workshops. Noncombatants were urged to clear out. Hundreds of thousands of leaflets gave the same message.

Israeli officials say their goals for a truce include a complete cessation of rocket and mortar fire from Gaza, a ban on armed men approaching the border with Israel, full Israeli control over the border crossings and a mechanism to ensure that Hamas is meeting its commitments.

The Hamas leader, Ismail Haniya, told Israel that there would be no talk of a truce until it ended its attack and all the crossings into Gaza from Israel as well as from Egypt were opened to full commercial traffic. He did not mention the rockets that Israel considers the central cause of its campaign.

On Thursday, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni was expected to fly to Paris to meet with Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and President Nicolas Sarkozy, who are seeking ways to promote a cease-fire.

From his ranch in Crawford, Tex., President Bush called Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. A White House spokesman, Gordon D. Johndroe, said Mr. Olmert had "assured President Bush that Israel is taking appropriate steps to avoid civilian casualties" in Gaza. In addition, he said, the Israeli leader told Mr. Bush that Israel was "targeting only Hamas operatives and those affiliated with Hamas."

They discussed prospects for a cease-fire -- "what steps could lead to a cessation of violence," Mr. Johndroe said -- but did not "get into specific timetables."

"It all begins with Hamas agreeing to stop firing rockets" into Israel, Mr. Johndroe added. "The onus is on Hamas."

The White House praised the diplomatic efforts of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, but denounced Iran and Syria, saying they had supplied weapons to terrorist groups.

"Hamas is pretty well supplied by Iran and, to a certain extent, Syria," Mr. Johndroe said. "Neither Iran nor Syria is playing a helpful role. They're not playing a constructive role in this current crisis, which is pretty typical for their actions with regard to Hamas and Hezbollah."

Israel's Supreme Court told the government on Wednesday to allow foreign journalists limited access to Gaza, which had been closed to them since early November. The ruling, which urged the government to allow in a group of up to a dozen foreign journalists, came in response to a petition filed by the Foreign Press Association.

Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, based in the West Bank, appealed to the United Nations Security Council for a cease-fire. Mr. Abbas, whose troops were forcibly ejected from Gaza by Hamas 18 months ago, is in a delicate position of not wishing Hamas to triumph but not wishing Palestinians to suffer.

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In a speech delivered on Wednesday, Mr. Abbas reiterated that Hamas was responsible for the Israeli invasion because it ended the cease-fire between it and Israel 12 days ago. But he called what Israel was doing "the bloodiest massacre and systemic destruction of all forms of life; it is an aggression that does not target Gaza only but the entire Palestinian people and their cause and future and their most basic human rights."

In the West Bank, the Palestinian police and security forces have had their leaves canceled. Some men associated with Hamas have been detained, and strict rules have been established for demonstrations in support of Gaza to avoid their turning into support for Hamas. Slogans and flags are limited, and close contact with Israeli forces and checkpoints has been barred to prevent trouble.

In Cairo, Arab countries appeared deeply divided over how to respond to the latest escalation in fighting between Israel and Hamas, with sharply differing comments from foreign ministers at the opening of an emergency Arab League meeting.

Moderate Arab states generally allied with the United States blamed Palestinian disunity for the crisis and more radical states, some of whom did not attend, urged collective action to defend the Palestinians against Israel.

In the most striking comments, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, criticized the Palestinians for their inability to remain united behind President Abbas of Fatah -- an implicit condemnation of Hamas, which took over Gaza entirely in 2007 in a brief but violent civil war with Fatah. Normally, during periods of Israeli-Palestinian fighting, Arab leaders condemn only Israel.

"This terrible massacre would not have happened if the Palestinian people were united behind one leadership, speaking in one voice," Prince Saud said at the league meeting's opening. "We are telling our Palestinian brothers that your Arab nation cannot extend a real helping hand if you don't extend your own hands to each other with love."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO: A member of Hamas on Wednesday raised the group's flag on the rubble of a mosque that was destroyed by Israeli warplanes in raids south of Gaza City. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MOHAMMED SABER/EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY) (pg.A13)

Load-Date: January 1, 2009

Assassinations are shots in the dark

The Business Times Singapore

January 1, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: SPECIAL FOCUS

Length: 1261 words

Byline: Neely Tucker

Body

BENAZIR Bhutto's father was prime minister of Pakistan in the 1970s and, before he was hanged, he would tell her to study the lives of great women as inspiration.

She sometimes told reporters that story, including the names of Joan of Arc and Indira Gandhi as study subjects suggested by her dad. The French revolutionary was burned at the stake; the Indian prime minister was assassinated by her bodyguards.

Their violent ends did not deter Ms Bhutto, nor did the murders of her father and brother.

A Harvard and Oxford graduate with a sharp knowledge of history, she would have known that the assassination has been around a lot longer than the ballot and is often more influential.

Assassination is almost universally denigrated as a 'cowardly act' (as President Bush described Ms Bhutto's killing this week). But the historical record shows it to be a dramatic, low-cost, highly symbolic means of communication - and murder - that disaffected people use to try to dramatically sway national or even international affairs.

It can work or backfire or just disappear, like a bloody drop in a bucket. Pakistan will be unstable in the coming days, as it has been in the past and will be again. Who can say if Ms Bhutto's slaying is the pinball that leads to destruction, the painful agent of positive change, or just a killing, like most, full of sound and fury and signifying nothing more than murderous nihilism?

The descent into regional conflagration could have been triggered 'by 'shock and awe' in Iraq, or the assassination of (prime minister Rafik) Hariri in Lebanon in 2005, or Israel's battles with Hezbollah,' says Mustafa Aksakal, assistant professor of history at American University, who is writing a book about the Ottoman Empire's descent into World War One.

'But the region has so far been able to absorb these shocks. It's just impossible to say what will be the straw that breaks the camel's back.'

'Anyone who thinks they can predict the consequences of a political assassination is a damn fool,' says Eric Rauchway, author of *Murdering McKinley: The Making of Teddy Roosevelt's America*, and a history professor at the University of California, Davis.

'All it provides is an opportunity. However, the opportunity it provides is often not one the assassin intended.' This has been true from the Ides of March forward.

Assassinations are shots in the dark

Did Marcus Junius Brutus, when he pulled out his blade to join in the murder of his one-time friend Julius Caesar, understand that his actions would produce (a) perhaps the most famous and influential political assassinations in western history; (b) one of the immortal lines of betrayal - 'Et tu, Brute?' - that echoes in the cultural id more than 2,000 years later; (c) his own ignominy and suicide?

On the evening of Jan 30, 1948, a radical Hindu newspaper editor named Nathuram Godse pulled out a pistol and approached a little old man on his way to prayer service. In the instant before he pulled the trigger, he certainly intended to kill Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, at whom he was enraged for his role in the partition of India and Pakistan.

But did he know that by so doing he would turn the diminutive weaver of cotton into the 'Father of India' and a global icon of nonviolent resistance?

But these killings were nothing close to the most murderously effective. The dubious title goes to Gavrilo Princip, the Serbian nationalist.

Standing at a stone bridge in Sarajevo in late June 1914, Princip shot Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand (and his wife) to demonstrate that he and his compatriots wanted to be freed of the constraints of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and to join neighbouring Serbia. What did he know? He was scarcely 20 years old.

But his act of assassination worked; it led to Austria pulling out of Bosnia.

Collateral damage

The collateral damage was that it ignited World War One.

In the next four years, some 16 nations lost more than 10 million lives, twice that many were wounded, the entire Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed, Germany was humiliated in defeat (laying the groundwork for the rise of Hitler, World War Two and the Holocaust) and America was launched into world prominence.

Princip's pistol also led to the creation of Yugoslavia, which led to the destruction of Yugoslavia, which led to another war involving ethnic Serbs in Bosnia, which led to mass murder of Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica, which led to US troops landing in a place called Tuzla, which led to war crimes tribunals and the imprisonment and subsequent death of the Serbian president who had started the war on ethnic nationalism.

Moving south, if one wants the short course on why peace in the Middle East is so elusive, just look up 'Nobel Peace Prize,' followed by 'assassination'. Egyptian president Anwar Sadat won that award in 1978, along with Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, for their peace agreement, the Camp David Accords. That lasted for three years, until Muslim fundamentalists stormed a parade route and shot Mr Sadat to death.

Thirteen years later, Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin (and colleague Shimon Peres) shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Mr Rabin's mortal enemy, Palestinian Liberation Organisation chairman Yasser Arafat. The two men had, mostly in secret, brokered a peace agreement (the Oslo Accords) that promised to have a transformative effect on the Middle East. But it was largely an agreement between two men, not two nations. One Israeli law student thought that Mr Rabin, a soldier who had defended Israel almost his entire adult life, was 'giving our country to the Arabs'. He took it upon himself to shoot and kill Mr Rabin.

The Oslo Accords withered and died.

And, of course, there is the United States, where roughly one out of every 11 presidents have been assassinated, where Nobel Peace Prize laureate Martin Luther King followed the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and was, of course, shot in the head at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis.

American assassination has been of titanic import. Abraham Lincoln's changed the course of the country. His assassination spot at Ford's Theater is a national landmark, and there is the Lincoln Monument on the Mall, not to mention his likeness on the penny and the US\$5 bill.

Assassinations are shots in the dark

John F Kennedy's assassination ... oh. You've heard.

It's also been almost inconsequential. Just 16 years after Mr Lincoln was killed, James Garfield was assassinated at a train station a few hundred yards from Ford's Theatre. That building, never designated anything, was torn down 99 years ago. The site eventually became the National Gallery of Art and today, not even a plaque marks the spot.

The sole reminder of the event is Mr Garfield's unobtrusive statue at the base of Capitol Hill.

In 1998, the US Justice Department published something called the Exceptional Case Study Project, as part of a threat assessment guide for law enforcement officials.

The study reviewed the historical record back to 1835 and surveyed 'the thinking and behaviour of all 83 persons known to have attacked or approached to attack a prominent public official or figure in the United States from 1949 to 1996'. They fit no one profile, authors Robert A Fein and Bryan Vossekuil found. Some had political beliefs, some were just nuts.

The serious ones kept their mouths shut: 'None of the 43 assassins and attackers communicated a direct threat to the target before their attack.' And some, perhaps like the person or people who killed Ms Bhutto, wanted to 'save the country or the world; to fix a world problem'. How seldom it works out that way. -- LATWP

Researcher Meg Smith contributed to this report

Load-Date: January 1, 2008

U.N. relief convoy hit in battle between Lebanese army, Islamic militant group

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

May 22, 2007 Tuesday

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Length: 1395 words

Byline: Scheherezade Faramarzi Associated Press

Body

TRIPOLI, Lebanon -- A convoy of U.N. relief supplies was hit in a third day of fighting Tuesday between Lebanese troops and an Islamic militant group holed up in a crowded Palestinian refugee camp.

In two other refugee camps in Lebanon, angry Palestinians burned tires to protest the Lebanese army assault on the northern camp of Nahr el-Bared. The unrest heightened fears that the military's attempt to crush the al-Qaida-inspired Fatah Islam could provoke a broader backlash among hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in other refugee camps, where Islamic extremists have been growing in influence.

Overnight, the Lebanese government ordered the army to finish off the militants who have set up in Nahr el-Bared, where 31,000 Palestinian refugees live on the outskirts of the northern port of Tripoli. At least 50 combatants have been killed since fighting erupted Sunday.

Black smoke billowed from the area Tuesday amid artillery and machine gun exchanges between troops and militants. Lebanese troops skirmished with Fatah Islam fighters, trying to seize militant positions on the outskirts of the camp.

"There are dead and wounded on the road, inside the camp," screamed a Lebanese woman, Amina Alameddine, who ran weeping from her home on the edge of the camp. She fled with her daughter and four other relatives after Fatah Islam fighters started shooting at the army from the roof of her house.

At the same time, Lebanese troops sought to flush out fighters hiding in Tripoli. Soldiers raided a building where Fatah Islam militants were believed to be hiding out, blasting an apartment with grenades, gunfire and tear gas.

They found no one in the apartment, but hours later, while pursuing a militant, they ordered him to surrender. He dropped a pistol but then detonated an explosives belt on his body, police officials said. None of the troops was injured.

Reports emerged from Nahr el-Bared of heavy destruction from the three days of bombardment by Lebanese artillery and tanks and militants who returned fire with mortars and automatic weapons.

"The shelling is heavy, not only on our positions, but also on children and women. Destruction is all over," Fatah Islam spokesman Abu Salim Taha told The Associated Press by telephone from inside the camp.

U.N. relief convoy hit in battle between Lebanese army, Islamic militant group

A U.N. refugee official said dozens of buildings were believed demolished, with residents trapped inside. There was also word that food and medical supplies were running out. The reports could not be confirmed because officials and reporters could not enter the camp.

"The camp is being destroyed from inside," a U.N. Relief and Works Agency staffer told the AP. "The construction is very weak and the houses are very close to each other."

"We have reports that there are dozens of homes that were destroyed with the residents inside. Truly people are under the rubble. This is no exaggeration," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

The militants have killed 29 soldiers since Sunday and about 20 of the fighters have also been killed. The number of civilian casualties is unknown because relief officials have had limited access.

Lebanese authorities do not enter the refugee camps under a nearly 40-year-old agreement with the Palestinians.

The tens of thousands of Palestinians live in two- or three-story white buildings on the camp's densely packed narrow streets. Refugees have been hiding in their homes inside the camp and Palestinian officials there said nine civilians were killed Monday.

After a morning of battles, the camp briefly fell silent Tuesday afternoon. Taha said the militants called a unilateral cease-fire, but it collapsed within an hour and heavy exchanges of fire and several explosions were heard. It was not known which side started firing.

An UNRWA official said a pickup truck and a water tanker were caught between the lines of the two sides and hit as they entered the camp.

"There may have been some casualties, at least one," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media. "We could not distribute everything," he told the AP by telephone from the camp entrance.

The Lebanon representative of the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad, which has been mediating a cease-fire, confirmed the relief effort had come under attack.

Speaking on Al-Jazeera television, Abu Imad Rifai said that while people were "trying to pick up food supplies for UNRWA, they were shelled and some were injured, some seriously."

Rifai said he did not know who had breached the cease-fire.

Earlier, Taleb al-Salhani of UNRWA said the agency scrambled to evacuate one of its employees, a Palestinian aid worker wounded Monday.

The army earlier stopped six UNRWA trucks, including a water tanker, saying it was too dangerous to enter the camp.

The government of Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Saniora appeared determined to pursue Fatah Islam. Lebanon's Cabinet late Monday authorized the army to step up its campaign and "end the terrorist phenomenon that is alien to the values and nature of the Palestinian people," Information Minister Ghazi Aridi said.

The Bush administration reaffirmed its support for Saniora's government Tuesday and indicated it suspected Syrian involvement.

White House spokesman Tony Snow said the Fatah Islam militants want to disrupt the nation's security and distract international attention from a U.N. effort to establish a special tribunal try suspects in the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in Beirut.

U.N. relief convoy hit in battle between Lebanese army, Islamic militant group

The United States "will not tolerate attempts by Syria, terrorist groups or any others to delay or derail Lebanon's efforts to solidify its sovereignty or seek justice in the Hariri case," Snow said.

Lebanese security officials accuse Syria of backing Fatah Islam to disrupt Lebanon. The charges are denied by Syria, which controlled Lebanon until 2005 when its troops were forced to withdraw from the country following Hariri's assassination.

The fighting, Lebanon's worst internal violence since the 1975-90 civil war, has added yet another layer of instability to an uneasy balancing act among numerous sects and factions vying for power. Saniora's government already faces a domestic political crisis, with the opposition led by Iranian- and Syrian-backed Hezbollah demanding its removal.

Dozens of refugees angered by the assault on Nahr el-Bared burned tires in protest in the southern camp of Ein el-Hilweh, Lebanon's largest Palestinian camp. Protesters also burned tires in Rashidiyeh camp, farther south.

The protests raised the specter that Palestinians in Lebanon's 11 other refugee camps could rise up in anger over the assault on Nahr el-Bared. The overcrowded camps -- housing more than 215,000 refugees, out of a total of 400,000 Palestinians in Lebanon -- are also home to many armed Palestinian factions who often battle each other and have seen a rising number of Islamic extremists.

Major Palestinian factions have distanced themselves from Fatah Islam, which arose here last year and touts itself as a Palestinian liberation movement. But many view it as a nascent branch of al-Qaida-style terrorism with ambitions of carrying out attacks around the region.

The group's leader, Palestinian Shaker al-Absi, has been linked to the former head of al-Qaida in Iraq and is accused in the 2002 assassination of a U.S. diplomat in Jordan. He moved into Nahr el-Bared last fall after being expelled from Syria, where he was in custody.

Since then, he is believed to have recruited about 100 fighters, including militants from Saudi Arabia, Yemen and other Arab countries, and he has said he follows the ideology of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. Among the militants killed Sunday was a man suspected in a plot to bomb trains in Germany last year, according to Lebanese security officials.

Major Palestinian faction leaders met with Saniora for the second time in as many days. European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana arrived Tuesday in Beirut to discuss the crisis.

Late Monday, an explosion went off in a shopping area in a Sunni Muslim sector of Beirut, wrecking parked cars and injuring seven people -- a day after a bomb in a Christian part of the capital killed a woman. The two bombings while the fighting was going on in Tripoli were highly unusual. Taha, the Fatah Islam spokesman, denied his group was behind them.

Load-Date: May 22, 2007

If I Could Talk To The Taliban; LITTLEJOHN

Daily Mail (London)

December 14, 2007 Friday

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Section: 1ST; Pg. 17

Length: 1202 words

Byline: RICHARD LITTLEJOHN

Body

CALLING on all his experience of a five-minute photo opportunity with the troops in Helmand Province this week, a mere 60 miles from the frontline, the Prime Minister announced that he has a cunning plan for ending the war in Afghanistan.

As the headline put it: 'BROWN: TALK TO THE TALIBAN.' Some of you may have realised already where I'm going with this. I wonder whether Gordon is aware that there are 47 different languages spoken in Afghanistan.

So, with apologies to the great Leslie Bricusse Laydeez and gennulmen, will you please welcome Gordon Brown as Dr Dolittle with his version of If I Could Talk To The Taliban.

Imagine Rex Harrison with chewed fingernails and a Scottish accent..

If I could talk to the Taliban, just imagine it, Chatting with the chaps in Pakistan, I could be rapping with Al Qaeda, And all the foreign fighters, In the Tora Bora, east Afghanistan.

If I could talk to the Taliban in Arabic, Or the dialect of deepest Kazakhstan, Try a phrase or two of Farsi, A word of Gujarati, I'm sure that I could make them understand..

We could converse in Ashkun or Tajiki, Learn a little of the lingo of Pashto, If people ask me: 'Can you speak Turkmenistan?' I'd say: 'Of course I can, can't you?' If I could meet Mullah Omar in Jalalabad, Try a little Brown diplomacy If I could reason with the Taliban, Reach out to the Taliban, Plead and get down on my knees to the Taliban, And hope they don't behead me!

If I could speak man-to-man to Sheikh bin Laden, In the distant mountains of the Hindu Kush.

Or maybe somewhere nearer, A live debate on al-Jazeera, I'd promise that I wouldn't tell George Bush.

If I spoke the native tongue of Pashtun tribesmen, I could guarantee that I would end this war.

Give a massive grant to Helmand, Well, it always works in Scotland, I'd even let them have Sharia Law..

If I consulted with Algerians and Chechens, In a safe house in east Uzbekistan.

If I Could Talk To The Taliban LITTLEJOHN

'Where's Osama?' I could ask, 'Is he up the Khyber Pass?' They'd say: 'No, infidel, he's in Londonistan.' If I could parlay with jihadis in Pershawi, And negotiate with the Yemenis, If I could talk to the Taliban, Give asylum to the Taliban, Mobile phones, council homes, long-term loans To the Taliban, Then they would vote for me!

Keep on rocking in the free world ...

FRANKLY, I never rated Led Zeppelin. I managed to sleep through their entire set at the Bath pop festival, more years ago than I care to remember.

But if they want to keep on rocking in the free world, why not? Wondering why they carry on is a bit like asking why bank managers go on being bank managers, or carpenters go on being carpenters.

It's what they do.

It's only white rock'n'rollers who get monstered for not acting their age. In the past year I've seen in concert 60-something soul legend Al Green, 70-something country star Willie Nelson and 81-year-old blues master BB King. No one is suggesting they take early retirement.

Mind you, I've also seen Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young live recently. Well, I say 'live'. Graham Nash and Neil Young were still on form, but David Crosby and Stephen Stills looked as if they ought to be sitting in a bath chair, watching daytime TV and dribbling quietly to themselves.

A couple of us were talking the other day about why the peerless Bruce Springsteen puts in such a punishing touring schedule after all these years.

The conclusion was that he enjoys it and he doesn't know how to do anything else.

Pretty much like the rest of us.

Either that or his pension's with Northern Rock.

JACK DROMEY, Labour party treasurer and husband of Harriet Harman who took a £5,000 donation from David Abrahams and borrowed £50,000 for her deputy leadership campaign has got himself a new nickname.

I'm told he's known as 'Tonto' because he's the partner of the Loan Arranger.

These white liberal 'bwanas' are the real racists THERE'S rightly been outrage over the soft sentences handed out in Australia to a gang of Aborigine men who raped a ten-year-old girl on a reservation in Northern Territory.

None of the nine young men involved were sent to jail. The judge said the girl 'probably agreed to have sex' with them.

Serious child sex abuse is seen as being widespread in Aboriginal communities, therefore different rules apply.

This is perhaps the most extreme example of the appalling 'it's their culture, innit' mentality which grips feeble-minded white 'liberals' in the English-speaking world.

Here in Britain, the authorities are just as guilty of double standards. Excuses are constantly being made for the most heinous behaviour of non-whites.

We may not have had the rape of a ten-year-old girl, but we've had plenty of examples of child abuse by Afro-Caribbeans, which have been ignored by social services until it's too late.

The most scandalous was that of little Victoria Climbié, from Haringey, who was tortured to death over a long period while social workers stood back.

If I Could Talk To The Taliban LITTLEJOHN

Although her grievous wounds were apparent to the naked eye, the 'experts' declined to intervene because they considered 'physical chastisement' to be an integral part of Afro-Caribbean culture and were terrified of being accused of racism.

It wouldn't happen again, we were assured later. It has and it will.

Elsewhere, teenage British girls are kidnapped and transported to the Indian sub-continent to be forced into marriage to some gargoyle-like second cousin they've never met before.

Many Muslim girls are subjected to the evil practice of 'female circumcision' vile genital mutilation in the name of religion yet the perpetrators get away with it.

Then there are the so-called 'honour' killings of women thought to have brought 'shame' on their family often because they refused to take part in a forced marriage.

Time and again the 'liberal' establishment refuses to condemn it.

Brixton was turned into an open-air drugs den because the police decided that cannabis-smoking was so rife among 'the community' predominantly West Indian in origin that they might as well be left to get on with it.

It's their culture, innit.

Modern day 'bwanas' like Ken Livingstone talk patronisingly about blacks as if they're incapable of doing anything for themselves, without vast subsidies and constant nannying by Leftist do-gooders.

All this stems from the mindset among white 'multiculturalists' born out of misplaced post-colonial guilt that people from black, Asian and other non- Anglo-Saxon backgrounds are genetically incapable of obeying the same laws as the rest of us.

I can't think of any more repulsive racist attitude. It is deeply offensive to the vast majority of decent, law-abiding people who live in those communities and an affront to our whole society.

It's about time white 'liberals' stopped treating ethnic minorities as if they're all ten years old.

FORMER assistant commissioner Brian Paddick, Liberal candidate for London mayor, is pictured on his website in his Met Police uniform.

Opponents say that now he has left the force, he shouldn't still be allowed to exploit it.

Oh, I dunno.

The answer is for the Tory candidate Boris Johnson to post a photo of himself sporting his Bullingdon Club coat-tails and white tie outfit.

And for Red Ken to pose in his Che Guevara T-shirt, Hezbollah headscarf, IRA gunbelt and Stasi jackboots.

Load-Date: December 14, 2007

Anger at kiss for teacher

The Times (London)

May 3, 2007, Thursday

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; Pg. 43

Length: 130 words

Byline: Richard Beeston

Body

President Ahmadinejad of Iran found himself accused of breaking Islamic law with an "indecent" public act yesterday. The Islamist leader could not resist embracing and kissing the hand of his former primary school teacher, an elderly woman, at an impromptu reunion (Richard Beeston writes).

"This type of indecency has grave consequences, like violating religious and sacred values," thundered the conservative **Hezbollah** newspaper, which described the incident as unprecedented in the 28-year Iranian revolution.

Sharia forbids men touching **women** to whom they are not related. Although in private these rules are often ignored by Iranians, strict adherence by officials is expected.

Najmeh Gholi Pour, the object of Mr Ahmadinejad's affection, was attending a Teachers' Day ceremony.

Load-Date: May 3, 2007

FAST NEWS

The Courier Mail (Australia)

May 4, 2007 Friday

Late City Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 32

Length: 122 words

Body

Olmert offensive

TEL AVIV: Prime Minister Ehud Olmert yesterday mounted a full-scale counterattack against calls for him to quit. He has been under siege all week after a commission report found his handling of last summer's 34-day war with Hezbollah was incompetent. The greatest threat to Mr Olmert's position is Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who has become the most prominent leader to call for him to step aside. She has positioned herself to become Israel's second female prime minister after the legendary Golda Meir.

Embassy closed

MOSCOW: Estonia closed its consulate in Moscow yesterday after pro-Kremlin youth activists scuffled with the ambassador's bodyguards in protests over the relocation of a Soviet war memorial in Tallinn.

Load-Date: May 4, 2007

Moral high ground is shifting beneath secularists' feet

The Irish Times

March 21, 2008 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Opinion; Pg. 11

Length: 2210 words

Body

OPINION Anti-religious zealotry will not eradicate religion. But it may prompt it to assume grotesque forms, writes John Gray.

CONTEMPORARY OPPONENTS of religion display a marked lack of interest in the historical record of atheist regimes. In *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason*, the American writer Sam Harris argues that religion has been the chief source of violence and oppression in history. He recognises that secular despots such as Stalin and Mao inflicted terror on a grand scale, but maintains the oppression they practised had nothing to do with their ideology of "scientific atheism" - what was wrong with their regimes was that they were tyrannies. But might there not be a connection between the attempt to eradicate religion and the loss of freedom?

It is unlikely that Mao, who launched his assault on the people and culture of Tibet with the slogan "religion is poison", would have agreed that his atheist world-view had no bearing on his policies. It is true he was worshipped as a semi-divine figure - as Stalin was in the Soviet Union. But in developing these cults, communist Russia and China were not backsliding from atheism. They were demonstrating what happens when atheism becomes a political project. The invariable result is an ersatz religion that can only be maintained by tyrannical means.

Something like this occurred in Nazi Germany. Richard Dawkins dismisses any suggestion that the crimes of the Nazis could be linked with atheism. "What matters," he declares in his book *The God Delusion*, "is not whether Hitler and Stalin were atheists, but whether atheism systematically influences people to do bad things. There is not the smallest evidence that it does." This is simple-minded reasoning. Always a tremendous booster of science, Hitler was much impressed by vulgarised Darwinism and by theories of eugenics that had developed from Enlightenment philosophies of materialism. He used Christian anti-Semitic demonology in his persecution of Jews, and the churches collaborated with him to a horrifying degree. But it was the Nazi belief in race as a scientific category that opened the way to a crime without parallel in history.

Nowadays most atheists are avowed liberals. What they want - so they will tell you - is not an atheist regime, but a secular state in which religion has no role. They clearly believe that, in a state of this kind, religion will tend to decline. But America's secular constitution has not ensured a secular politics. Christian fundamentalism is more powerful in the US than in any other country, while it has very little influence in Britain, which has an established church. Contemporary critics of religion go much further than demanding disestablishment. It is clear that he [Dawkins] wants to eliminate all traces of religion from public institutions. Awkwardly, many of the concepts he deploys - including the idea of religion itself - have been shaped by monotheism.

Moral high ground is shifting beneath secularists' feet

AC Grayling provides an example of the persistence of religious categories in secular thinking in his *Towards the Light: The Story of the Struggles for Liberty and Rights That Made the Modern West*. As the title indicates, Grayling's book is a type of sermon. Its aim is to reaffirm what he calls "a Whig view of the history of the modern West", the core of which is that "the West displays progress". The Whigs were pious Christians, who believed divine providence arranged history to culminate in English institutions, and Grayling too believes history is "moving in the right direction".

No doubt there have been setbacks - he mentions Nazism and communism in passing, devoting a few sentences to them. But these disasters were peripheral. They do not reflect on the central tradition of the modern West, which has always been devoted to liberty, and which - Grayling asserts - is inherently antagonistic to religion. "The history of liberty," he writes, "is another chapter - and perhaps the most important of all - in the great quarrel between religion and secularism."

The possibility that radical versions of secular thinking may have contributed to the development of Nazism and communism is not mentioned. More even than the 18th-century Whigs, who were shaken by French Terror, Grayling has no doubt as to the direction of history.

But the belief that history is a directional process is as faith-based as anything in the Christian catechism. Secular thinkers such as Grayling reject the idea of providence, but they continue to think humankind is moving towards a universal goal - a civilisation based on science that will eventually encompass the entire species.

In pre-Christian Europe, human life was understood as a series of cycles; history was seen as tragic or comic rather than redemptive. With the arrival of Christianity, it came to be believed that history had a predetermined goal, which was human salvation. Though they suppress their religious content, secular humanists continue to cling to similar beliefs. One does not want to deny anyone the consolations of a faith, but it is obvious that the idea of progress in history is a myth created by the need for meaning.

Belief in progress is a relic of the Christian view of history as a universal narrative, and an intellectually rigorous atheism would start by questioning it. This is what Nietzsche did when he developed his critique of Christianity in the late 19th century, but almost none of today's secular missionaries have followed his example.

One need not be a great fan of Nietzsche to wonder why this is so. The reason, no doubt, is that he did not assume any connection between atheism and liberal values - on the contrary, he viewed liberal values as an offspring of Christianity and condemned them partly for that reason. In contrast, evangelical atheists have positioned themselves as defenders of liberal freedoms - rarely inquiring where these freedoms have come from, and never allowing that religion may have had a part in creating them.

Among contemporary anti-religious polemicists, only the French writer Michel Onfray has taken Nietzsche as his point of departure. In some ways, Onfray's *In Defence of Atheism* is superior to anything English-speaking writers have published on the subject. Refreshingly, Onfray recognises that evangelical atheism is an unwitting imitation of traditional religion: "Many militants of the secular cause look astonishingly like clergy. Worse: like caricatures of clergy." More clearly than his Anglo-Saxon counterparts, Onfray understands the formative influence of religion on secular thinking. Yet he seems not to notice that the liberal values he takes for granted were partly shaped by Christianity and Judaism.

The key liberal theorists of toleration are John Locke, who defended religious freedom in explicitly Christian terms, and Benedict Spinoza, a Jewish rationalist who was also a mystic. Yet Onfray has nothing but contempt for the traditions from which these thinkers emerged - particularly Jewish monotheism: "We do not possess an official certificate of birth for worship of one God," he writes. "But the family line is clear: the Jews invented it to endure the coherence, cohesion and existence of their small, threatened people." Here Onfray passes over an important distinction. It may be true that Jews first developed monotheism, but Judaism has never been a missionary faith. In seeking universal conversion, evangelical atheism belongs with Christianity and Islam.

In today's anxiety about religion, it has been forgotten that most of the faith-based violence of the past century was secular in nature. To some extent, this is also true of the current wave of terrorism.

Moral high ground is shifting beneath secularists' feet

Islamism is a patchwork of movements, not all violently jihadist and some strongly opposed to al-Qaeda, most of them partly fundamentalist and aiming to recover the lost purity of Islamic traditions, while at the same time taking some of their guiding ideas from radical secular ideology. There is a deal of fashionable talk of Islamo-fascism, and Islamist parties have some features in common with interwar fascist movements, including anti-Semitism. But Islamists owe as much, if not more, to the far left, and it would be more accurate to describe many of them as Islamo-Leninists.

Islamist techniques of terror also have a pedigree in secular revolutionary movements. The executions of hostages in Iraq are copied in exact theatrical detail from European "revolutionary tribunals" in the 1970s, such as that staged by the Red Brigades when they murdered former Italian prime minister Aldo Moro in 1978.

The influence of secular revolutionary movements on terrorism extends well beyond Islamists. In his book *God Is Not Great*, Christopher Hitchens notes that, long before Hizbullah and al-Qaeda, the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka pioneered what he rightly calls "the disgusting tactic of suicide murder". He omits to mention that the Tigers are Marxist-Leninists who, while recruiting mainly from the island's Hindu population, reject religion in all its varieties.

Tiger suicide bombers do not go to certain death in the belief that they will be rewarded in any postmortem paradise. Nor did the suicide bombers who drove American and French forces out of Lebanon in the 1980s, most of whom belonged to organisations of the left such as the Lebanese Communist Party. These secular terrorists believed they were expediting a historical process from which will come a world better than any that has ever existed. It is a view of things more remote from human realities, and more reliably lethal in its consequences, than most religious myths.

It is not necessary to believe in any narrative of progress to think liberal societies are worth resolutely defending. No one can doubt that they are superior to the tyranny imposed by the Taliban on Afghanistan, for example. The issue is one of proportion. Ridden with conflicts and lacking the industrial base of communism and Nazism, Islamism is nowhere near a danger of the magnitude of those that were faced down in the 20th century. A greater menace is posed by North Korea, which far surpasses any Islamist regime in its record of repression and clearly does possess some kind of nuclear capability. Evangelical atheists rarely mention it. Hitchens is an exception, but when he describes his visit to the country, it is only to conclude that the regime embodies "a debased yet refined form of Confucianism and ancestor worship". As in Russia and China, the noble humanist philosophy of Marxist-Leninism is innocent of any responsibility.

Writing of the Trotskyite-Luxemburgist sect to which he once belonged, Hitchens confesses sadly: "There are days when I miss my old convictions as if they were an amputated limb."

He need not worry. His record on Iraq shows he has not lost the will to believe. The effect of the American-led invasion has been to deliver most of the country outside the Kurdish zone into the hands of an Islamist elective theocracy, in which women, gays and religious minorities are more oppressed than at any time in Iraq's history. The idea that Iraq could become a secular democracy - which Hitchens ardently promoted - was possible only as an act of faith.

In *The Second Plane*, Martin Amis writes: "Opposition to religion already occupies the high ground, intellectually and morally."

Amis is sure religion is a bad thing, and that it has no future in the West. In the author of *Koba the Dread: Laughter and the Twenty Million* - a forensic examination of self-delusion in the pro-Soviet western intelligentsia - such confidence is surprising. The intellectuals whose folly Amis dissects turned to communism in some sense as a surrogate for religion, and ended up making excuses for Stalin.

Are there really no comparable follies today? Some neocons - such as Tony Blair, who will soon be teaching religion and politics at Yale - combine their belligerent progressivism with religious belief, though of a kind Augustine and Pascal might find hard to recognise.

Moral high ground is shifting beneath secularists' feet

Religion has not gone away. Repressing it is like repressing sex, a self-defeating enterprise. In the 20th century, when it commanded powerful states and mass movements, it helped engender totalitarianism. Today, the result is a climate of hysteria.

Not everything in religion is precious or deserving of reverence. There is the claim of religious authorities, also made by atheist regimes, to decide how people can express their sexuality, control their fertility and end their lives, which should be rejected categorically. Nobody should be allowed to curtail freedom in these ways, and no religion has the right to break the peace.

The attempt to eradicate religion, however, only leads to it reappearing in grotesque and degraded forms. A credulous belief in world revolution, universal democracy or the occult powers of mobile phones is more offensive to reason than the mysteries of religion, and less likely to survive in years to come.

Victorian poet Matthew Arnold wrote of believers being left bereft as the tide of faith ebbs away. Today secular faith is ebbing, and it is the apostles of unbelief who are left stranded on the beach.

John Gray's *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* will be out in paperback in April (Penguin)

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End of Document

Tour of duty

The Jerusalem Post

February 21, 2008 Thursday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 13

Length: 2042 words

Byline: MATTHEW WAGNER

Highlight: Tevel b'Tzedek hopes to inspire Israeli youth to get involved in social activism locally. So why does it bring its recruits all the way to Katmandu?

Body

Rabi, a 14-year-old Nepalese orphan, stood on a stage in the dilapidated auditorium of a slum school in the Kalamati neighborhood of Katmandu playing the lead role in an amateur theater production.

Before an audience of about 200, he acted out the story of a young boy whose mother had died during the 10- year civil war between Maoists and royalists that ended in 2006 and whose father was seriously ill. Rabi's character got a job to pay for his father's medication, but he was unable to earn enough and his father died. A social worker found a place for him in a shelter for orphans.

It was a sad story. It is the story of Rabi's life.

"When Rabi got up on stage and told his story, it was probably the most intense moment of three very intense months in Nepal," recalls Yotam Pulitzer, 25, who formed a theater troupe of destitute Nepalese youths like Rabi as part of a program called Tevel b'Tzedek (The Earth - In Justice), a non-profit for social and environmental justice.

Pulitzer, who returned to his home in Mitzpe Harashim in the North last week from several months of backpacking in South Asia, met Tevel b'Tzedek while in Nepal. The trip that started off as part vacation, part adventure turned into an opportunity to give.

Tevel b'Tzedek is seeking to add a social activist dimension to a custom that has become a sort of rite of passage for Israeli youth. Some 50,000 post-army backpackers pass through South Asia every year, likely the largest group of travelers per capita of any nationality. Thousands more travel through South America and other Third World locations. Most come to wind down after their mandatory stint in the IDF.

These backpackers come to Nepal to escape the conflict with the Palestinians; to smoke cheap and potent Indian hashish; to embrace a culture untouched by the complicated anti-Semitic history of the West; to experience an exotic spirituality that is both intoxicating and non-committing; to enjoy the physical beauty of the countryside; to forge friendships and romances.

But many also come because they are sensitive, curious and idealistic. Filled with an inchoate need for meaning, purpose and faith, they set out on a search which is both physically and spiritually demanding. Often they end up wandering aimlessly, never really finding themselves.

Tour of duty

The founder of Tevel b'Tzedek, Rabbi Micha Odenheimer, 49, a student of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach who received rabbinic ordination from halachic authority Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, hopes to harness some of the energies expended on the vague youthful search for meaning and to channel them into constructive Jewish social activism projects as part of a larger campaign for tikkun olam, repairing the world. He hopes to use young Israelis' obligatory trip to a Third World locale as an opportunity to inspire them to confront the suffering and powerlessness of the world's poor and attempt to fix the negative aspects of globalization.

SO FAR two groups - one of 16 and one of 18 - have been sent to Nepal since Tevel b'Tzedek was founded last year. Another is slated to leave at the end of March. Most of the people taking part are post-army Israelis aged 22 to 24. But there are a few Hebrew-speaking Jews from Canada, the UK and the US. And there are also a handful of older professionals with specific training and skills.

"Tevel b'Tzedek was born out of a feeling that what happens to the poor and powerless of the world is humanity's greatest ethical challenge," says Odenheimer, a Yale graduate who receives funding from the UJA Federation of New York, the Shusterman Foundation, the Rochlin Family Foundation, the Pears Foundation and the Wolfensohn Family Foundation. "Judaism and Israel should be involved in the discourse on how to shape the world's future."

Odenheimer says he is displeased with the direction Israeli society is headed. He criticizes the Finance Ministry's neoconservative economic policies such as aggressive privatization, weakening organized labor and strict fiscal discipline that, he says, have trampled small business interests, exacerbated social inequalities and destroyed the education system.

"I believe in the market as an important part of a healthy economy," says Odenheimer, "but today we are in danger of creating an ethos in which greed is celebrated more than sacrifice."

In a counterintuitive move, Odenheimer hopes to make an impact on Tel Aviv by bringing talented young people to Katmandu. But not everyone buys his reasoning. In fact, he admitted, the immediate response some have to Tevel b'Tzedek's work is that instead of running off to solve the problems of the Nepalese, the organization should stay put and address the myriad problems at home.

Michalya Schonwald, who took part in the pilot of Tevel b'Tzedek and is now deputy international director involved in PR, planning, fund-raising and recruitment, says a primary goal is to create graduates who will continue at home the social activism they started in Nepal.

"For sure there are a lot of problems in Israel," says Schonwald, 29, a graduate of Columbia University, who was involved in fostering Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation before being accepted to Tevel b'Tzedek. "We are creating a variety of posts here to help graduates collaborate with local social justice groups. We are also establishing a seed fund to help graduates implement new projects."

But if the objective is to encourage people to get involved in social activism locally, why does Tevel b'Tzedek bring its recruits all the way to Katmandu?

"So many Israelis are interested in Nepal and other Third World countries," Schonwald says. "We want to give that journey a different, deeper context. Israelis will go there not as tourists but as change makers. And the experience there will be brought back home."

"Besides, what happens while people are there is a real transformation. They are suddenly opened to Third World issues and this sheds new light on how they view issues back at home. They also realize that the Third World is not that far away."

LIOR MESSING, 22, a graduate of Tevel b'Tzedek who grew up in Ramat Gan, brought back the social activism she learned in Nepal. Her work with Nepalese foreign workers in Tel Aviv - a continuation of her work in Nepal - is proof of the global village. Messing joined an organization based in Tel Aviv called Mesila that provides "empowerment" courses for Nepalese women, most of whom are working as caregivers to the elderly and mentally disabled.

Tour of duty

"We provide them with information on foreign workers' rights and visa issues," Messing says. "We help them cope with the treatment of their patients by giving them deeper understanding of Alzheimer's and mental retardation. We also counsel them on issues such as sexual harassment in the workplace."

During her stay in Nepal Messing worked with an organization called Prayas that was created by and for street children. It focuses on fighting drug abuse (mostly glue sniffing) and child prostitution.

According to Ambassador to Nepal Dan Stav, Tevel b'Tzedek is revamping the stereotype of the Israeli backpacker as a loud, boisterous consumer more interested in having a good time than showing an interest or empathy for the plight of the natives.

"I am happy to say that Tevel b'Tzedek is an idea that has had a positive impression on Nepalese," he says by phone from Katmandu, adding that the local population is not aware of the geopolitical issues of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

"Most Nepalese are mainly indifferent to the Israelis who pass through. They are seen primarily as a source of income. But Tevel b'Tzedek brought people who exhibit very high levels of ability and idealism. They go beyond the normal curiosity of the backpacker and are actually having an impact here."

Stav says that the embassy helps Tevel b'Tzedek sort through the thousands of NGOs and INGOs that operate in Nepal and choose the serious ones. Participants then volunteer at these organizations, both local and international, helping to fight the trafficking of women, child abuse and drug abuse.

Nepal, with a population of about 28 million, was devastated by the civil war that has led to an unstable quasi-republic governed by seven different parties, including the Maoists and the royalists. Annual gross national income per capita was \$290 in 2006, according to World Bank figures. In contrast, GNI per capita in Israel was \$20,000.

Taking steps to reduce the shocking socioeconomic disparity between western economies and Nepal's is a primary goal of Tevel b'Tzedek. But the nearly insurmountable challenges are daunting and the tiny organization cannot ever hope to solve them all. Rather, Odenheimer hopes to become a catalyst for the overhauling of Zionism's foreign policy priorities.

"Zionism was once dominated by idealists in search of a state whose socially just policies would make the Jews a 'light unto the nations,'" he says. "For many Zionists, the State of Israel was a means of healing that split between universalism and communal solidarity. Anchored in a place, a language, a nation that we could call our own, we could begin to act in the world without fear of losing our identity."

"Israel in the 1950s and 1960s, committed to democratic socialism, poised in its own development somewhere between the First World and the Third, spent a hefty 30 percent of its Foreign Ministry budget on agricultural, medical and other aid programs in Africa and elsewhere. Thousands of Third World nurses, doctors and social workers came to Israel for training."

"It didn't last. The Yom Kippur War, during which many Third World nations, threatened by an oil embargo, cut off relations with Israel, marked the end of much of this activity. Then, through the 1990s - the Oslo years - as peace seemed inevitable, the idea of a renewed integration of Jewish specificity and Jewish universalism grew compelling. But the breakdown of Oslo, the almost daily suicide bombings during the second intifada and, more recently, the war with Hizbullah and the widespread embrace of classic anti-Semitic belief in fundamentalist Iran, not to mention the threat of nuclear weapons, have reawakened Jewish existential fear of annihilation and that sense of Jewish foreboding."

Odenheimer believes that the only way to heal the rupture between the universalistic and particularistic aspects of Judaism is to show that while there might be tension between the two there is no contradiction. He and other teachers at Tevel b'Tzedek try to show this duality through the teaching of Jewish texts and through the keeping of Jewish customs such as kosher food (vegetarian), respect for the Shabbat (without coercion) and prayer, while at the same time actively engaging in social and environmental activism.

Tour of duty

Uriel Simon, professor emeritus of Bible at Bar-Ilan University, is one of the teachers who come to Katmandu to make an argument for Jewish social activism.

"Most of the participants in the program are secular and they tend to have a romantic attraction to Eastern religions which are seen as superior to the particularism of Judaism," he says. "My challenge is to show them a universalistic aspect of Judaism that they did not know existed. Meanwhile, the religious participants might feel threatened by universalistic ideals that cast in doubt their 'chosenness.' They have more of a tendency toward collectivism and closing themselves off to the suffering of others in the global village that we live in."

Simon says that he resolves the tension between the universalistic and the particularistic aspects of Judaism by "bringing the nations of the world into Jewish theology." "God did not only create Israel. He created millions of others as well. We cannot ignore their existence, their suffering their success."

Pulizer, a self-proclaimed secular Jew, says that he learned from Simon the universalistic dimension of Judaism. "I've always been bothered by the idea that the Jewish people considers itself chosen," he says. "I always saw this as a type of haughty condescension on our part. But through discussions, lectures and seminars, I've learned that Jewish chosenness has nothing to do with being better than other nations. Chosenness means that as a Jew I have more moral responsibility for bringing about tikkun olam."

Graphic

4 photos: CLASS PHOTO. A recent Tevel b'Tzedek cohort in Nepal. WORKING WITH the Nepalese. Founder Odenheimer is far right. THE VIEW from there. The idea is to gain perspective abroad and return home as social activists. (Credit: Courtesy photos)

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(Ducking the) Decision Day

The Jerusalem Post

January 30, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 24

Length: 2112 words

Byline: DAVID HOROVITZ

Highlight: Even would-be friends of Israel don't know which vision of the country they should be defending. How can they know, when we won't make up our own minds? EDITOR'S NOTES

Body

The elections are still more than a week away, but I can tell you already who lost. Israel did.

The polls consistently indicate that Binyamin Netanyahu's Likud will be the biggest party in the next Knesset. Tzipi Livni's Kadima would have to manage a late surge to surpass it, but having long since lost the center-right, it is now losing part of the center, too, and is slipping backward. Ehud Barak's Labor party has been bolstered by his perceived efficient performance as defense minister in the confrontation with Hamas. But Labor lags far behind, and is looking over its shoulder, worrying that Avigdor Lieberman's Israel Beiteinu will overtake it as Israel's third largest party. We will, thus, almost certainly be electing a right-wing or center-right government to replace the center-left coalition led by Kadima.

All this I know, as do you. What I don't know, clearly and specifically, is which Israel it is that these key parties want to lead toward, if given the opportunity by our voters next week. Many of the smaller parties do have defined positions; these more minor parties, though, will not be dominating the next coalition.

Most importantly, I don't know if the Likud, our likely new party of government, is committed to dramatically expanding Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria, as several of its Knesset members-in-waiting dearly hope; whether it will restrict expansion to "natural growth," without building new settlements, as Netanyahu has indicated; or whether it might even prove susceptible to pressure for a settlement freeze and the dismantling of homes.

Will the man who chose not to firmly oppose the Gaza disengagement until it was too late to stop it, now seek a hard-to-discern middle path on security and negotiation? How will he reconcile pressures from the Obama administration, on one side, and the hawks on his own Knesset list, on the other? Does he have a clear goal in terms of Israel's permanent contours, or will his be a reactive prime ministership, defined by the pressures placed upon him at home and abroad and his ability to maneuver, short-term, between them?

Likewise, I don't know if Kadima, in the unlikely event of its continued primacy, is bent on accelerating the negotiations its outgoing Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has been conducting with the Mahmoud Abbas-led Palestinian Authority, in which Olmert was desperately striving to reach an accord on all areas of dispute, involving unprecedented readiness for territorial compromise. Or whether Kadima's new leader, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, would adopt a more cautious approach, notably as regards the fate of Jerusalem. Or whether a more hawkish stance, as set out by her defeated party leadership rival Shaul Mofaz, would prevail.

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Then there's Labor, the party that, at Camp David in 2000 and in the subsequent final months of president Clinton's administration, sought and failed to achieve a permanent agreement with the Yasser Arafat-led PA. I don't know whether, even as a junior coalition partner, it would push for further concessions than those considered by Barak back then. Those concessions, it will be recalled, fell some way short of the parameters apparently contemplated by Olmert in recent months. Labor in the years up to and including Camp David, after all, confidently predicted that it would be able to reach a permanent accommodation with the PA while expanding Israeli sovereignty into five, 10 or more percent of the West Bank.

And finally, there is Israel Beiteinu, enjoying a dramatic rise in the polls by playing on rising Israeli Jewish concerns over deepening Arab hostility. I don't know how seriously it would seek to press its trademark demand for a remaking of Israel's sovereign borders, to redraw the line so that predominantly Arab areas adjacent to the West Bank border in northern Israel were redesignated as part of a Palestinian state, in return for the annexation by Israel of parts of Judea and Samaria with a heavy settlement presence.

Since our politicians have refused, entirely predictably, to reform our dismal electoral system, and we are thus condemned to further years of multi-party paralysis - excuse me, multi-party government - this already muddy picture will be further confused by the conflicting goals of the coalition partners.

And, yes, Israel will be the loser.

ISRAEL'S OFFICIAL public relations head honchos are feeling rather pleased with their performance during Operation Cast Lead. They note, accurately, that articulate spokespeople were made available to set out Israel's case in a variety of languages as the conflict unfolded.

They note that when the IDF killed 30 or more civilians at a UN school in Jabalya on January 6, the heavy civilian loss of life did not prove a turning point that massively exacerbated international criticism and constrained ongoing military action - in contrast to a similar incident during the war against Hizbullah in 2006. The difference, this time, was that the IDF Spokesman produced a chapter-and-verse response almost immediately, including the contention that a Hamas mortar battery had fired on the IDF, the names of two Hamas operatives purportedly killed in the return fire and footage of fire from the same school area in 2007.

But such "achievements" notwithstanding, any official Israeli PR contentment is wildly misplaced. Israel achieved impressive, if limited, military success against Hamas, confronting, though still not yet entirely halting, the rocket fire, while keeping IDF losses to a minimum and enjoying the backing of an efficiently marshalled home front. The portents are not good, but the jury is necessarily still out on the efficacy of the much-touted new mechanisms to prevent Hamas from rearming and strengthening.

But overall, on the media-diplomacy battlefield, Israel suffered a stinging defeat. Its legitimate insistence that Hamas brought disaster down upon the people of Gaza has not widely resonated. Its legitimate assertion that it sought to minimize civilian fatalities - pursuing pinpoint targets and warning locals to leave areas that were about to be attacked - when fighting an enemy that had ruthlessly placed Gaza civilians in the line of fire, is widely dismissed.

And if that uncomprehending trend in world public opinion is largely the fault of superficial international media coverage, Israel contributed to the momentum by failing, 2006-style, to prepare the media and diplomatic ground for its resort to force with the same kind of efficiency it displayed in its military preparations. Just as the army carefully researched and selected its Hamas targets in the months ahead, success on the public diplomacy battlefield required - also for months ahead, in all diplomatic and public frameworks - highlighting the avowed destructive goals of Hamas, the relentless threat of the rocket attacks, and the untenable reality these had produced for southern Israel.

Once the conflict began, the IDF contributed further to the negative perception by failing to produce figures on the number and nature of the Palestinian dead to counter Hamas-Gaza government claims that most of those killed were civilians, including many hundreds of women and children. Belatedly and off-the-record, Israeli officials now assert that the overwhelming majority of the Gaza fatalities were Hamas members, and even claim to have

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identified the vast majority of them. Too vague. Too late. As Israel had to know it would be, the toll of the civilian dead was the barometer by which Israel's purported "disproportionate" response was measured; all evidence that Israel had of the skewing of that total needed to be produced with the same urgency as was displayed in the response to the shelling of the UN school.

The negative diplomatic fallout - emblemized by the UN Security Council resolution - was an inevitable consequence of the critical media coverage. And the aftershocks, already felt far and wide, will also linger long. Latin American countries severing ties; Turkey shifting from ally to enemy; a global spike in anti-Semitism - these are the most overt indications. But the damage is more severe still.

Ordinary people watching TV everywhere, people who consider themselves "right-thinking" decent folk, were terribly affected by the footage from Gaza - as, of course, we were here, too. But here we could see what was off-camera. We recognized that Hamas had been gradually acquiring the capacity to terrorize all of Israel, and was holding (a largely sympathetic) civilian Gaza hostage in the hope of deterring Israel from tackling that threat. We knew that the IDF was striving to defang Hamas without setting off the booby-trapped schools and apartment blocks in which Hamas was hoping more Palestinians would be killed. We knew that Hamas was fighting out of uniform and that the Palestinian "civilian" death tolls were distorted.

Nowhere else were viewers as able to absorb those wider, perception-shifting factors. And so, inevitably, they have drawn erroneous conclusions about Israel and Hamas, protector and aggressor, right and wrong.

BUT WHILE the challenge of explaining Israel's actions in Gaza was daunting - and Israel was defeated on that second battlefield by the mix of its own public diplomacy shortcomings and media superficiality - it is dwarfed by the wider task of explaining Israel, and defending Israel and "selling" Israel, even to our friends, when we have yet to decide which Israel it is we wish to be and thus to sell.

In every conceivable forum - every media panel, every conference, every diplomatic gathering - representatives of Israel speak in a jarring discord of patriotic voices. Israel should retake Gaza; no, it must open the borders to Gaza and negotiate with Hamas. There can be no compromise on Jerusalem; no, we must relinquish the Palestinian neighborhoods of our capital city. Israel must retain all of Judea and Samaria, and hang the consequences in terms of our own democracy and international support; no, it must return to the pre '67 lines, stay Jewish, take security risks; no again, we must find a new middle ground short of the "Auschwitz borders."

Is an international political "friend of Israel" someone who pushes for the kind of accord advocated by our departing prime minister - someone, that is, like France's President Nicolas Sarkozy, who passionately tells us that "the future of Israel is at stake" and that we must show trust and take risks for peace? Or does that stance render Sarkozy a liability to our true cause? Is the Obama administration's likely maintenance of long-standing American opposition to the settlement enterprise proof of its flaws, or evidence that it has accurately judged where our best interests lie? Are the Greater Israel Christian Evangelists our worst nightmare or our best true friends?

There is no consensual Israeli answer to these questions. Our diplomats and advocates are thus left promoting a product whose most basic dimensions they cannot decisively describe. Our friends cannot know which Israel they ought to be supporting; we haven't told them.

Contrast that with the Palestinians. They speak with just two voices. What we want, the Abbas-led PA and its supporters chorus in unison, is a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem and a just solution to the problem of the refugees. What we want, counters Hamas, is the elimination of Israel, albeit with the possibility of an interim accommodation along the '67 lines. Duplicious or not, it's a clear agenda, offering a clear choice to both the Palestinians themselves and would-be peacemakers.

What, meanwhile, does Israel want? For the 41-and-a-half years since the Six Day War, we have insistently not made our minds up, even as facts shifted inexorably on the ground. For much of that time we deluded ourselves that Arab intransigence to any notion of compromise rendered such a decision irrelevant. Our heads are in the sand even as it shifts.

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Of course, all other democracies strive to reconcile internal divides, but only in ours have the arguments, decade after decade, failed to produce a workable consensus as to the very contours of our nation.

A week-and-a-half from now, across these unresolved fundamental divides, we will be unhappily casting our uncertain ballots for representatives who, on the whole, have managed to avoid setting out their own red lines and telling us their own specific conception of Israel - representatives who, in some cases, aspire to lead us without even having made those conceptual choices themselves. The blind led by the evasive.

What does Israel seek for itself? The day of fateful choice is upon us again. Watch us duck it.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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A tasty prospect not to everyone's taste

The Times (London)

June 21, 2007, Thursday

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Section: BUSINESS; Pg. 54

Length: 122 words

Byline: Martin Waller

Body

In one of those gestures of cultural sensitivity for which Americans are so esteemed, Hooters, an American restaurant chain whose raison d'etre is barely dressed waitresses, is working to open its first outlet in a Muslim country. A Kuwaiti investor is quoted on the Zawya Dow Jones newswire as aiming for three outlets this year. The location is, appropriately, Dubai, fast turning into the Middle Eastern version of Las Vegas. Hooters, which is expanding worldwide, had planned on Lebanon, but recent difficulties there made this unwise. Alcohol, hot pants, skimpy T-shirts -yes, I can see how Hezbollah might have taken issue. "The element of female sex appeal is prevalent in the restaurants," claims the Hooters website. Indeed.

Load-Date: June 21, 2007

Speaking to the region across a wide gulf

The Jerusalem Post

June 6, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 2181 words

Byline: CALEV BEN-DAVID

Highlight: On a visit to attend 'The Doha Debates,' a 'Jerusalem Post' writer finds the small but rich emirate of Qatar leading a media revolution in the Arab world. BETWEEN THE LINES. The Doha Debates featuring Mahmoud Zahar will be broadcast on BBC World on June 7 and 8.

Body

It's a late May evening in Doha, capital of the Gulf emirate of Qatar, and the temperature has dropped to a balmy 38¼C from a blistering daytime high of 45¼C.

Luckily, the air-conditioning is keeping things cool in the large room at the headquarters complex of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development where The Doha Debates, a public affairs program now concluding its third season on BBC World News, is being taped for later broadcast.

Tonight's guest is top Hamas official Mahmoud Zahar, who will field questions from host Tim Sebastian and an audience of Qatari students and other young Arabs from around the region.

As the taping gets under way, things quickly heat up, with Sebastian challenging Zahar in the patented take-no-prisoners style he perfected during his years as host of the BBC interview program, HARDtalk.

Raising the issue of the Kassam rockets shot daily from Gaza on Sderot and other Israeli communities, Sebastian asks bluntly: "You call this self-defense? Indiscriminate attacks against innocent civilians in Israel? You don't care who you kill, do you?"

Zahar surely anticipated such treatment from Sebastian when he signed up to do The Doha Debates. Less expected, perhaps, is the grilling he subsequently receives from the audience. While his rote denunciations of Israel garner dutiful applause, the Hamas leader finds himself the subject of a stream of blistering inquiries from the young Arabs seated before him.

"How do you consider yourself an Islamic organization, when Islam forbids killing innocent people and civilians, even when they belong to an enemy?" asks one.

"You are criticizing the Israelis for doing things against the Palestinians that Hamas is itself doing," says another.

A young woman who identifies herself as a Palestinian shoots out in a strong voice: "Not only are Hamas's activities creating a negative image of Palestinians, both in the Arab world and international community, but it's also costing many, many lives - so how can you allow this to continue?"

Speaking to the region across a wide gulf

There's no program other than The Doha Debates in the Middle East that allows Arab audiences to so openly confront a figure such as Zahar, and it's hard to imagine any other place in the Arab world they could do so other than in Qatar. The uniqueness of program is emblematic of Qatar's exceptional role in the region - one sending out ripples of change throughout the Middle East - and generating a strong counterreaction, as well.

QATAR SITS on a small peninsula that juts up like a left-hand thumb from the east coast of Saudi Arabia into the Persian Gulf. It shares many of the same characteristics of the other Gulf states: It sits on a huge ocean of oil (an estimated 15 billion barrels) and natural gas, making it the richest nation in the world per capita; it is still ruled by a dynastic sheikhdom, although it has recently introduced some democratic reforms; the rising oil economy has powered a local construction boom, leaving Doha's skyline dotted by ultra-modern skyscrapers in various stages of construction or completion; and its native population of about 350,000 is outnumbered by some four times that number of foreign workers. (When I arrive in Doha, I am greeted at the airport by a Chinese woman, taken to my hotel by a Filipino driver and checked in by an Indian receptionist.)

In other ways, though, Qatar has carved out for itself its own exceptional identity among neighbors that include Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait. My own presence there last week is indicative of one aspect of this special status. Qatar was the first Gulf state to openly establish diplomatic relations with Israel, and after suspending them with the outbreak of the second intifada, it reestablished trade relations in 2005, allowing Jerusalem to open a commercial office in Doha. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni visited there two months ago, to attend the Doha Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade, and other Israelis are allowed to visit if they receive government permission for a visa.

These developments are part of a relatively dramatic (in terms of the Gulf) push forward toward Westernization and liberalization over the past decade, following the ascension to its throne of Qatar's current ruler, Emir Hamid bin Khalifa Al Thani. Hamid has expanded women's rights, including the right to vote in local elections and for a newly formed parliament; recently allowed the first church to open to serve the Christian foreign labor population; and has significantly invested in and opened up the nation's educational facilities, including a literal "Education City," whose colleges include local branches of Carnegie-Mellon, Georgetown, Cornell, Texas A&M and Virginia Commonwealth.

Credit for many of these developments, especially the latter, is also given to the emir's dynamic wife, Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al-Missned, who has emerged in recent years as second only to Jordan's Queen Rania as the most prominent female ruler in the Arab political world. She makes her influence felt through her role as chairwoman of the Qatar Foundation, which serves as the principle sponsor of The Doha Debates (and also sponsored my visit to Qatar).

Beyond education, it is in media through which Qatar has made its most notable impact on the region. The most prominent manifestation of this - and the most controversial - is the Arabic Al Jazeera satellite TV news network, founded in 1996, and joined two years ago by an English-language sister channel.

Al Jazeera has, of course, been bitterly attacked in Israel recently for its slanted reporting of the Gaza situation, as well as by the US and Iraq on its coverage of the latter's ongoing conflict. But there's no denying its impact on the Arab world in presenting reports dealing with sensitive political, social and religious issues with a critical openness that has proved groundbreaking for the Arab broadcast media (and this includes giving Israeli officials a chance to have their say directly to Arab audiences).

Qatar is now looking to expand that outreach in other media outlets.

While in Doha, for example, I meet with Abdulaziz al- Mahmoud, editor-in-chief of a new daily, Al Arab, that started publishing in November and has hopes to become a regional paper.

Before this, al-Mahmoud served as a senior editor at Al Jazeera, and still sits on the board. He defends the station from charges of bias, but when I suggest that the station is also serving political purposes, he concedes, "Yes, you can say that" - although when I ask what they are, he responds with a smile, "To be honest, I'm not sure."

Speaking to the region across a wide gulf

Al Arab is different, he assures me, more of commercial venture sponsored by local investors (Al Jazeera gets direct government funding) and one in which he has a freer editorial hand.

An engaging personality, Mahmoud is at ease discussing and debating an Israeli journalist on various regional issues. But ordinary Qataris (if there is such a thing) are apparently less comfortable with the idea, he concedes, telling me the Israeli trade office had initial difficulty finding someone to rent it space until the government intervened. Full normalization will only come, he insists, after a final agreement with the Palestinians is reached.

As for Qatar's own normalization in the area of press freedom, it has clearly made some impressive strides. Earlier this year the emir authorized the establishment of the Doha Media Center, an NGO set up in collaboration with the international organization Reporters Without Borders, whose mission will be to "focus on violations committed against media in the Arab world and other countries."

Still, even Reporters Without Borders last year ranked Qatar in 79th place on its Worldwide Press Freedom Index, below neighbors Kuwait and the UAE (Israel was 44th). Al Jazeera may feel free to criticize Jerusalem and other Arab regimes, but it is noticed that it rarely turns that critical eye on Qatar's own government, especially Emir Hamid and Sheikha Moza.

ONE MAN in Qatar who insists he operates under no editorial restrictions at all is Doha Debates creator and host Tim Sebastian.

"I just wouldn't have accepted working here under any other condition," the veteran BBC reporter insists, in the same self-certain tone he used to such great effect taking on various world leaders in his years on HARDtalk.

The Doha Debates evolved out of a conversation Sebastian had four years ago with Sheik Hamid, "in which he asked me what kind of program I would do here if I had the freedom to do so, and I said one based on the Oxford Union debates," in which notable figures take sides over a particular motion, and a student audience votes afterward, either in favor or against.

Like much else in Qatar that happens with lightning speed once the emir gives his assent, a pilot program was quickly set up on the motion: "This House believes the Arab world is not interested in genuine reform," and Sebastian recruited an old colleague, Ali Willis, to act as producer.

"Initially we thought this might be a one-off or limited series," says Willis. "It was only after the third program, when it got picked up by BBC World, that we realized it would be a continuing series."

The only input from the sponsors, she says, "was a request that we take down a portrait of the emir that we had hung in the background for the first show."

There certainly seems to be virtually no regional hot-button topic the program has not dealt with in the past four years, including: "This House believes in the separation of mosque and state"; "This House believes that Iran poses the greatest threat to security in the region"; "This House believes Hizbullah had no right to fight a war on Lebanon's behalf"; and "This House believes that Arab women should have full equality with men."

In January 2007, Shimon Peres was invited to appear on the program, becoming the first high-ranking Israeli to visit Qatar in more than a decade, and he has been followed by Meretz MK Yossi Beilin and former foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami. The Doha Debates segments dealing with the Israeli-Arab conflict are among the most controversial and popular, according to Willis.

"The show on the motion 'This House believes the Palestinians should give up their full right of return,' probably generated the greatest response," she says.

Unfortunately, that motion was rejected, although last month's "This House believes the Palestinians risk becoming their own worst enemy" was approved. Certainly it's harder to imagine a better example of that proposition than Zahar, who, during his contentious 90-minute give-and-take with the studio audience, rejected any criticism of Hamas, showed not the slightest sign of any possible acceptance of Israel's existence and displayed not even a

Speaking to the region across a wide gulf

sliver of self-doubt or remorse in his organization's policy of deliberately targeting innocent civilians (or, for that matter, attacking fellow Palestinians it considers a threat).

Certainly on this occasion, The Doha Debates lived up to its stated mission as "a public forum for dialogue and freedom of speech in Qatar."

Sitting in the crowd is 24-year old Almuhammad al-Hammadi, one of the bright young Qataris who regularly attend, and who recently began working in the country's Foreign Ministry.

"It is helping to open up the country to discussion and debate, giving the people courage to speak out about certain issues that were once considered taboo," he says.

One sign of this is that just three months ago the country held its first-ever student debating competition, organized by the recently formed Qatar Debate Society, which next autumn will also be sending a national team (three of whom are girls) to the World Schools Debating Championships in Washington DC.

So impressive and quick are the apparent strides being made by Qatar in the realm of free expression, one can't help wonder if it may pose a possible danger to the country's social and political stability down the line.

"It's true that it is still primarily the younger Qataris, the students seen as the 'Qatar Foundation' generation, that is being influenced by all this," says al-Hammadi. "And they are being given certain expectations that could become problematic if these aren't met."

If the possibility of a local backlash against this rapid liberalization should remain a concern, that trend is already evident on a regional level. In February, the Arab League adopted a new "satellite channel charter" that officially allows its member-states to withdraw broadcast permits from stations that "offend the leaders or national and religious symbols" or "damage social harmony, national unity, public order or traditional values" of Arab countries. Clearly, outlets such as Al Jazeera, and programs like The Doha Debates, were the spur to the measure - and Qatar and Lebanon were the only countries that voted against it.

"It's a worrying development," says Sebastian. "Free speech in the region is under pressure, and we stand out even more as a forum where people can say things they can't say anywhere else."

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Graphic

2 photos: A PANORAMIC view of Qatar's capital. Doha's skyline is dotted by ultra-modern skyscrapers in various stages of construction or completion. HEATED EXCHANGE. Hamas official Mahmoud Zahar fields questions from host Tim Sebastian. (Credit: Courtesy of 'The Doha Debates')

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Terror recalled

The Jerusalem Post
March 21, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 24

Length: 1985 words

Byline: David E. Kaplan

Highlight: Thirty years ago, 35 Israelis were killed in one of the worst terror attacks on Israeli soil. Survivors of what became known as the Coastal Road Massacre tell their story. Box at end of text.

Body

They meet once a year. They smile, they laugh, they hug and they cry. They're alive - 35 of their loved ones are not.

This year is the 30th anniversary of what has become known as the Coastal Road Massacre. On March 11, 1978, 35 Israeli civilians lost their lives in a terrifying hijacking of an Egged bus on the coastal highway between Tel Aviv and Haifa.

Masterminded by Abu Jihad and executed by the Fatah PLO faction, the attack began when 11 terrorists, including two women, left Lebanon and landed in Zodiac boats on the stretch of beach at Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael, located some 30 km south of Haifa.

At day's end, the bus the terrorists hijacked was a burnt-out shell. So were the lives of many Israelis.

Metro spoke to some of the survivors of the hijacking at their annual ceremony, held at the monument on the coastal road opposite Cinema City in Herzliya. "I was 11 years old at the time," says Dani Boskanitz, who - together with his brother Eran - was left an orphan in the attack. Boskanitz had been forced at gunpoint to board the bus at Ma'agan Michael, while Eran was one of the last to jump from the vehicle as it was consumed in flames at the spot where the monument stands today.

"I have a beautiful wife and a wonderful son," Boskanitz says, "but there's this black cloud; it's always lurking in the background, and when I get together each year with the survivors and their families, it consumes me."

Another victim revisiting the horror was Ruth Drori, a tour guide who spends part of each year in Israel and part in Holland. She was 30 years old when she last saw her husband alive. "He was lying on the ground at Ma'agan Michael and he screamed at me, 'I'm fine; just take care of the children,'" she recalls. She had no idea he had been shot, so when he said "take care," she didn't understand that he meant forever. On the bus, one of Drori's children sat next to her while the other two crouched under the seats. Later, when the grenades went off, she says, "I found myself lying on the floor under dead bodies. I managed to scramble off the bus, but couldn't find my children. I was convinced they'd been killed in the inferno. Covered in blood, I was quickly placed in an ambulance and rushed to hospital. At some stage, I fainted. At Meir Hospital in Kfar Saba, I later heard the names being read over the radio [of people who] had died." The tears flow as she tells of hearing her husband's name. "I had thought my kids were

Terror recalled

dead and my husband was alive." Fortune had decreed otherwise. All three of her children had miraculously survived.

Drori remarried and had two more children. All five were at the ceremony and watched their mother walk to the microphone and address the gathering.

She was followed by Welfare and Social Services Minister Isaac Herzog, representing the government. Not only their personal losses were at the back of people's minds. From Herzog to the survivors themselves, everyone was asking, "What has changed?" Only three days before the ceremony, an Arab gunman from east Jerusalem had opened fire at Jerusalem's Mercaz Harav Yeshiva, killing eight students. "We come here today to pay our respects to those who died in a massacre 30 years ago," says Bobby Shapiro from Moshav Ben Ami near Nahariya, "and the nation is mourning another massacre fresh from today's headlines."

Shapiro and his wife, Brenda, were new immigrants from South Africa on that fateful morning in March 1978. It was pure chance that their lives became intertwined with the horrific events about to unfold. The Shapiro family was driving north on the coastal highway when they saw a bus at the turnoff to Ma'agan Michael. Thinking there had been an accident, Shapiro stopped suddenly. "Next thing I saw was this frantic woman running towards us, screaming, with a baby in her arms covered in blood."

Brenda jumped out of the car with their two young daughters and two of their friends. "I'll see if I can help with the injured. You take the mother and her baby to [the] hospital," were her parting words. Shapiro sped off. A kilometer on, the mother became hysterical. "Look what the terrorists have done."

"Terrorists, what terrorists?" a puzzled Shapiro screamed frantically. Then the enormity of the misunderstanding hit him. He had left his family not at the scene of a road accident, but in the clutches of terrorists. In the meantime, the infant in his car had died. "I stopped, hailed down an oncoming car with whom I left the mother and her dead child, did a U-turn, and sped back," he remembers.

No sooner had Shapiro stopped behind the bus when he found himself staring down the barrel of a Kalashnikov and ordered to board. "There were 11 terrorists, although I didn't note the number at the time. I looked and shouted for my family but couldn't see them. I was shoved to a seat. In the front, a woman terrorist was in command and barking orders in English, while another two were positioned in the front and back of the bus, holding grenades. Their fingers rested on the safety pins, waiting for an order to release." That order would come later.

"The female terrorist screamed that they were from Fatah and that we were going to Ben-Gurion Airport, where we would board a plane for an Arab country."

At this point, Shapiro did not know whether his family was alive or dead, but he knew they weren't on the bus. "I also knew that if I was to survive this day, I had to escape. Boarding a plane was not an option for an Israeli with a South African passport. These were the thoughts going through my mind."

New developments soon made escape a far-fetched option. "They began tying us up and I was bound back-to-back with a man (the father of Dani and Eran Boskanitz) whose wife was lying on the floor next to us suffering with gunshot wounds. There was nothing we could do and she died shortly afterwards. By the time we passed the Wingate Institute, I had managed to wriggle free. It took me all the way from Ma'agan Michael to achieve this. The man pleaded, "Tikshor et ze" ("Tie it back on") - fearing they would kill us. I placed the rope loosely back on and waited for the first opportunity to dive out the window. I expected it to come sometime shortly before we reached the airport." His chance came much sooner, near the Herzliya Country Club.

End of the road

The army had set up an ambush. "The next thing we knew, they were shooting from both sides, taking out the tires. The woman terrorist threatened to blow up the bus. We had little reason to doubt her," Shapiro says.

The order came. Both terrorists, one in the front and the one at the back, simultaneously released the safety pins from their grenades. A passenger at the back, Yossi Hochman, seeing what was about to happen, jumped on the

Terror recalled

terrorist. The grenade exploded, killing Yossi's wife and two children. Miraculously, Yossi survived, although he lost both his legs.

"I was near the front and when I saw what was about to happen bundled myself into a ball. Don't ask me how I survived the explosion. The bus was now on fire. The man that I had been bound to lay dead beside his wife, who had succumbed to her wounds earlier. There was death and carnage everywhere. Instinct took over and I dived out the window. This wasn't so easy. I was caught [up] and found myself hanging there for some five seconds before I managed to drop to the ground. I dashed to a nearby trench, where I took refuge with a woman and her daughter. She was pleading that her father was still in the bus and was about to run back to try save him. I knew that meant certain death and pulled her down. The terrorists were disembarking from the bus and shooting in all directions. I couldn't let her go. It was terrible, and her dad died on the bus."

The girl's mother, Lily Glottman, has headed the Survivor's Committee since its inception, organizing a memorial ceremony every year.

Through all the smoke and gunfire, Shapiro saw a man writhing in agony on the ground next to the blazing bus. "He was holding his stomach and was bleeding badly. I don't know what got into me. Thinking I had lost my wife and kids, I got up and ran to the fellow, picked him up and darting through the smoke and gunfire, hurried back to the trench." The man, Simcha Galon, survived, as did his wife Shosh. Their seven-year-old daughter did not.

But what had become of Shapiro's wife, Brenda, and the girls? As soon as Shapiro had sped off toward the hospital, it quickly became apparent this was a terrorist attack and not a road accident. "I screamed at the girls to run up a hill," Brenda tells Metro. "The terrorists saw us and opened fire. Thankfully, the grass was tall and I screamed at them to drop to the ground and crawl. Bullets whizzed passed us and after a few seconds the firing stopped. I guess they thought they had killed us because they didn't bother to check. To this day we cannot say how long we lay there until we heard Hebrew." They had been found by an IDF commando unit. "I screamed 'anahnu po' - 'we are here'," Brenda says.

It was fitting that the son of Israel's sixth president addressed the 30th anniversary of one of the nation's most lethal terror attacks on home soil. Isaac Herzog's parents were in their first year of the marriage when their young lives were nearly crushed in a terror attack. Chaim Herzog was chief security officer of the Jewish Agency for Israel when on March 11, 1946, a car bomb exploded beneath the Jewish National Fund wing of the agency compound in Jerusalem. The bomber, an Arab employed by the US Consulate, was a trusted figure at the agency. Only two weeks previously, he had supplied weapons to the Hagana. What no one knew was that he was a double agent. That ignorance resulted in 11 fatalities, including JNF Director Leib Jaffe.

"Luckily, my father was in the toilet at the time of the bombing," reveals Herzog. His mother, Aura, was not so fortunate. She was buried under the rubble. "My dad had to dig her out. She was unconscious and remained in the hospital for six months. After riding in the ambulance with her, [my father] then had to leave her and rush to an important meeting with a representative from the United Nations. He had no time to change, so his clothes were covered in my mother's blood." The UN man took one look at the future president of Israel and said, "If this is the way you come dressed to a meeting, no one will stop you people from winning this war."

How right he was, and it's a message the terrorists have still to learn.

(BOX) Palestinians honor their first woman terrorist

On the morning of March 11, 1978, a Palestinian Fedayeen unit of 11 members, led by female terrorist Dalia Mughrabi, landed by boats on a beach near Ma'agan Michael, having departed from Lebanon. They immediately killed an American photographer who was taking nature photographs nearby, and then hijacked a bus on the coastal highway.

An IDF anti-terror unit, headed by (current Defense Minister) Ehud Barak, followed the bus until it was finally stopped at Herzliya. A gun battle ensued, with the passengers caught in the lethal crossfire. Many of those attempting to escape were shot at by the terrorists, who finally blew up the bus, turning it into a fiery deathtrap.

Terror recalled

Mughrabi's leadership role in the attack (a second **female** terrorist also took part in the attack) marked the emergence of **women** as full-fledged combat members of terror organizations. The Palestinian Authority has named a girls' school in Hebron in honor of Mughrabi, whose name has also been bestowed on popular children's summer camps.

The bloody attack was the immediate trigger for Israel's Operation Litani against PLO bases in Lebanon three days later. During the Second Lebanon War with **Hizbullah**, Bobby and Brenda Shapiro received another calling card from their neighbors in Lebanon. A Katyusha rocket fell a few meters away from their home in Moshav Ben Ami, near Nahariya, leaving a massive hole in their garden.

Graphic

5 photos: REMEMBERING TRAGEDY. An emergency crew removes the victims' bodies from the burnt out wreckage of the bus. FAMILIES LAY wreaths at the 35 lights surrounding the memorial, each light signifying a loss of life. GREAT FORTUNE. Bobby and Brenda Shapiro and their daughters, Lisa and Danya, who all survived the terrorist attack. BINDING BONDS. MK Isaac Herzog and survivor Ruth Drori, who lost her husband. Both spoke at the memorial service and laid wreaths. **Female** terrorist Dalia Mughrabi. (Credit: David E. Kaplan; Jerusalem Post Archives)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

No Headline In Original

Kalgoorlie Miner (Western Australia)

May 26, 2008 Monday

First Edition

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Section: KAL; Pg. 8

Length: 581 words

Body

BEIRUT, Lebanon: Hezbollah fighters have pulled back since seizing parts of Lebanon's capital, but their brazen display has made one thing clear: A private army blamed for terrorist attacks on Western interests and dedicated to the destruction of Israel will be a fixture in this weakened country for a long time. Hezbollah's refusal to discuss disarmament at talks with Lebanese factions in Qatar last week means it has formidable firepower to unleash at will.

This could have wider implications, given Hezbollah's summer war with Israel two years ago, though some Lebanese suspect Hezbollah's main objectives include local power grabs and settling ethnic scores.

"Hezbollah's mask has dropped," said Ayman Kharma, a Sunni Muslim cleric whose Tripoli apartment was blasted during fighting this month with a militia allied to Hezbollah. "We were in favor of Hezbollah when it was fighting Israel. Now we see it from the inside."

WELLINGTON: The names of the two men killed in a microlight crash on the east coast of NZ's North Island have been released by police. They were Darren McNay, 39, and Anthony Bell, 30, both of Wairoa. The two men, who were friends, left the Wairoa Aerodrome on a joyride about 3.15am yesterday. A friend on the ground raised the alarm when they failed to return after about an hour. A rescue helicopter found the wreckage of the microlight about 120m from the northern end of the Wairoa runway at 7.30am. An investigation had been launched into the cause of the crash.

BOGOTA, Columbia: The leader of Latin America's largest guerrilla army is dead.

In a statement, the Defence Ministry said "we have learned through different military intelligence means" that the commander of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Manuel "Sureshot" Marulanda, died on March 26, possibly from a heart attack.

Marulanda, believed to be about 80 and whose real name is Pedro Antonio Marin, has led the peasant-based FARC since its founding in 1964. Colombia's government has announced his death various times over the past 15 years, but each time proof that he was alive cropped up months later.

YINGXIU, China: China has warned that the death toll from a massive earthquake two weeks ago could take a major leap and pass 80,000, suggesting the government may be giving up hope of finding more survivors.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made a brief visit on Saturday to one of the hardest-hit towns, Yingxiu - a helicopter ride that offered a rare bird's-eye views of the destruction wrought by the 7.9-magnitude quake on May 12.

No Headline In Original

The mountains in central Sichuan province showed huge tracks of naked earth from landslides. The State Council, China's Cabinet, said Saturday the latest confirmed death toll for the quake - China's biggest disaster in three decades - was 60,560, with 26,221 people still missing.

LIMA, Peru: A Peruvian forensics team has begun excavating a mass grave containing the remains of 123 men, women and children killed by the military 24 years ago, a human rights representative said.

Investigators in the highland village of Putis, in the southern province of Ayacucho, have exhumed 25 skeletons piled on top of each other among bullet and clothing fragments, said German Vargas, head of a group representing victims' families.

Ayacucho was the epicenter of violence by Maoist Shining Path guerrillas as well as a brutal, state-sponsored counterinsurgency campaign in the 1980s and 1990s. An estimated 69,280 people died in the civil conflict.

Load-Date: May 25, 2008

End of Document

THE 'INDECENT' PICTURE THAT HAS SET IRAN'S MULLAHS AGAINST THEIR PRESIDENT

The Mirror
May 4, 2007 Friday
Scots Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 15

Length: 130 words

Byline: BY MARK ELLIS, FOREIGN EDITOR

Body

A HEAD of state bows to kiss the gloved hand of his former schoolteacher ... an old woman wearing a headscarf and a long coat.

A touching scene of reunion and respect, you might think. But this is Iran - and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been accused of indecency.

The president publicly embracing any unrelated woman is enough to outrage religious leaders. The ultra-conservative **Hezbollah** newspaper ranted on its front page: "The Muslim Iranian people have no recollection of such acts contrary to sharia law during Islamic rule.

"Such indecency progressively has grave consequences, like violating religious and sacred values."

The president has clashed with hardline mullahs before. His suggestion that **women** should be allowed to attend football matches was also ruled offside.

Graphic

RESPECT: Iran's president bows for his teacher Pictures: AFP/GETTY; OUTRAGE: Ahmadinejad kisses teacher's glove

Load-Date: May 4, 2007

THE 'INDECENT' PICTURE THAT HAS SET IRAN 'S MULLAHS AGAINST THEIR PRESIDENT

End of Document

Israeli Shells Kill 40 At Gaza U.N. School

The New York Times

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 12

Length: 1350 words

Byline: By TAGHREED EL-KHODARY and ISABEL KERSHNER; Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza City, and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem. Reporting was contributed by Ethan Bronner from the Israel-Gaza border; Rina Castelnuevo from Ashdod, Israel; Mark Landler from Washington; Neil MacFarquhar from the United Nations; Alan Cowell from Paris; and Graham Bowley from New York.

Dateline: GAZA

Body

Israeli mortar shells killed as many as 40 Palestinians, among them women and children, outside a United Nations school in Gaza on Tuesday where they were taking refuge in the 11th day of the conflict. The Israeli military contended that Hamas fighters had fired mortars from the school compound, and United Nations officials called for an independent inquiry into the episode.

The rising civilian death toll in crowded Gaza heightened international urgency to end the combat. American and European diplomats said it was highly likely that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel would travel to Egypt on Wednesday to discuss a cease-fire. Israel has said it will not end the operation until it has crushed Hamas's ability to fire rockets into its civilian areas.

Meanwhile, Hamas continued to fire rockets, despite the large numbers of Israeli troops on the fourth day of the ground operation in Gaza. One rocket reached farther than ever into Israeli territory, only 20 miles from Tel Aviv, and wounded an infant.

With another day of gory news reports inflaming the Arab world, Israel contended that the deaths at the school, at the Jabaliya refugee camp north of Gaza City, demonstrated Hamas's callousness toward the lives of Palestinian civilians.

The Israeli Defense Forces said that their troops had fired several mortar shells near the school in response to mortar fire from the school compound.

"They shot back to save their own lives," said Ilan Tal, an Israeli military spokesman and a brigadier general in the reserves. Among the dead, the military said in a statement, were "Hamas terrorist operatives and a mortar battery cell."

The military identified two Hamas operatives, Imad Abu Asker and Hassan Abu Asker, as having been killed.

Israeli Shells Kill 40 At Gaza U.N. School

A young witness from Jabaliya, Ibrahim Amen, 16, said that he had seen one of the militants, whom he identified as Abu Khaled Abu Asker, in the area of the school right before the attack.

Ibrahim said he saw the militant after he answered calls for volunteers to pile sand around the camp "to help protect the resistance fighters." Ibrahim went to pile sand near the school with his brother, Iyad, 20, who was then injured by the Israeli mortar fire.

United Nations officials were unable to immediately determine the accuracy of the Israeli military's statements.

Christopher Gunness, a spokesman for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which offers assistance to registered Palestinian refugees and runs the school, said his organization was calling for an independent inquiry.

"Anyone on either side of the confrontation lines found to have violated international humanitarian law must be brought to justice," Mr. Gunness said.

The night before, the United Nations said, three Palestinian men were killed in an Israeli attack on another United Nations school for refugees in Gaza.

"These attacks by Israeli military forces which endanger U.N. facilities acting as places of refuge are totally unacceptable and must not be repeated," the United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, said in a statement. "Equally unacceptable are any actions by militants which endanger the Palestinian civilian population."

Speaking to reporters at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City on Tuesday, hours before the strike at the Jabaliya school compound, John Ging, the chief of operations for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, called the Gaza violence a "horrific tragedy" and a result of "political failure."

"There is no safe haven," he said.

United Nations officials initially put the Jabaliya death toll at 30 and said 55 were wounded, with several in critical condition. Palestinian hospital officials said 40 people had been killed, among them 10 children and 5 women.

The death toll in Gaza reached around 640 on Tuesday, according to Palestinian health officials. The United Nations has estimated that about one-fourth of those killed were civilians, though there have been no reliable and current figures in recent days.

International efforts to halt the violence appeared to be moving into a higher gear.

At the United Nations, the Security Council held a high-level meeting attended by the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, and many foreign ministers to discuss the situation in Gaza. Mr. Abbas and other senior Arab officials supported a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire, which was introduced by Libya.

But some members of the Security Council, including the United States, withheld support for any resolution because of efforts in the Middle East to achieve a cease-fire.

President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt said at a news conference in Sharm el Sheik, Egypt, with President Nicolas Sarkozy of France that the Israelis and the Palestinians should accept a cease-fire to give Cairo time to continue its efforts toward a durable long-term solution.

Israeli and American officials insist that a cease-fire would have to await guarantees that no more weapons would be smuggled into Gaza through tunnels from Egypt; a possible mechanism for that is the stationing of international observers along the border with Egypt.

"We must find a way to prevent arms and explosives from entering Gaza," the American secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, told the Security Council. "When this ends, there must be new arrangements in place, not a return to the status quo ante."

Israeli Shells Kill 40 At Gaza U.N. School

President-elect Barack Obama broke his silence about the Gaza fighting on Tuesday, telling reporters, "The loss of civilian life in Gaza and Israel is a source of deep concern for me."

Israeli losses have also risen since the ground invasion began on Saturday. The military said that three of its soldiers were killed late Monday night when an Israeli tank shell was mistakenly fired at a building they occupied.

A fourth soldier was also killed Monday night, very possibly also by an Israeli tank shell, the military said. Two soldiers, including one on Tuesday, have been killed in clashes with Hamas.

Before the Israeli ground campaign began, three Israeli civilians and a soldier were killed by rockets fired from Gaza at southern Israel.

Hamas's deepest rocket fire into Israel was a Katyusha-type rocket that on Tuesday slammed into the Israeli town of Gadera, more than 25 miles north of the Gaza border. The rocket landed between houses, and a baby was injured slightly, the Israeli authorities said.

The location was significant for Israelis, since Gadera is considered part of central Israel. The thousands of rockets fired out of Gaza in recent years have all landed in the south.

Israeli ground forces continued to fight Hamas operatives in northern Gaza.

The Israeli forces were surrounding Gaza City and, residents said, were east of Khan Yunis in the south.

In Al-Nasir, a district of Gaza City, families fleeing the fighting in the north poured into a United Nations boys' school. Thirty members of the extended al-Sultan family from Beit Lahiya, including more than 20 children, huddled in one small classroom.

Ayisha al-Sultan, 36, who is married to a heart surgeon, said she had left behind a comfortable villa where each of her five children has a separate room.

"Now look at us," she said. "At night we covered the floor tiles with paper for the kids to sleep on. We took off our jackets and covered them."

International relief agencies warned that the humanitarian situation in Gaza was becoming increasingly dire. Three-quarters of the 1.5 million residents are currently without power, and hundreds of thousands are without running water, international agencies have said.

Venezuela Expels Envoy

CARACAS, Venezuela -- President Hugo Chavez expelled the Israeli ambassador on Wednesday to protest Israel's military offensive in Gaza, bringing relations between Venezuela and Israel to their lowest point since 2006, when both nations withdrew their envoys in a dispute over Israel's military campaign in Lebanon against Hezbollah.

Mr. Chavez stopped short of breaking off diplomatic ties but described Israel's actions in Gaza as "genocide."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: A fellow Israeli soldier at the grave site in Jerusalem of Staff Sgt. Nitai Stern, who was killed Monday in Gaza by an Israeli tank. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MOISES SAMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Israeli Shells Kill 40 At Gaza U.N. School

A wounded Palestinian being carried on Tuesday near the United Nations school at the Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ISMAIL ZAYDAH/REUTERS) MAP: Israeli shells hit Jabaliya. A Hamas rocket struck Gadera.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

End of Document

5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

January 31, 2008 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. B10

Length: 1330 words

Byline: Compiled by Meg de Jong, Calgary Herald

Body

Top Stories

Tory Pledges Reach \$800 Million

As the clock counted down on an expected election call, Premier Ed Stelmach rolled out more big spending plans Wednesday, ringing up a 10-day total estimated at \$812 million -- a tally approaching \$1,000 a second.

Page A1

Minister Calls for New Review of Arthritis Drugs

Health Minister Dave Hancock asked a provincial committee Tuesday to reconsider its recent rejection of new arthritis therapies -- a decision that outraged patients and advocates -- as he launches a review of Alberta's controversial pharmaceutical approval process.

Page A1

Second Child Found Frozen on Sask. Reserve

Searchers have found the body of a second little girl, dressed in nothing but a diaper and a light pullover, who went missing on a frigid night in Yellow Quill First reserve in Saskatchewan.

Page A5

News Sections -- A and B

City & Region

Catholic School Board Miffed at Single New School

As suburban parents pop champagne to celebrate Calgary's six new schools, the city's Catholic school board chairwoman, Margaret Belcourt, is crying foul after receiving only one new facility when the public board gets five.

Page B1

17-Year-Old's Stabbing Death Confirmed as Homicide

The year is off to a deadly start as Calgary police confirmed a body found in Mount Pleasant is the city's fifth homicide in 2008.

Page B1

Canada

Majority of Canadians Back No Clemency

The Conservative government appears to have won over a majority of the country to its hands-off stance toward Canadians facing execution in foreign countries, according a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted exclusively for Canwest News Service and Global Television.

Page A7

World

Two Remain as Edwards Exits Democratic Race

Former North Carolina senator John Edwards abandoned his long-shot U.S. presidential campaign Wednesday, telling disappointed supporters it was "time for me to step aside so that history can blaze its path" in the Democratic party.

Page A6

Olmert Weathers Scathing Report on Lebanon War

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert did not give in Wednesday to those clamouring for his resignation after the publication of an investigation into Israel's war against Hezbollah in Lebanon 18 months ago.

Page A13

Arbour Softens Support for Pan-Arab Rights Charter

Louise Arbour, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, backed away Wednesday from what appeared to be unqualified public support for a new pan-Arab human rights charter that includes a commitment to eliminate Zionism.

Page A12

Traffic

- Right lane closed daily (except for Sundays) between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.: On eastbound Heritage Drive east of Glenmore Trail S.E., until Feb. 5.
- Right lane, sidewalk closed: On 1st Street between 9th Avenue and 10th Avenue S.E. until Feb. 11.
- Road closure: On 1st Street between 7th Avenue and 9th Avenue N.W. until Feb. 23.
- Right lane closed: On northbound Centre Street between 7th Avenue and 6th Avenue S.E. until July 1.
- Road closure: On 6th Avenue between Centre Street and 1st Street S.E. until July 3.

Commuter Weather

6 A.M. Off to Work: Variably cloudy.

Temperature: -16 C

12 Noon Lunch: Mainly sunny with cloudy periods. Winds easterly 15km/h shifting to northerly 20km/h.

Temperature: -13 C

5 P.M. Heading Home: Mainly clear with cloudy periods.

Temperature: -15 C

Overnight: Mainly clear with cloudy periods. Low: -26 C

Friday: Mainly sunny with cloudy periods. High: -19.3 C Low: -29.1 C

Online Features

CalgaryHerald.com

News: Stress load on pilots rising, union says.

News: Liberals not always so different from Tories on clemency for killers.

Sports: Giant progress: Eli's all grown up.

Sports: Gilbride has fond memories of the CFL.

Quote of the Day

"No member of the wolf pack would ever choose (to take) a picture of a star doing charity work over a shot of Paris Hilton getting out of a car without her underwear on"

Tim Blackmore, an associate professor of media studies at the University of Western Ontario, who believes well-behaved young people face an uphill battle if they want to steal the headlines back from their badly behaved peers.

See story, Page A3.

Calgary Business -- E1

Markets

- TSX Composite 48.23 12998.21

- Dow Jones 37.47 12442.83

- Nasdaq 9.06 2349.00

- TSX Venture 3.0 2555.38

U.S. Federal Reserve Extends Rate-Cut Spree

Wall Street cheered Wednesday after the U.S. Federal Reserve slashed the cost of borrowing by half a percentage point in one of the most remarkable rate-cutting sprees of recent years.

Page E1

Suncor Presses Ahead With Voyageur Expansion

Barely hours after reaching an agreement with the province on royalties, Suncor Energy Inc. on Wednesday pushed ahead with its \$20.6-billion Voyageur oilsands expansion. The project, which will add 200,000 barrels per day (bpd),

will take Suncor's oilsands production past 550,000 bpd by 2012, making it the largest oilsands producer in Canada.

Page E1

Editorial -- A14

Stelmach's 20-Year Outline Leaves Too Many Questions

When Premier Ed Stelmach mocks union attack ads with his stage-whisper "we have a plan," he is only partially correct. That is, he offers only a partial plan. . . . The plan Albertans need will set priorities for revenue, not just which mayor shall be served first.

Page A14

Plutonium Half Truths

By telling only half the truth, Jeremy Whitlock of AECL is misleading Canadians about the proliferation dangers of plutonium produced in power reactors.

Gordon Edwards, Page A15

Herald Hockey -- D1

Katz Will Likely Get Full Control of Oilers

Members of the Edmonton Investors Group Ltd., an altruistic partnership that began with 37 members, swelled to 38, suffered three deaths, sustained deletions and additions and wound up at 34, will hand over their Edmonton Oilers to billionaire Daryl Katz and his Rexall Sports Corp. by the Feb. 5 deadline.

Page D3

Sports -- D5

Dickenson Expected to Return to Red and White

The Calgary Stampeders have called a news conference for today at McMahon Stadium, where it's expected they'll announce the signing of 35-year-old quarterback Dave Dickenson, who still keeps his off-season home in the city. At this point, he's expected to play a backup role to Henry Burris, which would presumably be reflected in his salary; he reportedly made \$400,000 with the Lions last season.

Page D5

Entertainment -- F1

Madonna Remains 'Cash Queen of Music'

Pop star Madonna is still the material girl, earning \$72 million in a recent 12-month period to top a Forbes.com list of female singers whom the financial website dubbed "Cash Queens of Music."

Page F1

Tonight's TV Picks:

- Eli Stone: 8 p.m. on CTV (Ch. 3).
- Lost: 10 p.m. on CTV (Ch. 3).

Sudoku

World's Hottest Puzzle Craze

How to Play:

Complete this grid by placing the digits 1 to 9 exactly once, and only once, in each horizontal row and in each column. Also, each digit should only appear once in every 3x3 shaded or white mini-grid in the puzzle. Sudoku appears on the 5 Minute Herald page Monday to Friday and on the Saturday and Sunday puzzle pages.

Real Life -- C1

Warming Up to Winter

According to Carmen Wyatt, communications manager for the Canadian Mental Health Association's Calgary region, about three per cent of the population experiences seasonal affected disorder (SAD), a condition which begins in late fall and worsens throughout the winter. Symptoms include weight gain, feelings of anxiety or despair and decreased energy. And Wyatt says roughly 15 per cent of the population experiences the "winter blues," a less-intense version of SAD.

Page C1

It's An Odd World

Man Fakes Terrorist Attack

Douglas Hoffman, 61, was sentenced in January to as much as five years in prison for staging a small-scale terror campaign among his neighbours in Henderson, Nev., to mask his own vandalism in destroying over 500 trees to get a better view. At first Hoffman cut down just the trees that affected his own view, but to divert attention, he cut down others in the subdivision and then sent threatening notes suggesting that an extremist militia would continue to attack their property, finally promising "chemical, biological and nuclear mass destruction."

Graphic

Colour Photo: Dave Hancock ;

Colour Photo: Margaret Belcourt ;

Colour Photo: John Edwards ;

Colour Photo: Francisco Bonilla, Reuters; Picture of the Day: Jorge Elich, an eight-year-old lion-tamer, puts his head inside a lion's mouth during a practice session at the Circus Paris in El Ejido, near Almeria, southern Spain, on Wednesday. Elich, the youngest amongst six siblings, has been training the lions in his family's circus since the age of five after taking over the duties from his ailing father.

Colour Photo: Ed Stelmach

Colour Photo: Dave Dickenson

Colour Photo: Madonna

Photo: (See hard copy for description). ;

Load-Date: January 31, 2008

End of Document

NO EARLY END SEEN TO 'ALL-OUT WAR' ON HAMAS IN GAZA

The New York Times

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1396 words

Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER and TAGHREED EL-KHODARY; Ethan Bronner reported from Jerusalem and Taghreed El-Khodary from Gaza. Dina Kraft contributed reporting from Ashkelon, Israel, and Mark Landler from Washington.

Body

JERUSALEM -- Israel is engaged in an "all-out war with Hamas," Defense Minister Ehud Barak told Parliament on Monday as his air force struck at the organization's civic institutions -- the Islamic University, Interior Ministry and presidential guesthouse. The death toll surpassed 350, more than 60 of them civilians, according to United Nations officials.

As the conflict passed its third day, with no active diplomacy, there appeared to be no quick end to the largest assault on Gaza in decades.

Israel has defined its aims relatively narrowly, saying it seeks to cripple Hamas's ability to fire rockets into Israel. It has not made clear if it means to topple the leadership of Hamas, which Israel and the United States brand as a terrorist organization.

Hamas sought to cast its fighters as martyrs in a continuing battle against Israel, the lone resisters in a Palestinian community divided between Gaza, where Hamas rules, and the West Bank, which is governed by the rival Fatah organization.

Hamas killed four Israelis on Monday after firing more than 70 rockets, including a long-range one into the booming city of Ashdod some 18 miles from Gaza, where it hit a bus stop, killing a woman and injuring two other people. Earlier, a rocket hit nearby Ashkelon, killing an Israeli-Arab construction worker and wounding three others. The other dead Israelis, The Associated Press reported, were a civilian in the Negev desert and a soldier.

Thousands of Israelis huddled in shelters as the long-range rockets hit streets or open areas late in the night, the most serious display of Hamas's arsenal since the Israeli assault began.

In Gaza, where the bombardment continued early Tuesday, residents pulled relatives from the rubble of prominent institutions leveled by waves of Israeli F-16 attacks, as hospitals struggled to keep up with the wounded and the dead and doctors scrambled for supplies. Hamas gunmen publicly shot suspected collaborators with Israel; families huddled around battery-powered radios, desperate for news.

NO EARLY END SEEN TO 'ALL-OUT WAR' ON HAMAS IN GAZA

Mr. Barak said that Israel would widen and deepen the attack if necessary and told Israeli lawmakers that it would continue until Hamas no longer had the ability to fire rockets into Israel. Politicians on the left who supported the initial attack urged the government to seek a new cease-fire rather than continue the bombardment.

But the military created a two-mile war cordon along the Gaza border and amassed tanks and troops there, with commanders saying that a ground force invasion was a distinct possibility but had not yet been decided upon.

In Crawford, Tex., a spokesman for President Bush renewed calls for the parties to reach a cease-fire, but said Israel was justified in retaliating against Hamas's attacks. "Let's just take this one day at a time," said the spokesman, Gordon Johndroe.

Allies of Hamas in parts of the Muslim world raised their voices. In Beirut, tens of thousands of Hezbollah supporters stood in pouring rain in protest, and in Tehran a group of influential conservative Iranian clerics began an online registration drive seeking volunteers to fight Israel.

Mr. Barak had told lawmakers that Israel had nothing against the citizens of Gaza and that it had more than once offered its hand in peace to the Palestinian nation. "But we have an all-out war with Hamas and its offshoots," he said.

Israel sent in some 40 trucks of humanitarian relief, including blood from Jordan and medicine. Egypt opened its border with Gaza to some similar aid and to allow some of the wounded through.

At Shifa Hospital in Gaza, the director, Dr. Hussein Ashour, said that keeping his patients alive from their wounds was an enormous challenge. He said there were some 1,500 wounded people distributed among Gaza's nine hospitals with far too few intensive care units, equipped ambulances and other vital equipment.

On Monday, Dr. Ashour was not the only official in charge. Armed Hamas militants in civilian clothes roamed the halls. Asked their function, they said it was to provide security. But there was internal bloodletting under way.

In the fourth-floor orthopedic section, a woman in her late 20s asked a militant to let her see Saleh Hajoj, her 32-year-old husband. She was turned away and left the hospital. Fifteen minutes later, Mr. Hajoj was carried out by young men pretending to transfer him to another ward. As he lay on the stretcher, he was shot in the left side of the head.

Mr. Hajoj, like five others killed at the hospital this way in 24 hours, was accused of collaboration with Israel. He had been in the central prison awaiting trial by Hamas judges; when Israel destroyed the prison on Sunday he and the others were transferred to the hospital. But their trials were short-circuited.

A crowd at the hospital showed no mercy after the shooting, which was widely observed. A man in his 30s mocked a woman expressing horror at the scene.

"This horrified you?" he shouted. "A collaborator that caused the death of many innocent and resistance fighters?"

Sobhia Jomaa, a lawyer with the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, said 115 accused collaborators were in the central prison. None had been executed by Hamas since it took office and their cases were monitored closely.

"The prison provided the sole protection to all of them," she said. "But once it was bombed, many wanted to take revenge."

Across the street from the hospital, a mosque where militants often took refuge has been destroyed by Israel, one of five mosques it has hit so far.

Electricity arrives in Gaza only a few hours a day, offering the diversion of television, but nothing local. The Hamas station was taken out by an Israeli missile and most local radio stations have closed their doors out of fear of suffering the same fate.

NO EARLY END SEEN TO 'ALL-OUT WAR' ON HAMAS IN GAZA

Israeli drones buzz overhead taking photographs.

Israel's heavy bombing, more than 300 airstrikes since the operation began on Saturday, reduced dozens of buildings to rubble, but appeared to be directed mainly at the political, military and academic symbols of Hamas's rule in Gaza. The Israelis also made targets of the homes and offices of Hamas's political and military leaders, who did not appear in public during the day.

Despite an apparent effort to limit the attacks to specific buildings, ordinary Gazans are constantly caught up in the bombing. On Saturday, when dozens of Israeli sorties were made simultaneously, a group of young people, ages 18 to 20, were hit when a missile was aimed at a group of Hamas policemen in the street. According to a statement by United Nations Special Coordinator Robert Serry, eight of the young people, emerging from a United Nations training center, were killed instantly and 19 wounded. Eight of those hurt were in critical condition on Monday. One is awaiting emergency transfer to an Israeli hospital.

Mr. Serry sent Mr. Barak a letter of protest.

In the Jabalya refugee camp on Sunday, an attack on a mosque where militants were hiding also struck a nearby house, killing five girls under the age of 18, health ministry officials said.

Meanwhile in Israel, sirens wailed over mostly empty streets in the seaside city of Ashkelon. Storefronts were battered shut.

Families clustered inside the city's stretches of towering white apartment blocks and single-family houses. Weary of venturing too far outside, they scurried into protected rooms when sirens sounded, listening for the sound of another rocket crashing somewhere in their city.

It is a city that is reluctantly getting used to its status as the front line. "It's frightening, but what can we do?" asked Chen Hassan, 18, a high school senior. She woke up Monday morning, jolted by the sound of a missile hitting a public library under construction across the street.

The rocket killed the construction worker and wounded several others, Bedouins from Israel's Negev Desert.

Correction: January 5, 2009, Monday

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction: An article on Tuesday about the Israeli assault in Gaza referred incorrectly to the number of civilians killed in Gaza through the first three days of the conflict. The total number of civilians killed was more than 60, not "some 60." (The number of women and children civilians alone totaled 62, according to United Nations officials; they had no count for male civilians who were killed.)

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Israeli tanks Monday on the northern border of the Gaza Strip.(PHOTOGRAPH BY MENAHEM KAHANA/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES)(A1)

A father in the Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza whose five daughters were killed in an Israeli airstrike on Monday held his son.(PHOTOGRAPH BY MOHAMMED SALEM/REUTERS)

Israelis in Ashkelon took cover on Monday as a siren wailed

NO EARLY END SEEN TO 'ALL-OUT WAR' ON HAMAS IN GAZA

a construction worker was killed there by a missile fired from Gaza. (PHOTOGRAPH BY TSAFRIR ABAYOV/ASSOCIATED PRESS)(A12) MAP: Map details the affected area of Gaza Strip.(A12)

Load-Date: May 6, 2011

End of Document

Faith, freedom and bling

The International Herald Tribune

January 17, 2008 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 9

Length: 1445 words

Byline: Maureen Dowd - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: RIYADH

Body

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When the two stepped onto the escalator, the president tenderly reached for the king's hand, in case the older man needed help. He certainly does need help, but not the kind he is prepared to accept.

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At a news conference on Tuesday night, the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, was asked what the president and king had discussed about human rights.

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Faith, freedom and bling

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"It's not allowed for ladies to use the gym," the Marriott desk clerk told me, an American woman in an American franchise traveling with an American president.

W. was strangely upbeat throughout the trip - "Dates put you in a good mood, right?" he joked to reporters on Tuesday, specifying that he meant the fruit - even though back home the Republican candidates were running from him and clinging to Reagan.

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"We don't need America to dictate our enemies to us, especially when it's our neighbor," said an insider at the Saudi royal court. The Saudis invited the Iranian president, I'm-a-Dinner-Jacket, to their hajj pilgrimage last month.

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Clearly, the man believes in miracles.

Load-Date: January 18, 2008

5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

January 21, 2008 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. B14

Length: 1271 words

Byline: Compiled by Meg de Jong, Calgary Herald

Body

Top Stories

Alberta Must Save Oil Riches, Says Review Head

Jack Mintz, the head of an expert panel reviewing Alberta's billion-dollar question -- how to invest our resource wealth -- says the government isn't properly managing its savings and must sock away more cash for the future.

Page A1

Stampede President Offers Reward for Murder Info

Calgary Stampede President George Brookman, sad and furious over the LRT station death of one of his employees, says he'll contact Crime Stoppers to contribute \$10,000 "to help catch whoever did this terrible thing."

Page A1

Two Cups of Coffee Can Cause Miscarriage: Report

Two cups of coffee a day doubles a pregnant woman's risk of miscarriage, new research shows.

Page A1

News Sections -- A and B

City & Region

Family Mourns Woman Murdered Near C-Train

The family of Arcelie Laoagan, a mother of five found dead by the Franklin C-Train station, are calling the person who killed their sister "evil," as the pastor at her church said the tragedy shows the city is changing.

Page B1

Condo Conversion Halt Blamed for Rent Crunch

The supply of new rental units added in the city has not kept up with the number lost to condo conversions leading some to look to a Cranbrook policy that allows for a halt on re-development.

Page B1

Canada

Gangster Gunned Down at Own Engagement Party

A week after he was released from prison, gangster Ricardo Scarpino was shot dead in his car Saturday as he arrived at his own engagement party at an upscale Vancouver restaurant.

Page A4

World

Obama Evokes King in Appeal to Black Voters

Evoking the memory of Martin Luther King Jr., Barack Obama appealed Sunday for African-Americans to rally behind his presidential campaign as a means to achieve the slain civil right's leader's dream of racial equality.

Page A8

Saudi Women to Take the Wheel at Last

Saudi Arabia is to lift the ban on women drivers in an attempt to stem a rising suffragette-style movement in the deeply conservative state.

Page A9

Macabre Speech Angers Israeli Cabinet Ministers

Several Israeli cabinet ministers called for the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah on Sunday after a macabre speech by the Hezbollah leader in which he boasted to a roaring crowd of tens of thousands of supporters in Beirut that his radical Islamist movement was holding body parts from Israeli soldiers killed during a 34-day war in 2006.

Page A9

Traffic

- Road closure: On 45th Avenue between 17th Street and 19th Street S.W. until 6 p.m. Tuesday.
- Road closure: On 27th Street between 107th Avenue and 29th Street S.E. until 6p.m. Tuesday.
- Right lane closed: On westbound Bow Trail, from 38th Street to 45th Street until Friday.
- Left lane closed: On Country Hills Boulevard at Beddington Trail in both directions until Saturday.
- Road closure: On 1st Street between 7th Avenue and 9th Avenue N.W. until Feb. 23.

Commuter Weather

6 A.M. Off to Work: Clear.

Temperature: -18 C

12 Noon Lunch: Mainly cloudy with a chance of flurries (POP 40%). Winds light.

Temperature: -9 C

5 Minute Herald; Breaking news at calgaryherald.com

5 P.M. Heading Home: Mainly cloudy with a chance of flurries (POP 60%).

Temperature: -4 C

Overnight: Mainly cloudy with a chance of flurries (POP 60%). Low: -6 C

Tuesday: Variably cloudy. High: -1 C Low: -14 C

Sunday: High: -14.1 C Low: -22.1 C

Online Features

Calgary Herald.com

News: Europe, North America an ocean apart on GM foods.

News: Tobacco industry comes under fire for flavoured smokes.

Sports: Question marks dog Raptors entering second half of season.

Sports: Molitor improves record to 26-0.

Quote of the Day

"These species are the canaries in the coal mine"

Jonathan Baillie, head of the Edge project, on a list of the 10 most biologically valuable of all amphibians struggling for survival.

See story, Page A5

Calgary Business -- D10

Bank of Canada Rate Cut in the Cards

On Tuesday, the Bank of Canada is expected to cut interest rates another quarter percentage point to counter the risk of an economic slowdown. It was given room to make an additional cut -- following up on December's quarter-point chop to 4.25 per cent -- as the annual core inflation rate for November came in at 1.6 per cent. That's well below the Bank of Canada's target of two per cent.

Page D10

Apple Rations iPhone Sales

Apple Inc. is trying to stop people from buying so many iPhones. Since it started selling the multi-tasking gadget in June, the company has four times set limits on the number of iPhones it will sell to an individual customer. Apple says it's rationing iPhones in an attempt to discourage resellers, who stock up and offer them online at inflated prices.

Page D12

Editorial -- A10

Simplifying the Tax Process

The best thing about a flat tax is not its simplicity, but the affirmation of a key principle: The harder you work, the more you make.

Page A10

Letter of the Day

(F)or those illustrious council experts who put (the LRT) system above ground, I have a suggestion. With all the money you saved not putting a transit system either below ground, or above and out of the way of traffic, how about reimbursing the riders for lost pay due to your foul-ups?

Lindsay Terborg, Page A11

Sports -- D1

Patriots Top Chargers to Reach NFL's Super Bowl

The New England Patriots defeated the San Diego Chargers 21-12 to reach the Super Bowl for the fourth time in seven years and continue their unbeaten season. Tom Brady threw touchdown passes to Jabar Gaffney and Wes Welker, and the Patriots' defence limited the Chargers to four field goals to win the American Football Conference championship game in Foxborough, Mass.

Page D1

Rochette, Leung Make It to National Skating Team

Mira Leung couldn't catch Joannie Rochette, but the Vancouver native did enough Sunday morning to catch a spot on the plane carrying Canada's national figure skating team to the world championships in Sweden in March.

Page D3

Entertainment -- C1

The Law Sides With Borat

Having mercilessly lampooned his interviewees in his film Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan, the film's creator British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen is having the last laugh over those who failed to see the joke. A U.S. court has thrown out a lawsuit brought by one of his victims, Kathie Martin, an etiquette tutor who tried to teach the apparently sexist and bigoted Kazakh some modern American manners.

Page C6

Tonight's TV Picks:

- Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles: 10 p.m. on CTV (Ch. 3)

Sudoku

World's Hottest Puzzle Craze

How to Play:

Complete this grid by placing the digits 1 to 9 exactly once, and only once, in each horizontal row and in each column. Also, each digit should only appear once in every 3x3 shaded or white mini-grid in the puzzle. Sudoku appears on the 5 Minute Herald page Monday to Friday and on the Saturday and Sunday puzzle pages.

Real Life -- C7

The Great Diaper Debate

When it comes to infant care, choosing disposable or cloth diapers can be a loaded decision, no pun intended. Concerned parents say they don't want to add to the local landfill with disposables, but they were also concerned

about using cloth because of worries about the environmental impact of using bleaches, chemicals and increased water consumption from laundering.

Page C7

It's An Odd World

Robber Shot While Grasping for Sex Toy

In November, accused armed robber Steven McDermott, 49, was finally captured after leading California Highway Patrol officers on a high-speed chase in a commandeered cab, causing two minor collisions before fleeing on foot. When he was finally cornered, officers said, he reached toward his waistband, leading one officer to shoot him, though the object McDermott was reaching for turned out not to be the gun used in the robbery but a sex toy, tethered to his belt loop.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Jack Mintz ;

Colour Photo: George Brookman ;

Colour Photo: Arcelie Laoagan ;

Colour Photo: Hassan Nasrallah ;

Colour Photo: Dani Cardona, Reuters; Picture of the Day: Performers hold torches as they take part in Correfoc (Run with fire) party in Palma de Mallorca on the Spanish island of Mallorca on Sunday. ;

Colour Photo: Apple rations iPhone sales ;

Colour Photo: Joannie Rochette ;

Colour Photo: Sacha Baron Cohen ;

Photo: (See hard copy for description). ;

Colour Photo: The great diaper debate ;

Load-Date: January 21, 2008

Faith, Freedom and Bling in the Middle East

The New York Times

January 16, 2008 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Editorial Desk; Pg. 23; OP-ED COLUMNIST

Length: 1449 words

Byline: By MAUREEN DOWD

Dateline: RIYADH, Saudi Arabia

Body

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Faith, Freedom and Bling in the Middle East

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<http://www.nytimes.com>

Load-Date: January 16, 2008

A plague with no cure

The New Zealand Herald

March 10, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; World

Length: 1515 words

Body

LOS ANGELES - The pair of helicopters flew in a tight circle, an LAPD chopper close in, with a media craft higher up. It was a familiar pattern to those used to watching for signs of trouble.

They seemed awfully close to my street. Indeed, they were more or less directly over my building, a scenario that I understood when I discovered the block in mid-town LA, south of Hollywood, had been cordoned off by police cars after reports of shots being fired.

A teenager had been fatally shot in the face. He died shortly afterwards at Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre.

A homicide detective with the LAPD's Hollywood Division would only confirm that two suspects were in custody and that the crime was gang- related.

The victim, Gerardo Canenguez, 19, was likely a member of the Vista Boys, a local Latino gang. He and a companion were out riding their bicycles when they likely encountered rival gang members.

After Canenguez went down, the shooters fled on foot down my street.

The victim's friend chased the assassins, firing repeatedly from a pistol, an episode witnessed by my neighbour and her little girl. It was around 11.30am. The perpetrators would have run past a building site tagged with Vista Boys graffiti, signs that are found on many local street corners and pavements. The discerning eye will also notice something else: an MS or sometimes MS13, sprayed by taggers from a rival crew.

In the estimated 1000 gangs that roam Los Angeles County, the Vista Boys are a penny ante outfit. MS are of a different order altogether.

Their full name is Mara Salvatrucha, literally Salvadorean gang [M is the 13th letter in the alphabet, hence the numerals], one of the most feared outfits in the megalopolis, spawned from Central American immigrants, many of whom fled the vicious conflict in El Salvador during the 1980s when the United States deemed the nation a hot zone in its war against communism.

"There was a huge influx of Salvadorans," explains Bruce Riordan, who directs anti-gang operations for the Los Angeles city attorney's office. "Mara Salvatrucha began in LA and have spread throughout Central America. They have a huge presence in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica. It's of major concern to law enforcement."

A plague with no cure

A close examination of local tags suggests the Vista Boys sprayed over MS-13 signs. Tagging can definitely lead to violence. Serious gangs take tagging seriously. It is their territory. If you cross out MS graffiti, it's an act of war. If so, Gerardo Canenguez may have paid the price.

In a city weary of gangs, Canenguez's death never made the local news cycle. Latino, black, Asian and white gangs have long battled for grassroots supremacy in LA. Owning turf means controlling drug sales. Teen boys are ripe for recruitment. In my area, parents move rather than see their children succumb to la vida loca, the crazy life, of gang violence.

But beyond LA's mean streets, MS and the 18th Streeters have morphed into a major international, and to some extent overlooked, scourge.

Riordan believes they are "the new and emerging organised crime in America". This is an alarming trend to US law officials only too aware that three hours south of LA, just across the border in Mexico, open warfare exists between rival narcotraffickers and officials, with near daily executions and firefights.

Today, Mara Salvatrucha has its tentacles into drug and weapons smuggling, human trafficking, murder, theft and other crimes. In 2004, the FBI created a task force specifically to combat Mara Salvatrucha, whose exploits include killing 28 people, mostly women and children, in a machine gun attack on a bus in Honduras in December 2004.

Ironically, criminal convictions in the US, and subsequent deportations, have facilitated the spread of gangs. El Salvador's gang problem is so severe that MS followers are housed in a separate prison to members of the 18th Street gang, perhaps Mara Salvatrucha's deadliest LA rival.

"Both prisons are largely controlled by the inmates," says Riordan. "The army and police keep prisoners in, but day-to-day operations are largely run by the inmates. You need gang approval to get access. It's believed that inmates have access to cell phones. This is a real problem. You can run a criminal organisation with a cell phone.

"The warring gangs are reshaping crime as a transnational phenomenon."

The Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Centre [TTCCC], a think tank at George Mason University in Washington DC, is blunt in its assessment: "Transnational crime will be a defining issue of the 21st century for policymakers, as defining as the Cold War was for the 20th century and colonialism was for the 19th."

The centre's director, Dr Louise Shelley, says transnational gangs have been major beneficiaries of globalisation. "They take advantage of increased travel, trade, rapid money movements, telecommunications and computer links, and are positioned for growth."

Last month, top law enforcement officials from the UK, EU, Hong Kong, US, Japan and South Africa, assembled at Britain's Ditchley Foundation, reached a sober conclusion. "The consensus was that transnational crime is more of a threat than terrorism," says Shelley, one of the attendees.

To many people beyond, say, the front line of gang warfare, the impact of transnational crime is insidious. The Ditchley conference compared it with climate change: while aware of looming danger people are loath to change habits. Faced by public outrages such as 9/11 or the European transport bombings, governments often give terrorism priority. "Gangs are extreme capitalists," says Riordan. "The profit motive is number one."

Indeed, the parallels between terrorism and transnational crime - which sometimes intersect - are striking. "Both groups frequently operate in decentralised cell structures, tend to target civilians and use similar tactics such as kidnapping and drug dealing," a US congressional report, Transnational Organised Crime, noted in March 2006.

Drugs are a common source of cash for both. Since NATO forces invaded Afghanistan, poppy cultivation and opium production has soared, with significant profits going to the Taleban. During the past two years, Colombian officials and the US Navy and Coast Guard have seized 13 semi-submersibles - able to travel underwater but not dive or resurface like a real submarine - said to have been funded by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia, or FARC. The 17m long vessels, which could carry up to 5 tonnes of cargo, were likely intended for use in smuggling

A plague with no cure

cocaine, a trade at which FARC is expert. Elsewhere, Hezbollah, like FARC designated a terrorist organisation by the US, is alleged to have laundered money in South America's wild west Triple Frontier region, where Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay converge. And, in 2005, Honduras and El Salvador even claimed Mara Salvatrucha had meet with al-Qaeda, an allegation that was never proven.

Despite these threats, Shelley believes the US has dropped the ball, focusing on terrorism even as the transnational crime threat grows.

In this sense, 9/11 was a boon to criminals. "Up until 2001, there was some understanding," says Shelley. "Terrorism swept everything away. The [poor] analysis on transnational crime is just appalling."

Riordan concurs, noting that anti-

gang budgets plummeted by as much as 75 per cent in Los Angeles, giving organised crime an opportunity to expand, although funding has returned to roughly pre-9/11 levels.

Law enforcement's problem is catching up, an issue that will focus minds at a summit of Latin American police chiefs scheduled in LA next month.

What to do? "It's an international crisis that requires international co-operation," warns Riordan.

Unless resources are made available "the crime will continue to grow". He notes that Interpol has set up an anti-gang division. Shelley says better intelligence is needed [Ditchley suggests strangling options for using dirty money], but agrees international co-

operation is not easy in a globalised, sometimes corruptible, world.

Then there's the problem of small countries - several Caribbean nations spring to mind - that host criminals whose cash flow can dwarf national revenues.

It sounds like the challenge nations face in combating terrorism, although Shelley believes fighting crime poses fewer threats to civil liberties - a debatable issue. The ultimate challenge in this new criminal universe, as far as safety goes, is who gets the edge: criminals or law enforcement?

Mexico's urban warfare is a stark warning of what happens when crime wins. "We'll certainly be unable to eradicate transnational crime," says Shelley. "But were not even stemming its growth." She believes the public has yet to understand the enormity of this "growing threat".

A few days after Canenguez died, an impromptu memorial, made from candles and flowers, appeared at the spot where he was slain. It quickly disappeared. Meanwhile, the MS graffiti has mushroomed, testimony to the seemingly inexorable growth of a criminal cancer whose clout stretches far beyond Canenguez's tiny piece of turf.

Load-Date: March 10, 2008

US academic slams Iran President

The Courier Mail (Australia)
September 26, 2007 Wednesday
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Body

THE following is an edited extract of the speech made by Columbia University president Lee Bollinger, pictured, introducing Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the US yesterday.

Mr President, you exhibit all the signs of a petty and cruel dictator

OVER the last two weeks, your government has released Dr Haleh Esfandiari and Parnaz Axima; and just two days ago Kian Tajbakhsh, a graduate of Columbia with a PhD in urban planning.

While our community is relieved to learn of his release on bail, Dr Tajbakhsh remains in Tehran, under house arrest, and he still does not know whether he will be charged with a crime or allowed to leave the country.

Let me say this for the record, I call on the President today to ensure that Kian Tajbakhsh will be free to travel out of Iran as he wishes.

Let me also report today that we are extending an offer to Dr Tajbakhsh to join our faculty as a visiting professor in urban planning here at his alma mater, in our Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation.

And we hope he will be able to join us next semester. The arrest and imprisonment of these Iranian Americans, for no good reason, is not only unjustified, it runs completely counter to the very values that allow today's speaker to even appear on this campus.

But at least they are alive.

According to Amnesty International, 210 people have been executed in Iran so far this year -- 21 of them on the morning of September 5 alone.

This annual total includes at least two children -- further proof, as Human Rights Watch puts it, that Iran leads the world in executing minors.

There is more. Iran hanged up to 30 people this past July and August during a widely reported suppression of efforts to establish a more open, democratic society in Iran. Many of these executions were carried out in public view, a violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party.

These executions and others have coincided with a wider crackdown on student activists and academics accused of trying to foment a so-called "soft revolution". This has included jailing and forced retirements of scholars.

US academic slams Iran President

We, at this university, have not been shy to protest and challenge the failures of our own government to live by these values; and we won't be shy in criticising yours. Let's, then, be clear at the beginning, Mr President, you exhibit all the signs of a petty and cruel dictator.

And so I ask you: Why have women, members of the Baha'i faith, homosexuals and so many of our academic colleagues, become targets of persecution in your country?

Why, in a letter last week to the Secretary-General of the UN, did Akbar Gangi, Iran's leading political dissident, and over 300 public intellectuals, writers and Nobel Laureates express such grave concern that your inflamed dispute with the West is distracting the world's attention from the intolerable conditions your regime has created within Iran? In particular, the use of the Press Law to ban writers for criticising the ruling system.

Why are you so afraid of Iranian citizens expressing their opinions for change? In our country, you are interviewed by our press and asked to speak here today.

And while my colleague at the Law School, Michael Dorf, spoke to Radio Free Europe (sic, Voice of America) viewers in Iran, a short while ago on the tenets of freedom of speech in this country, I propose going further than that.

Let me lead a delegation of students and faculty from Columbia to address your university about free speech, with the same freedom we afford you today.

Will you do that? In a December 2005 state television broadcast, you described the Holocaust as a "fabricated" "legend".

One year later, you held a two-day conference of Holocaust deniers.

For the illiterate and ignorant, this is dangerous propaganda.

When you come to a place like this, this makes you, quite simply, ridiculous.

You are either brazenly provocative or astonishingly uneducated.

You should know that Columbia is a world centre of Jewish studies and now, in partnership with the YIVO Institute, of Holocaust studies.

Since the 1930s, we've provided an intellectual home for countless Holocaust refugees and survivors and their children and grandchildren.

The truth is that the Holocaust is the most documented event in human history. Because of this, and for many other reasons, your absurd comments about the "debate" over the Holocaust both defy historical truth and make all of us who continue to fear humanity's capacity for evil shudder at this closure of memory, which is always virtue's first line of defence. Will you cease this outrage?

Twelve days ago, you said the state of Israel "cannot continue its life".

This echoed a number of inflammatory statements you have delivered in the last two years, including, in October 2005, when you said Israel should be "wiped off the map".

Columbia has over 800 alumni living in Israel. As an institution, we have deep ties with our colleagues there.

I have spoken out in the most forceful terms against proposals to boycott Israeli scholars and universities, saying such boycotts might as well include Columbia.

More than 400 college and university presidents in this country have joined in that statement.

My question, then, is: Do you plan on wiping us off the map, too?

US academic slams Iran President

According to reports by the Council on Foreign Relations, it's well documented that Iran is a state sponsor of terror that funds such violent groups as the Lebanese Hezbollah, which Iran helped organise in the 1980s, the Palestinian Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. While your predecessor government was instrumental in providing the US with intelligence and base support in its 2001 campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan, your government is now undermining American troops in Iraq by funding, arming and providing safe transit to insurgent leaders like Muqtada al-Sadr and his forces.

There are a number of reports that also link your government with Syria's efforts to destabilise the fledgling Lebanese government through violence and political assassination.

My question is this: Why do you support well-documented terrorist organisations that continue to strike at peace and democracy in the Middle East, destroying lives and society in the region?

In a briefing before the National Press Club this month, General David Petraeus reported that arms supplies from Iran, including 240mm rockets and explosively formed projectiles, are contributing to "a sophistication of attacks that would by no means be possible without Iranian support". A number of Columbia graduates and current students are among the brave members of our military who are serving, or have served, in Iraq and Afghanistan. They, like other Americans with sons, daughters, fathers, husbands and wives serving in combat, rightly see your government as the enemy.

Can you tell them, and us, why Iran is fighting a proxy war in Iraq by arming Shi'a militia who are targeting and killing US troops?

This week, the UN Security Council is contemplating expanding sanctions for a third time because of your government's refusal to suspend its uranium-enrichment program. You continue to defy this world body by claiming a right to develop peaceful nuclear power, but this hardly withstands scrutiny when you continue to issue military threats to neighbours. Last week, French President Nicolas Sarkozy made clear his lost patience with your stall tactics; and even Russia and China have shown concern.

Why does your country continue to refuse to adhere to international standards for nuclear weapons verification in defiance of agreements that you have made with the UN nuclear agency?

And why have you chosen to make the people of your country vulnerable to the effects of international economic sanctions and threaten to engulf the world with nuclear annihilation?

Let me close with this comment.

Frankly, and in all candour, Mr President, I doubt that you will have the intellectual courage to answer these questions.

But your avoiding them will, in itself, be meaningful to us. I do expect you to exhibit the fanatical mindset that characterises so much of what you say and do.

Fortunately, I am told by experts on your country, that this only further undermines your position in Iran with all the many good-hearted, intelligent citizens there.

A year ago, I am reliably told, your preposterous and belligerent statements in this country (as in your meeting at the Council on Foreign Relations) so embarrassed sensible Iranian citizens that this led to your party's defeat in the December mayoral elections.

May this do that and more.

I am only a professor, who is also a university president, and today I feel all the weight of the modern civilised world yearning to express the revulsion at what you stand for.

I only wish I could do better.

US academic slams Iran President

Ahmadinejad under attack P30

Load-Date: September 25, 2007

End of Document

**HOLDING HANDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST; THE PRESIDENT SHEATHES HIS
SWORD; AND TRIES TO RESCUE HIS LEGACY BY LIVING IT UP ON A TOUR
OF ARABIA**

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

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SOONER EDITION

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Byline: MAUREEN DOWD

Body

As a Saudi soldier with a gold sword high-stepped in front of him, President Bush walked slowly beside King Abdullah through the shivery gray mist enveloping the kingdom, following the red carpet leading from Air Force One to the airport terminal. When the two stepped onto the escalator, the president tenderly reached for the king's hand, in case the older man needed help. He certainly does need help, but not the kind he is prepared to accept.

It took Mr. Bush almost his entire presidency to embrace diplomacy, but now that he's in the thick of it, or perhaps the thin of it -- given his speed-dating approach to statesmanship -- he is kissing and holding hands with kings, princes, emirs, sheiks and presidents all over the Arab world and is trying to persuade them that he is not in a monogamous relationship with the Jews. His message boiled down to: Iran bad, Israel good, Iraq doing better.

Blessed is the peacemaker who comes bearing a \$30 billion package of military aid for Israel and a \$20 billion package of Humvees and guided bombs for the Arabs.

Like the slick Hollywood guy in "Annie Hall" who has a notion that he wants to turn into a concept and then develop into an idea, W. has resumed his mantra of having a vision that turns into freedom that could develop into global democracy.

W.'s peace train quickly gave way to the warpath, however, with Mr. Bush devoting a good chunk of time to the unfinished war in Iraq and the possibility of a war with Iran.

In meetings with leaders, he privately pooh-pooed the national intelligence estimate asserting that Iran had halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003. On Fox News, he openly broke with intelligence analysts, telling Greta Van Susteren about Iran: "I believe they want a weapon, and I believe that they're trying to gain the know-how as to how to make a weapon under the guise of a civilian nuclear program."

Less than a week after the president arrived in the Middle East, three violent eruptions -- an Israeli raid killing at least 18 Palestinians, 13 of whom were militants; an American Embassy car bombing in Beirut; and a luxury hotel suicide-bombing in Kabul -- underscored how Sisyphean a task he has set for himself.

HOLDING HANDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST THE PRESIDENT SHEATHES HIS SWORD AND TRIES TO RESCUE HIS LEGACY BY LIVING IT UP ON A TOUR OF ARABIA

"This is one of the results of the Bush visit," said Mahmoud Zahar, a Hamas leader, as he went to a Gaza hospital to see the body of his son, a militant killed in the battle. "He encouraged the Israelis to kill our people."

Arab TV offered an uncomfortable juxtaposition: al-Arabiya running the wretched saga of Gaza children suffering from a lack of food and medicine during the Israeli blockade, blending into the wretched excess scenes of W. being festooned with rapper-level bling from royal hosts flush with gazillions from gouging us on oil.

W.'s 11th-hour bid to save his legacy from being a shattered Iraq -- even as the Iraqi defense minister admitted that American troops would be needed to help with internal security until at least 2012 and border defense until at least 2018 -- recalled MTV's "Cribs."

At a dinner Tuesday night in the king's tentlike retreat, where the 8-foot flat-screen TV in the middle of the room flashed Arab news, the president and his advisers Elliott Abrams and Josh Bolten went native, lounging in floor-length, fur-lined robes, as if they were Peter O'Toole and Omar Sharif.

In Abu Dhabi, Sheik Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan gave the president -- dubbed "the Wolf of the Desert" by a Kuwaiti poet -- a gigantic necklace made of gold, diamonds, rubies and emeralds, so gaudy and cumbersome that even the Secret Service agent carrying it seemed nonplussed. Here in Saudi Arabia, the king draped W. with an emerald-and-ruby necklace that could have come from Ali Baba's cave.

Time's Massimo Calabresi described the Kuwaiti emir's residence where W. dined Friday as "crass class": "Loud paintings of harems and the ruling Sabah clan hang near Louis XVI enameled clocks and candlesticks in the long hallways."

In Abu Dhabi, the president made a less-than-rousing speech about democracy while staying in the less-than-democratic Emirates Palace hotel's basketball-court-size Ruler's Suite -- an honor reserved for royalty and W. and denied to Elton John, who is coming later this month to play the Palace.

The president's grandiose room included a ballroom, in case Mr. Bush wanted to practice the tribal sword dancing he has been rather sheepishly doing with some of his hosts. The \$3 billion, seven-star, 2.6-million-square-foot pink marble hotel -- said to be the most expensive ever built -- would make Trump blush. It glistens with 64,000 square feet of 22-carat gold leaf, 1,000 chandeliers, 20,000 roses changed every day, 200 fountains, a dome higher than St. Peter's, an archway larger than the Arc de Triomphe, a beach with white sand shipped in from Algeria and a private heliport. The rooms range from \$1,598 to \$12,251.

Puddle jumping through Arabia, the president saw his share of falcons in little leather hoods -- presumably not a Gitmo reference -- and Arabian stallions, including one retired stud from Texas -- presumably not a W. reference. But there was a distinct dearth of wives and dissidents.

It does not bode well for the president's ability to push the Israelis and Palestinians that he has done so little to push Musharraf on catching Osama, despite our \$10 billion endowment, or the Saudis on women's rights and human rights, even with the \$20 billion arms package.

At a news conference on Tuesday night, the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, was asked what the president and king had discussed about human rights.

"About what?" the prince repeated flatly.

"Human rights," Condi prompted.

"Human rights?" the stately prince pondered, before shimmying out of the question.

Though W. has made the issue of the progress of women in the Middle East a central part of "the freedom agenda," he doesn't seem bothered that 17 years after his father protected the Saudis when Saddam invaded

HOLDING HANDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST THE PRESIDENT SHEATHES HIS SWORD AND TRIES TO RESCUE HIS LEGACY BY LIVING IT UP ON A TOUR OF ARABIA

Kuwait, Saudi women still can't drive or publicly display hair or skin and still get beheaded and lashed because of archaic laws. Neither does the female secretary of state of the United States.

"It's not allowed for ladies to use the gym," the Marriott desk clerk told me, an American woman in an American franchise traveling with an American president.

W. was strangely upbeat throughout the trip -- "Dates put you in a good mood, right?" he joked to reporters on Tuesday, specifying that he meant the fruit -- even though back home the Republican candidates were running from him and clinging to Reagan.

The Saudi big shots I talked to were intrigued that W. is now more in the sway of Condi than Bombs Away Cheney. They admire his intention about making peace, even though they're skeptical that he has the time or competence to do it; and they're sure that the Israelis need more of a shove than a nudge.

They are also dubious about his attempts to demonize and isolate Iran.

"We don't need America to dictate our enemies to us, especially when it's our neighbor," said an insider at the Saudi royal court. The Saudis invited the Iranian president, I'm-a-Dinner-Jacket, to their hajj pilgrimage last month.

Saudis and Palestinians grumbled that they find it hard to listen to the president's high-flown paeans to democracy when he only acknowledges his brand of democracy. When Hamas, Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood won elections, W. sought to undermine them. The results of the elections were certainly troubling, but is democratization supposed to be about outcomes?

They also think W.'s plan cancels itself out. The Israelis don't have to stop settlements if rockets are coming in from Gaza, and Abbas, the Palestinian president, can't stop rockets from going out of an area he does not control.

The president who described himself at Galilee as "a pilgrim" makes peace sound as easy as three faiths sharing, when history has shown that the hardest thing on earth is three faiths sharing.

Asked by ABC's Terry Moran what he was thinking when he stood on the site where Jesus performed miracles at the Sea of Galilee, W. replied: "I reflected on the story in the New Testament about the calm and the rough seas, because it was on those very seas that the Lord was in the boat with the disciples, and they were worried about the waves and the wind, and the sea calmed. That's what I reflected on: the calm you can find in putting your faith in a higher power."

Clearly, the man believes in miracles.

Notes

Maureen Dowd is a syndicated columnist for The New York Times.

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The neocon hand in Obama's victory

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Body

Colombo, June 6 -- It's Barack Obama. America made history on Tuesday when for the first time a non-white entered the fray as the candidate of a main political party at the November presidential election.

The victory of Obama after a hard-fought battle with Hillary Clinton, the favourite just 17-months ago to win the Democratic Party's race for the presidential candidate, is indeed a milestone in the evolution of US politics.

The victory probably heralds the beginning of the Barack Obama era. In the pre-Obama era, many a black in the United States could only dream of having a non-white as a presidential candidate. They had little hope that they would live to see this day. The blacks have only seen early exits at the party nomination level in their previous attempts to run for the White House. In the 1980s, civic rights leader Jesse Jackson made two for the Democratic Party ticket and both times left early in the race. Prior to him, there were Douglas Wilder (1992), Shirley Chisholm (1972) and Al-Sharpton (2004), all Democrats. Chisholm was the first **female** black candidate. There were a few who sought the Republican Party's nominations, too. But no black breasted the tape at the party race. Obama did. His victory perhaps shows that race is no longer an issue in US politics.

But the victory was not offered to him on a platter. Hillary could have won the nomination and made history as the first **female** President of the United States, if only she had the support of the powers behind the scenes. What decided Obama's victory was not the popular vote, but the votes of the so-called super-delegates, which include the high and the mighty in the Democratic Party with connections to corporate America.

While at the primaries and the caucuses, the voters were influenced by a candidate's policies and the voters' prejudices regarding race and gender, at the super-delegate level, the force behind the vote in the past was corporate America. In the Bush era, a much bigger force -- the neocon lobby -- asserted itself in writing the destiny of the United States. The neocons' definition of US national interest makes corporate America happy, the religious right happy and, of course, Israel happy. The neocons had a gay time during the presidency of George W. Bush, a willing partner, who offered his administration's plum posts to neocon bigwigs. The neocon's business of dominating the world and making the United States rich at the expense of the misery of the rest of the world is still not finished. With just seven months remaining for the Bush presidency to end, it is na?ve to expect that the neocons would wind up their Project for the New American Century (PNAC), even though they have bloodied Iraq and buried whatever moral principles that governed international relations.

It is easier for these neocons to manipulate and coax the 800-odd Democratic Party superdelegates than the millions of Democrats who vote at the primaries and the caucuses.

The neocon hand in Obama 's victory

As a cynic who is wary of neocons, this writer is of the view that the neocons had a hand in Obama's victory.

Obama was largely a little known politician until he delivered the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic Party Convention. The speech catapulted him to the frontline and made him a heartthrob in American politics. A few months later, Obama, a former law professor at the University of Chicago, became the fifth black American senator in US history, winning a 70 percent landslide at the congressional elections. Till the last minute, there wasn't a Republican candidate for the Illinois seat Obama won? Why? Since then, he has been touted as the possible Democratic Party candidate for the 2008 election. If one were to become the front runner of the party within two years of making a speech and winning a Senate seat, then the rise of that person needs serious inquiry.

Obama enjoyed the support of the US corporate media, another tool in the hands of the neocons. His blackness was wiped away with the media highlighting the fact that though he had a Kenyan black father, his mother was white.

Even his admission of smoking cocaine and marijuana during his youth did not earn him negative publicity in the US media. His opponents then brought his Muslim connection. Some compared Obama with Osama and pointed out that he had a Muslim middle name -- Hussein. They even said that Obama, during his childhood days in Indonesia, attended a Madrasa, a school, according to neocons, where extremist thoughts were planted in young minds. But with the help of the 'friendly' media, Obama overcame these taunts with much ease. He was not short of funds either while the Clinton camp often appealed for more funds to run the campaign.

Now that Obama has won the Democratic Party's nomination, what comes next? He will have to face a formidable foe in John McCain of the Republican Party at the November elections. McCain is white and Protestant. He also subscribes to the neocon plan. Have the neocons engineered an Obama victory so that McCain could win the presidential race despite the Americans' disenchantment with the present Republican administration?

They probably reckon that the Americans will not elect a black as president. But this is a gamble. So the neocons have drawn their plan in such a way that they stand to gain whoever wins. Of course, they will prefer McCain to Obama.

However, in Obama the neocons have a president who will attempt to show that he is not what he had been accused of being during his battle to win the Democratic Party nomination. He was branded as a national interest liability because of his Muslim middle name, his Muslim father and his childhood days in Indonesia. He was taunted as 'Hussein' and the right wing Republicans went to the extent of publishing a picture showing Obama in a traditional Somali Muslim dress -- a picture taken in 2006 during an African tour.

Though Obama is a member of the United Church of Christ in Chicago and has never worshipped at a mosque, he will have to double his efforts to prove he is not what he was accused of being. Here lies the danger of Obama playing into the hands of the neocons.

Though, like Clinton, he campaigned on a platform that opposed the Iraq war, Obama has already signalled his willingness to toe the neocon line as far as Israel is concerned.

His declaration of victory coincided with the convention of the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), better known as the Jewish lobby. Obama, Hillary Clinton, McCain, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert were all invitees for the great show.

Clinton in her speech at the AIPAC convention said, "I know Senator Obama understands what it is at stake here. ... I know that Senator Obama will be a good friend to Israel."

What Clinton said at the AIPAC show has little relevance as she has lost her political clout after her defeat, unless she is chosen as Obama's running mate. But what Obama said must have pleased the crowd. In fact, his speech was so effective that it won him new converts who were sceptical about his earlier pro-Israeli statements, especially those he made during his battle for the party nomination.

The neocon hand in Obama 's victory

He referred to a dirty email campaign doing the rounds among the Jews in America. The email said Obama was a captive of Palestinian ideology and was a secret Muslim. He dismissed such fears and said he came from a family which helped liberate Jews from the Buchewald concentration camp in Germany.

"As president I will never compromise when it comes to Israeli security," he said and assured the AIPAC that he would sign a deal to provide US\$ 30 billion in military aid to Israel for it to gain "a qualitative military advantage."

He also said he would not negotiate with Hamas and Hezbollah, though he would talk to Iran on America's terms.

"It will be tough and principled diplomacy with the appropriate Iranian leader at a time and place of my choosing -- if, and only if -- it can advance the interests of the United States," Obama said adding, "I will always keep the threat of military action on the table."

Haven't the neocons, the religious right and the Israeli lobby got their presidential candidate in Barak Hussein Obama?

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TWO WEDDINGS AND A WAR

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Byline: TAMARA EL-KHOURY, Times Staff Writer

Dateline: EBRINE, Lebanon

Highlight: Life in Lebanon and the rites of passage take on a new meaning because of war, not in spite of it, as a younger generation that has never lived in peace ponders the future.

Body

War postponed my friend's wedding.

Last summer, three weeks before the date, fighting broke out between Israel and Hezbollah, a militant Islamic group in Lebanon. My friend, the embarrassed bride-to-be, put off the wedding, I canceled my trip, and panic spread in the American Lebanese community as we tried to evacuate our loved ones.

She eventually got married, and this year another friend decided to take the risk and schedule a wedding in Lebanon in late July. I was excited but cautious. I had visited my motherland nearly every year for the past 15 years, so I knew the warm Mediterranean and massive amounts of food might not be the only things waiting for me. But I was adamant about going despite new fighting, this time between the Lebanese army and Fatah al-Islam, an al-Qaida-linked group hiding in a Palestinian refuge camp in Lebanon.

The country is on the brink of civil war, the world's journalists were writing. But I swore only the airport's closure would keep me out of the country. My mother and I took vacation time, bought tickets and followed the news.

We knew four other families taking the risk. We all left around the same time to attend the wedding. The bride and groom live in Cleveland but planned a Lebanon wedding because, "It's the closest we could get to heaven," they said on the save the dates.

My mother and I arrived in Lebanon on a Friday night. A cousin picked us up from the airport. Beirut's air was as I remembered it, hot, dirty and foul. Traffic barely moved as people inched toward the mountains for a weekend respite from the heat.

As we took the hour drive to Ebrine, a Christian village in the mountains where my mother is from, our cousin raised his voice the way Lebanese do when they're passionate about something. It sounds like yelling to anyone else, but to Lebanese ears it's just talking.

He doesn't know why we keep coming back to this country, he said. This country is finished. There is nothing here, he said, thrusting his hand toward the land.

TWO WEDDINGS AND A WAR

Last summer, he and his family evacuated to Canada where his oldest son lives. This month, his youngest son left Lebanon to attend college in Canada.

Still, as I stared out the window at the mass of traffic, at the dilapidated buildings, I felt joy. I'm 25 years old. I was born in Washington, D.C., and have never lived in Lebanon, but my Lebanese parents raised me to know Lebanese traditions, food, culture and the country itself. I felt like I was home.

But the conversation from the airport to Ebrine kept popping up in my head through the duration of my two-week trip. Why do we keep coming back?

The next day was the wedding. The reception was outdoors. The moon was full. Women were dressed in elaborate gowns, men in colorful ties. Dancers in traditional clothes swarmed the dance floor. The bride entered at the top of a stone staircase on a hill and the groom rushed up to greet her. Fireworks on the ground lit their way down the stairs.

It doesn't take long for a dance floor with Lebanese guests to fill. Even my mom left her seat to dance.

As dancers lifted the bride, the groom and their mothers on their shoulders, I walked to the ladies room. I heard an explosion and braced myself. "Bombs," I thought. "They're bombing the wedding."

I heard several more booms and ran outside to a fireworks show. I laughed at myself and joined the celebration of love and unity in a country struggling to find both.

The rest of the trip brought more examples of contradictions in Lebanon. The country's economy has tanked yet people still take three hours to eat at tables filled with food. Lebanon is teetering on the brink of political chaos, people are leaving the country to find opportunity, yet the Lebanese are partying hard.

Sky Bar, a swanky nightspot overlooking the Mediterranean, was packed with beautiful people and bottles of vodka. I asked some Saudi Arabian men sitting with a three-foot bottle of Grey Goose why they come to Lebanon even during war.

"Lebanon is free," one said.

Unlike much of the Arab world, Lebanon is not an Islamic state. In Lebanon, these Saudis could legally drink, smoke and watch bare-legged women dance.

There were signs of war, though not at Sky Bar. I found myself tensing up while driving through army checkpoints till a friend told me to relax; these weren't the Syrian guards I was used to. On this trip, the soldiers were Lebanese.

Then there was the distant thundering heard from Ebrine. Real bombs, not fireworks, echoing from the Palestinian refugee camp in Tripoli.

The biggest sign of war was the fact that I couldn't visit my three aunts. The road to my father's village went through Tripoli and it was too dangerous. An aunt and uncle braved the road to visit me in the safe beach chalet owned by a family friend. They left early to attend the funeral of a young soldier from their village who had been killed in Tripoli.

A few days before I left, an election took place to replace two assassinated anti-Syrian members of Parliament. The army was dispatched to prevent outbreaks of violence. The election ended peacefully.

However, the election solidified my fears that the people-power uprising that unified the country in 2005 was dead. The "Cedar Revolution," as it was dubbed, stemmed from the assassination of Lebanon's prime minister, Rafik Hariri. The result was an end of nearly 30 years of Syrian occupation and a unity of Lebanese Christians, Muslims and Druze.

TWO WEDDINGS AND A WAR

During that exciting time I had written about the hope of a reborn Lebanon, but the people have fallen back into the pull of the country's feudal system. The same families who have influenced the country's politics then are the same families that do so now. The Lebanese don't give up power easily even for the sake of the country.

The distant booms I heard from Ebrine of the army fighting an al-Qaida-linked group made it obvious why a stabilized Lebanon is in the best interest of Mideast peace.

There were other things I saw during my trip which disappointed me. I found laziness and an obsession with material things, particularly in the younger generation. Kids who don't work are demanding cell phones, designer clothes and nice cars. Their parents want to give them everything and are hiring live-in maids from other Third World countries.

Maybe their focus on the superficial keeps their mind off the darker issues. Maybe their experience that death isn't just for the old makes them want to revel in the now.

I do know that those same people always have their home open, always have coffee ready and a joke to tell.

By the end of my trip I realized that perhaps why the Lebanese celebrate so much, why they break into dance to the beat of an out-of-tune drum in the middle of a lazy Sunday lunch, why they take so long to eat, why they laugh even when political tensions are highest, why they pray so hard is because of war.

The Lebanese were born during violence, educated in violence. They got married and raised children in war. It's a tradition unwillingly passed on through generations.

Because the Lebanese are not strangers to death, they truly know how to live.

That's why I keep going back.

Tamara El-Khoury is a Times staff writer based in Clearwater.

Graphic

PHOTO, TAMARA EL-KHOURY - Times: Amid sparkling fireworks, not bombs, bridegroom Samir Shaia and bride Ghunwa Nakouzi enter their wedding reception in the coastal town of Batroun, Lebanon, on July 28. They think of Lebanon as "the closest we could get to heaven." PHOTO, TAMARA EL-KHOURY - Times: A lazy Sunday lunch turns into a party in the northern mountain town of Beit Chlala when boys playing for tips pull out their drums. The Lebanese, who have been born in violence and live with it all of their lives, know how to celebrate life. MAP, RON BRACKETT - Times: Locates the capital city of Beirut as well as Ebrine and Tripoli in Lebanon.

Load-Date: August 19, 2007

I only answer to God, says Sheik

Geelong Advertiser (Australia)

April 23, 2007 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 167 words

Body

ONLY God can ask controversial Sheik Taj Aldin Alhilali to step down as Australia's mufti, the cleric says.

State and federal politicians have called for Sheik Alhilali to step down as mufti over controversial comments he has made over the past six months.

Earlier this month, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils -- which suspended the sheik's salary last year after he likened scantily-clad women to uncovered meat -- said his future would be decided by the National Council of Imams by June.

But Sheik Alhilali, who returned to Australia from the Middle East on Saturday, said he respected the council but would not necessarily comply with a vote to remove him as mufti.

"I only answer to God," he said.

Sheik Alhilali said he would defend his innocence in response to allegations he handed over charity donations for victims of last year's war in Lebanon to Hassan Nasrallah, from the radical Hezbollah group.

The allegations have sparked an ongoing investigation by the Australian Federal Police.

Load-Date: April 24, 2007

THE 'INDECENT' PICTURE THAT HAS SET IRAN'S MULLAHS AGAINST THEIR PRESIDENT

The Mirror
May 4, 2007 Friday
2 Star Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 37

Length: 130 words

Byline: BY MARK ELLIS, FOREIGN EDITOR

Body

THE President of Iran bows to kiss the gloved hand of his former schoolteacher... an old woman wearing a headscarf and a long coat.

A touching reunion, you might think. But this is a country where the fanatical mullahs call the shots - and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been accused of indecency.

According to sharia law, a man cannot have physical contact with a woman if he is not related to her.

The ultra-conservative Hezbollah newspaper ranted on its front page: "The Muslim Iranian people have no recollection of such acts contrary to sharia law during Islamic rule. Such indecency has grave consequences."

The president has clashed with hardline religious leaders before. His suggestion that women should be allowed to attend football matches caused outrage.

m.ellis@mgn.co.uk

Graphic

OUTRAGE: He kisses teacher's gloved hand; RESPECT: Iran's president bows for his teacher Pictures: AFP/GETTY

THE 'INDECENT' PICTURE THAT HAS SET IRAN 'S MULLAHS AGAINST THEIR PRESIDENT

Load-Date: May 4, 2007

End of Document

BLOODIED GAZA SET FOR THE ENDGAME

The Sunday Times (London)

January 11, 2009

Edition 1

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Section: NEWS; Pg. 24,25

Length: 3065 words

Byline: MARIE COLVIN

Body

In the emergency room of Al Shifa hospital in Gaza City, Dr Raed al-Arayni was entering his 12th day of nonstop work and was preparing for yet another operation when his worst nightmare came true.

The bloodied little boy being carried into the room by a neighbour was screaming at him. "Baba, baba [daddy, daddy]," the child cried.

"I did not recognise my own child because of his injuries," recalled Arayni. "For a few seconds I couldn't move, my knees became weak. I could barely stand at the sight of my child halfway between life and death." Running over he realised that both his sons - Hathifa, 7, and Abdul Rahman, 5 - were lying in his emergency room, severely wounded.

Tears streaming down his face, Arayni began working feverishly on Hathifa, who had the worst injuries. A chunk of shrapnel had pierced his chest, his right leg was broken and blood poured from his wounds.

A colleague began treating Abdul Rahman. The nerves in his broken left arm had been severed and he had no feeling in his hand. They were able to stabilise the two boys.

"I just thank God my children didn't arrive to me in bits and pieces, missing body parts as the women and children I see arriving daily," said Arayni, standing by Hathifa's bedside, his face showing the exhaustion of almost two weeks of back-to-back operations. The slight, bearded surgeon had not returned home for 12 days, grabbing a nap or a meal at the hospital when he could.

When the Israelis launched a massive attack against Hamas, the Islamic extremist group that rules Gaza, to stop it launching rockets against Israel's southern cities, he had moved his family from their home in Jabaliya, a crowded refugee camp just north of Gaza City. They took refuge with a relative in the more central Fakhura district, believing they would be safer..

BLOODIED GAZA SET FOR THE ENDGAME

The surgeon pushed aside the thought of his own children as the wounded poured in, sometimes so many that the operating floors were slick with blood. Injured men, women and children were piled in the corridors and surgeons commandeered the recovery room.

On Tuesday Um Mustafa, his wife, and their boys had gone up on the roof of the building, desperate for some fresh air after almost a week inside while Israeli jets screamed overhead and missiles, tank and artillery rounds pounded the coastal strip day and night.

The boys had been playing for about an hour when Um Mustafa sent them downstairs for a bottle of water. Moments later a huge explosion rocked the building, followed by a second.

Two missiles had slammed into the girls' primary school next door run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, where Gazans fleeing the fighting had been given refuge. Some 40 people, many of them women and children, were killed.

A controversy still rages over the strike on the school, one of three bombed by the Israelis within 24 hours. Israel claimed militants had fired mortars from near the school. UN officials insisted their security guards kept militants out of their compounds and that they had even given the Israeli military the GPS co-ordinates for their 23 schools, refuge for some 15,000 Gazans, to avert such a tragedy.

As soon as Hathifa and Abdul Rahman were stabilised, Arayni went back to operating on the casualties from the school bombing. As he left their room on Friday, leaving the boys in the care of their weeping mother, Abdul Rahman woke from a feverish sleep and began calling out for his father.

"I want my daddy. Where is he? Is he hurt?" he cried His older brother, the shrapnel still in his chest because it is too dangerous to remove, reassured him. "No, he's treating other kids who got hurt like us," Hathifa said..

By the standards of the past fortnight in Gaza, the Arayni boys were lucky. At the last count 830 Palestinians had been killed and some 3,000 wounded, according to health officials in Gaza. The Hamasrun health ministry said at least a third were children.

Israeli troops were dug in on the outskirts of Gaza City and hunkered down in Palestinian homes they had seized.

Hamas's security forces had been driven from the streets, but struck back in hit-and-run attacks from tunnels, sniped from rooftops and continued to launch rockets into Israel.

Northern Gaza was a wasteland.

Whole blocks of the concrete apartment buildings and small homes of the refugee camps of Jabaliya, Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya were devastated, hit by missiles or demolished by military bulldozers.

Aid officials warned of a humanitarian disaster. The UN said two-thirds of Gazans were without electricity and half had no water. Food and medical supplies were running low.

On Wednesday Israel relented slightly, announcing it would stop firing between the hours of 1pm and 4pm to allow aid agencies to deliver supplies.

Nevertheless, it showed no sign of ending its operations any time soon. From Israel's perspective it is fighting a crucial battle, backed by nearunanimous popular support, against an enemy committed to its ultimate destruction and which has continued to target its citizens in the south.

There was more evidence of that yesterday as at least 10 Hamas rockets were fired at Israeli targets. One hit a block of flats in the city of Ashkelon, wounding two people.

BLOODIED GAZA SET FOR THE ENDGAME

"Israel has acted, is acting and will act only according to its considerations, the security needs of its citizens and its right to self-defence," Tzipi Livni, the foreign minister and the ruling Kadima party's candidate for prime minister, said on Friday.

How close is Israel to achieving its goals? What has the bloodshed achieved and is there any sign of it stopping? ISRAEL launched Operation Cast Lead on December 27, little more than a week after Hamas refused to renew a six-month truce that had largely held and resumed its rocket attacks on southern Israel.

The operation's aims were to stop Hamas's rocket launches into southern Israeli cities and end the smuggling of weapons through tunnels under Gaza's southern border with Egypt.

Israeli intelligence repeatedly warned that Hamas was stockpiling increasingly sophisticated long-range Grad rockets, manufactured in China but passed to Hamas by Iran, along with its home-made Qassam rockets. Israel believed that unless it acted soon, Hamas's ability to strike would present a grave danger..

That prediction proved accurate.

As soon as the Israeli missiles began landing in Gaza, Hamas launched rockets that reached further than before, hitting the cities of Ashkelon, Ashdod and Beersheba.

Last week a Grad rocket landed on Gedera, a town 28 miles from Gaza and less than a mile from the Israeli air force base at Tel Nof, where nuclear weapons are believed to be stored.

The wider strategic aim of the operation is the need to confront Iranian-sponsored bellicosity.

The supply of Grad rockets to Hamas followed Tehran's sponsorship of Hezbollah, the Lebanese-based Shi'ite militant group which had fired rockets at Israel's northern cities and fought a war with Israel in the summer of 2006.

The threat of a nucleararmed Iran, the rising power in the region, is foremost in Israel's thoughts. Last week in Washington, Sallai Meridor, Israel's ambassador to the United States, warned in an interview that Iran would have enough enriched uranium this year to manufacture a nuclear bomb.

If Israel is to address such a threat militarily in the future, it will need to have subdued the immediate threats on its borders.

The timing of the attack on Gaza was also influenced by the Israeli general election, due on February 10. As rockets terrorised southern Israel, the ruling coalition, led by Kadima, was increasingly open to accusations of being soft on defence and trailed the right-wing Likud party, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, in the polls.

The arithmetic of Israeli politics is fiendishly complicated, but the effect of the Gaza operation is revealed in the fortunes of the Labour party headed by Ehud Barak, the defence minister.

Two weeks ago, before the attack, it was struggling in third or fourth place in the polls with only nine or 10 expected parliamentary seats (out of 120)

after the elections. After a week of operations that figure had risen to 16 seats.

Likud is still leading the race with an expected 32 seats and Kadima is likely to win 27 or so seats, but the centre-left block is closing fast.

A decisive victory over Hamas may pull the rug from under the right-wing bloc and possibly allow a Barak-Livni coalition. But if Hamas can claim victory, it will strengthen Likud and its allies and Israel will probably get Netanyahu as its next prime minister.

There could be no doubt that Israel had the upper hand after two weeks of fighting, but the operation, which Barak described as one of "shock and awe", had reached a difficult point by this weekend.

BLOODIED GAZA SET FOR THE ENDGAME

Israeli pundits all agreed that the government needed a "clear win", such as an assurance of quiet on the southern front, to withdraw with any semblance of victory and to justify the high price of international opprobrium.

That was not even on the horizon. On Friday, Palestinian sources said Hamas's weapons caches had been decimated and scores of the tunnels it used to import weapons had been destroyed in the bombings. But with its leadership hiding in underground bunkers or holding talks in Egypt, and only about 400 of its 15,000 officers and foot soldiers killed, the organisation was largely intact.

For Israelis this provided two starkly different choices. One was to declare victory and withdraw, either unilaterally or with a semblance of a ceasefire brokered by the international community.

The other was to implement "stage three" of Operation Cast Lead, following the initial bombing and subsequent ground assault, and continue into the crowded neighbourhoods of Gaza City and refugee camps. Here Hamas has created a virtual underground city of tunnels and the warren of alleys and narrow streets make it far more difficult for Israeli forces to manoeuvre.

Ehud Olmert, the outgoing prime minister, was said to be advocating going even further and aiming to topple Hamas.

The organisation had won elections in 2006 and 18 months ago ousted Fatah, led by Mahmoud Abbas, the moderate president who runs the rival Palestinian Authority, from Gaza.

Avigdor Ben-Gal, a decorated and influential retired Israeli general, said this weekend: "We need to conquer the Gaza Strip and put the Hamas military and political leaders on a French ship to leave Gaza for good, just as we did with [the former Palestinian leader Yasser] Arafat in Beirut 1982. We've already conquered a bigger Arab city than Gaza [namely, Beirut], our army is trained and fit for the mission. The politicians should give the order." Some Fatah officials have even privately expressed the hope that Israel would rout Hamas, so stung were they by being forced out of Gaza.

Expanding the incursion would carry high risks. So far the Israeli population has supported the operation: a poll on Friday showed 91% of Israelis in favour. But that could change dramatically if casualties start piling up, as they did when an operation was launched against Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006 to stem the flow of missiles on Israel's northern cities.

Israel did not then secure the crushing victory to which its people were accustomed.

For Hamas, however battered, the equation is far simpler.

All it has to do to declare victory is survive. The leadership is certain to reap the kudos from having stood up to the most powerful army in the Middle East without jets, tanks or sophisticated weaponry.

Hamas appeared to be regrouping after, incredibly, being shocked at the original Israeli attack. This was despite the tanks that had been massing on its borders for days and Israel's public warnings that it would not tolerate rockets being launched on its soil.

"Hamas actually believed that firing rockets into Israel would force it to open the Rafah crossing [into Egypt]," said a senior Palestinian who has negotiated with them..

"They were shocked at the massive Israeli response. They are very naive." However, Izzedine al-Qassam, Hamas's military wing, was said still to have high morale and other extremist groups in Gaza were fighting side by side with Hamas.

WHATEVER the Israelis decide to do - and there were reports that leaflets had been dropped on Gaza yesterday warning the residents to expect a dramatic escalation in hostilities - they have to do it quickly.

BLOODIED GAZA SET FOR THE ENDGAME

Israeli soldiers stationed on lines at the edge of Gaza City were increasingly becoming sitting targets. The thousands of reservists who had been called up finished a week's training on Friday and could not be kept in the camps indefinitely; they have civilian jobs and families at home.

In addition, the Israeli government was well aware that international pressure was building, fuelled by horrific images that have emerged from Gaza despite Israel's refusal to allow foreign journalists to enter the coastal strip.

International diplomatic efforts to end the conflict were grinding slowly forward. Both Israel and Hamas rejected a UN security council resolution that had called for an "immediate ceasefire". Olmert called the resolution "unworkable" and Hamas rejected the resolution on the grounds that it had not been consulted.

Crucially, the Americans, Israel's superpower sponsor, abstained from the vote, preferring to back an Egyptianbrokered ceasefire. These efforts appeared to be moving ahead. General Amos Gilad, a senior Israeli official, visited Cairo last week and will do so again today, and a Hamas delegation, both from Gaza and its Damascus-based politburo, travelled to Cairo yesterday.

A senior Palestinian source who had seen the proposal said it contained four points and put Egypt as the sole broker between the two sides.

The first point, he said, called for an agreement between both "factions" on an immediate ceasefire; the second point was the opening of the Gaza border crossings to allow humanitarian aid and "Egypt to continue its efforts" the third point was a vague provision for an international element, presumably to monitor the border; and the fourth point provided for Egypt to oversee talks between Hamas and Fatah to end their bitter dispute and form a united leadership.

Despite fighting talk from Hamas members, those dealing with them say that although they are still insisting they will not stop fighting until the Rafah crossing into Egypt is open - their key demand and their own litmus test of a real victory - they want a ceasefire.

In the longer term, both Israelis and moderate Palestinians realise that the only way forward is a political solution.

Israel would love to see Abbas retake power in Gaza. Should he replace Hamas on the back of an Israeli invasion, however, he would be perceived as an Israeli stooge.

"There is no eliminating Hamas. They are part of the Palestinian people whether we like it or not," said Ghassan Shaqa'a, a senior Palestinian politician and an adviser to Abbas.

"You have to talk to them." Everyone is waiting for the US presidency of Barack Obama, who will be sworn in on January 20. Despite the economic crisis, sources in his administration said that he knew he would have to engage in the Middle East crisis, although he was hoping that there would be a ceasefire by the time he took office.

"God knows he will have enough on his plate, but he has to work from day one on this or the only options left will be bad ones," said Martin Indyk, a Middle East adviser to Hillary Clinton, the incoming secretary of state.

Indyk, the author of a new book, *Innocent Abroad*, based on his experience as an American ambassador to Israel, reiterated the US policy that the only solution was a two-state solution, with some special provision for Jerusalem, the city holy to Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Obama indicated last week that he could open contacts with Hamas, a first for an American president.

He is likely to begin a complicated three-way chess game involving talks with Syria and contacts of some sort with Iran.

A diplomatic breakthrough with Syria could isolate Iran, a bonus in the campaign to stop it from going nuclear, and encourage other Arab states to come to the negotiating table.

BLOODIED GAZA SET FOR THE ENDGAME

"Obama won't be able to do it alone," Indyk said. "He'll need leaders in the region like Anwar Sadat [the late Egyptian president and the first Arab leader to make peace with Israel in the 1970s]. The president will need to be ready to grab the moment when it arises." FOR the citizens of Gaza it cannot come too soon. Of all the suffering among Gazan civilians, few endured worse than the Samouni clan. Last week four young boys from the extended family were rescued after three days of being trapped in a home with the bodies of their mothers and relatives.

Their emaciated condition horrified aid workers who had spent days trying to get permission from the Israelis to rescue them.

Their ordeal began last Sunday, shortly after Israel invaded. Troops ordered families to gather in one large house while they searched the Zeitoun neighbourhood. On Monday morning, with about 90 men, women and children inside, three Israeli missiles slammed into the house, according to the survivors.

Sixteen were killed in the strike - seven women, six children including a baby found curled up under its dead mother's arm, and three men.

Ahmed Samouni, 15, told his tale from his hospital bed, a tube snaking out of his nose and his hands still black with blood and grime.

"Some of their heads were exploded," he said, still shaking from the experience. "The door was open. A chicken came in and started to eat the brains from their heads. I pulled off the chicken, crawled to the door and closed it with my feet." Down the hall are his brother Yaqub, 10, and cousin Abdullah, 8, so badly wounded that they can barely speak. Another cousin is in intensive care.

Yesterday more horrors visited Gaza. Eight members of a family, including two women and two children, were killed in Jabaliya when an Israeli tank shell hit them as they sat out in their garden to bask in the unseasonable winter sun.

The neighbour who took them to hospital did so in the boot of his car because their bodies were mangled together.

Amid all the uncertainty about Israel's intentions and the search for a ceasefire, human tragedy seems to be the only thing guaranteed.

Additional reporting: Sara Hashash; Uzi Mahnaimi in Tel Aviv; Sarah Baxter in Washington

Graphic

The Israeli attacks have left large areas of northern Gaza devastated. Troops have fought house to house battles, right

Lama Hamdan, four, is buried after she and her sister were killed in an Israeli strike on Gaza

Dr Raed al-Arayni comforts his son Hathifa, 7, who was wounded by shrapnel

BAZ RATNER/MOHAMMED SALEM/AP

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

Mufti says he; answers only to his God

The Gold Coast Bulletin (Australia)

April 23, 2007 Monday

Main Edition

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Section: Pg. 7

Length: 171 words

Body

ONLY God can ask controversial Sheik Taj Din al-Hilali to step down as Australia's mufti, says the cleric.

State and federal politicians have called for Sheik al-Hilali to step down as mufti over controversial comments he has made over the past six months.

Earlier this month, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils - which suspended the sheik's salary last year after he likened scantily-clad women to uncovered meat - said his future would be decided by the National Council of Imams by June.

But Sheik al-Hilali, who returned to Australia from the Middle East on Saturday, said he respected the council but would not necessarily comply with a vote to remove him as mufti.

"I only answer to God," said Sheik al-Hilali last night.

On Saturday Sheik Alhilali said he would defend his innocence in response to allegations he handed over charity donations for victims of last year's war in Lebanon to Hassan Nasrallah, from the radical Hezbollah group. The allegations are being investigated by the Australian Federal Police.

Load-Date: April 23, 2007

Mufti dismisses council vote

Northern Territory News (Australia)

April 23, 2007 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 177 words

Body

wire

ONLY God can ask controversial Sheik Taj Aldin al-Hilali to step down as Australia's mufti, the cleric says.

State and federal politicians have called for Sheik al-Hilali to step down as mufti over controversial comments he has made over the past six months.

Earlier this month, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) -- which suspended the sheik's salary last year after he likened scantily-clad women to uncovered meat -- said his future would be decided by the National Council of Imams by June.

But Sheik al-Hilali, who returned to Australia from the Middle East yesterday, said he respected the council but would not necessarily comply with a vote to remove him as mufti.

"I only answer to God," he told SBS television last night.

Sheik al-Hilali also told reporters at Sydney Airport on Sunday that he would defend his innocence in

response to allegations he handed over charity donations for victims

of last year's war in Lebanon to Hassan Nasrallah of the radical Hezbollah group.

The allegations sparked an Australian Federal Police investigation.

Load-Date: April 22, 2007

Show of the week; Wednesday 1

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

July 30, 2007 Monday

First Edition

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Section: THE GUIDE; Pg. 22

Length: 156 words

Byline: Robin Oliver

Body

Halal Mate - Afifa's Match,

SBS, 8pm

This story, one of four about Muslim life in Australia, is as warm as one could wish and director Claudia Rowe makes sure it leaves us glowing. We meet Afifa Saad, goalkeeper with the South Melbourne **Women's** Soccer Club. She used to be the team striker, but dropped back into the goalie spot because it was more appropriate to her religion. "You're pretty much covered, all you can see is the face." She was good at it, winning the league's goalkeeper of the year award.

We meet the close-knit family in Brunswick, preparing a big barbecue to welcome back Afifa's dad and mum, Aboud and Khadia, who went to Lebanon to visit Khadia's mother but were trapped in fighting between **Hezbollah** and Israeli troops.

Now Khadia is about to spring a surprise. She's met a handsome young man named Walid - a perfect match for Afifa, she decided, and persuaded him to visit Melbourne. A charming love story, Muslim style.

Load-Date: July 29, 2007

Left-wing dreamers

Ottawa Citizen

May 14, 2007 Monday

Letters Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A9

Length: 194 words

Byline: Fred Maroun, The Ottawa Citizen

Body

Re: Canadian antiwar activists sat down with terror groups, May 8.

Canadian Peace Alliance coordinator Sid Lacombe tells us that the Cairo conference was an opportunity for "dialogue" with the likes of Hamas and Hezbollah. Cairo's Al Ahram Weekly believes that the international left is "overcoming its traditional resistance to the cultural conservatism of Islam." How lovely!

Exactly what kind of "dialogue" are our peace activists having with terrorists? Did they tell them that killing Israeli children and making incursions into Israel to kidnap soldiers was, perhaps, not the best way to achieve peace? Did they tell them that Israelis are, after all, people too and not just members of the "Zionist entity"? Don't bet on it.

Just when we think that the left could not possibly sink any lower, they surprise us again. These so-called Canadian leftists abandoned the most cherished values of the traditional left: peace, secularism, and women's rights. This illustrates why many who traditionally voted for the left, like myself, now prefer to vote for Stephen Harper or Nicolas Sarkozy, the new president of France. When will the left wake up?

Fred Maroun,

Ottawa

Load-Date: May 16, 2007

Bush rallies Gulf against Iran 'terror'

The Evening Standard (London)

January 14, 2008 Monday

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London Evening Standard

Section: A; Pg. 25

Length: 198 words

Byline: ED HARRIS

Body

PRESIDENT George W Bush urged Gulf allies to back his campaign against Iran, branding it "the world's leading statesponsor of terror".

Speaking in Abu Dhabi before today's visit to Saudi Arabia, Mr Bush said the capital Tehran threatens countries everywhere and that America is "rallying friends around the world to confront this danger before it is too late".

"One cause of instability is the extremists supported and embodied by the regime that sits in Tehran. Iran is today the world's leading state sponsor of terror," he said, adding that Iran funded militant groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad and sent arms to the Taliban in Afghanistan and Shia extremists in Iraq.

But his comments were dismissed by Iran's foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, who said: "Mr Bush has tried unsuccessfully to undermine our relations with the countries of the region. We believe his mission has totally failed. It would be much better if the Americans stopped intervening in the region's affairs." Mr Bush also came under pressure to tackle Saudi Arabia's human rights record where its ruler King Abdullah has cautiously tried to institute some reforms on education and women's rights..

Load-Date: January 14, 2008

Empty tables, empty chairs

The Jerusalem Post
January 9, 2009 Friday

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Byline: Diana Bletter

Highlight: The holidays are over, the global financial crisis is hitting home, and business owners in the North are expecting a long, cold winter

Body

Yarka, a Druse village in the Galilee known for its powerhouse discount stores, is feeling the economic pinch. In normal times, some 2,500 shoppers pass through the doors of Mercaz HaMazon, the village's largest supermarket, on Fridays and Saturdays. But these are not normal times. Store manager Isam Shalli says sales have dropped 15 to 20 percent in the past few months.

"There are fewer customers because of the economic situation," Shalli tells Metro. The shoppers who come to Yarka from as far away as Kiryat Shmona, Hadera and even Tel Aviv because of the village's reputation for low prices don't come as often. People are buying fewer luxury items, Shalli observes. "There are certain expensive wines and cuts of beef that nobody will touch these days."

The economic slump that began on Wall Street and spread through the United States has tumbled across the Atlantic, hitting northern Israel.

According to a National Insurance Institute spokesman, there has not been a significant increase in the number of people claiming unemployment benefits in the last quarter of 2008. And NII Director-General Esther Dominissini has stated that Israel is not entering a recession. Yet in shops along Nahariya's main street, store owners beg to disagree. They already feel the country is in a recession and the proof is what they are experiencing. Business is down, store owners - as well as customers - say. People simply aren't spending money the way they used to a few months ago.

"What Hizbullah didn't do to us in 2006, this new economic situation is doing to us now," said one owner of a shop near the Egged bus station in downtown Nahariya.

Tourism in northern Israel is down, which means that hotels like the Park Plaza in Nahariya have closed. In a ripple effect, the businesses that serviced the hotel are also affected. Take Haled Zina, who owns and operates a laundry business at Kibbutz Shomrat that caters both to private customers as well as restaurants and hotels - among them, the former Park Plaza. As a result of the hotel's closure and restaurants having less cloth napkins and tablecloths to wash, his laundry business has stalled. Two weeks ago, he had to lay off two employees who had worked in the laundry for several years. The night before he told them they no longer had a job, he cried. When he told them the next morning, they cried.

"It's a snowball effect," Zina explains. "The hard times go from one business to another and one person to another."

Empty tables, empty chairs

Zina and his brother, Ibrahim, also own and operate the Zina Brothers Auto Repair Shop on Moshav Shavei Zion, a 10-minute drive from Nahariya. After investing thousands of shekels to build a new body shop and modernize their equipment, the brothers now face a downward spiral of decreasing business. Zina says their business is down - not by 20 or even 30%, as in many local businesses - but 60%.

According to Zina, "People don't want to repair their cars now unless it's an emergency. And when they do decide to repair them, they argue over the prices. And then, once they agree, we have to make sure they have the money to pay us."

He has seen more and more people pull out their credit cards only to be told that the banks refuse to back their payments. Zina no longer takes personal checks and often has to pursue people for months - if not years - to get them to pay.

"I chased one man for two years until he finally came in and agreed to a payment plan," Zina recalls. He explains that he is forced to play roles other than that of a businessman now. He has to be a psychologist to convince people that "yes, they can afford to pay, and I have to have a lawyer at my side to make sure I really get my money," he says.

Part of the problem is that banks are also reluctant to part with their money.

"The bankers know I'm a good customer, but they're afraid because they see how difficult it is all around," Zina says.

Emmanuel Socolovsky is the founder of Turnkey Projects, an eight-person firm in the Tefen Industrial Park that offers mechanical and industrial engineering solutions to businesses. Socolovsky agrees with Zina's assessment about banks' sudden new, strict lending policy.

"Banks are hysterical today," Socolovsky notes. "If you don't have a 1-to-1 collateral ratio, they won't give you a shekel."

Banks are reluctant to lend, which makes Socolovsky's customers delay or cancel projects in a way they never did before. He says he developed a machine for a customer who originally wanted to produce 30 of them. That was a few months ago and now, the customer plans to produce only four - a drop of almost 90%.

So what should businesses do during these slow times?

Socolovsky believes that now is the "perfect" time to concentrate on new developments.

"We have to believe we're not going back to the Stone Age," he states. "We have to move things forward, even during economic slow times."

Yet sometimes businesses can't move ahead. Richard Mann, a real estate and commercial lawyer in Nahariya, told Metro that even in good times, 50% of all new businesses fail within 18 months. What tides them over is fresh capital - something that banks are no longer so willing to give.

"Many businesses rely on credit to cover their fixed expenses until a customer's check clears," Mann explains. "I've heard a lot of my clients say that they are going from one bank to another to try to raise the necessary funds."

Mann says his law office has not yet felt the crunch because, for better or worse, "people always have legal problems." But he pauses with a wink and a knock on his wooden desk. "I don't want to jinx myself," the lawyer says.

Others are not so lucky. Cafe owner Pnina Freitag says she looks out at her cafe on Nahariya's main street and sees a lot of "empty tables." People aren't splurging on luxuries anymore, and sitting in a cafe with a coffee and a croissant is now considered a luxury.

Empty tables, empty chairs

"People need the money but even so, they're playing less Lotto," Freitag complains. "The only thing that stays the same is taxes."

The economic slowdown is impacting retired people on fixed incomes who've lost some of their life savings as well as young people just starting out.

Katia Lukomliansky, a 26-year-old Nahariya resident, works two jobs to make ends meet. By day she's an assistant at Miro Hair Salon, a local beauty salon, and at night, she works as a security guard.

"I live with my mother, I work two jobs, and I still can't get by," Lukomliansky says, adding that she and her mother left Russia 12 years ago because the economic situation there was bad. At first, she says, coming to Israel was a "smart move." Now she's not so sure.

"It used to be that 500 shekels could buy you a lot of groceries at the supermarket," Lukomliansky remembers. "Now prices for staples like milk and bread have gone up - but our salaries have stayed the same." She remarks that a lot of people she knows are in the same situation, financially pressed and gloomy about their future.

"Pretty soon," she sighs, "we'll have to pay for air."

Lukomliansky's employer, Miro Vaknin, says that he, too, has to "work 12 hours a day so that my kids don't lack for anything."

The business at his salon - in which he cuts men's, women's and children's hair - has decreased by 30%. The downturn has pushed him to concentrate on the cosmetics school, Irbuvim, that he runs with his wife, Merav. The school, which gives lessons in make-up, waxing, manicures and hairdressing, has seen an increase in students' enrollment.

"Women who never thought of working or who can't work outside their home now want to supplement their husbands' incomes and so are enrolling," Vaknin says. "They can do three waxings a day and bring in more than 200 extra shekels." People are doing what they can to adjust to the new reality, observes Nirit Goldstein, an interior designer in Kfar Tavor. What this means is that people who had planned to renovate or redesign their homes are now holding back.

"Projects have been put on hold or even stopped for good because people lost their money on the stock market," Goldstein says. "Or because they're scared they'll lose their jobs." She believes that having a beautiful space to live in is a necessity; others consider it an indulgence, and few feel that now is the time to indulge themselves.

"The only people who are still going ahead on projects are kibbutz members who, for years, have counted every shekel and saved them under their mattress," Goldstein says.

Goldstein receives calls every day from builders and construction workers asking if she knows of anyone hiring. She herself feels under "intense pressure" to balance taking care of her three small children along with running her own business, which she started this past summer. And though she tries hard not to feel afraid, she admits to being nervous.

"I think if we all view this economic situation as a cycle and learn to stay optimistic, we could all influence things in a positive way," Goldstein says.

But people are reluctant to spend and are squirreling away what they have. Metro meets a retired seamstress, who requested to be identified as "Hannah," as she comes out of a fruit and vegetable store pulling her shopping cart. She says she walked to this particular shop because its prices were better than the store just around the corner from her apartment.

"I'm even cutting my toothpaste tube in half and scooping out the insides before throwing it out," Hannah confides.

Empty tables, empty chairs

The world's crisscrossing of goods - in boom times, a boost of globalization - also means that the economic slowdown is felt around the globe. Maher Abed, who manages a grove of citrus trees in Bustan Hagalil, a moshav in Western Galilee, says he used to sell his entire crop to buyers in Europe for a good fee. Now, prices have been slashed. Europeans used to pay \$700 for a ton of pomelits; the price has plummeted to \$100.

"This is the first time I've seen something like this," Abed says. "If the prices don't improve, I'll have to cut down all the trees and start all over again with avocados."

Even children, normally oblivious to the phrase, "You don't understand the value of money," suddenly seem to understand.

"I feel bad asking my parents to buy me a pair of shoes and I wouldn't have thought twice about it before," says Yael Abutbul, 17, who is looking at shoes and boots in a Nahariya display window. And while she's interested in fashion, she says she'll save her shoe purchase for next year.

"My needs aren't as important as my family's needs," Abutbul says. Her parents are both employed and they don't have money problems, "but this is affecting everyone's outlook," she observes.

Byria Levy, who works in marketing at the Iscar Factory in Tefen, is shopping for treats for her grandsons, Ido and Niv, and says she isn't so worried. What gives her security these days, she says, is her employers' reassurance that she will not be fired.

"It wouldn't be smart to fire loyal people because of a short-term crisis and then have to go out in a few months and look for new, inexperienced people," Levy says.

While Levy went ahead with her purchases, other shoppers held back.

"Who can afford pine nuts at 99 shekels a kilo these days?" one complained. Another shopper said that stories in the media were creating a panic around the country.

"Every day, the media tells us the situation is bad," Ran Gefen, owner of Ran O'Fan bicycle shop in Moshav Shavei Zion, says. "That puts fear into people. Why make them afraid?"

He says people should continue to buy things they love, like bicycles, because sports is like therapy.

Gefen's sales have also dropped, but he isn't sure whether that's because it's winter, when people cycle less, or because of the economy. Still, he's playing it conservatively: ordering fewer bikes for next season and making sure he offers customers the best service possible. Then, he hopes, people will remember to enjoy themselves.

Healing massage therapist Manal Fawakhri in Ein Sarah, south of Nahariya, says that this is a time when people need to nurture their inner strength.

"Forget what's going on outside yourself," Fawakhri, a single parent with two children, suggests. "Focus on strengthening your body and soul."

She says what has helped her through troubled times is the awareness that life is "like the sea - some days it's stormy and some days it's calm." Her recommendation for how to get through rough waters? Aroma therapy and a healing massage. "Especially when times are tough, people need to take care of themselves," she says. "Everyone should breathe deep, get a good healing massage, and remember not to be afraid."

Graphic

Empty tables, empty chairs

5 photos: BROTHERS HALED and Ibrahim Zina report that business at their auto repair shop is down 60 percent. 'People don't want to repair their cars now unless it's an emergency,' says Haled. KNOW WHAT you knead - massage therapist Manal Fawakhri says this is a time when people need to nurture their inner strength. AMOS LAWRENCE, stands with Asaf Azoulay in Azoulay's empty Nahariya pizza joint. DAILY BREAD - Ezra Cohen's bakery, too, is seeing fewer customers these days. (Credit: Diana Bletter)

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G2: The broken bloodline: Fatima Bhutto is Benazir's niece. The resemblance is striking: the long nose, the headstrong personality, the burning rage about a father's violent death. Declan Walsh meets the woman who would have been the heir to Benazir's throne - if it weren't for the family feud that came between them

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Byline: Declan Walsh

Body

Watching him receive a verbal pistol-whipping from Jeremy Paxman at a London press conference this week, it was hard not to feel sorry for Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the 19-year-old heir to Pakistan's most perilous throne. Did the Oxford fresher really think he was up to the job of heading the Pakistani opposition, even nominally? At home in Pakistan, critics found other faults. "He's not a Bhutto, really, he's a Zardari," muttered a party loyalist, a few days after she was assassinated. "We need a true Bhutto to do the job."

Bilawal may be happy to slip back to Oxford, secret service bodyguards in tow, for another three years. But in Karachi there is another young Bhutto who, if dynasty is your game, seems perhaps better qualified to lead the Pakistani opposition.

Fatima Bhutto is clever, sassy and savours the salty taste of Pakistani public life. She has two books under her belt, writes a punchy newspaper column, and, as a close lieutenant to her vote-seeking mother, is a politician in training. There are some obvious parallels between Fatima and Benazir 30 years ago. Both their lives have been shaped by the untimely and violent deaths of their fathers; both are headstrong, with deep reserves of charm and, when called for, a sense of entitlement. Both are western-educated. The physical resemblance can also be striking. One television interview this week showed Fatima in profile before a portrait of a young Benazir - the same long nose, wide forehead and calm bearing were evident.

Fatima is 25 and eligible to run for public office. (Bilawal must wait another six years.) And for what its worth, she even has the endorsement of Jemima Goldsmith. "At least she has some work experience," wrote Goldsmith, who was once married to cricket star Imran Khan, in last week's Sunday Telegraph. (Goldsmith's expertise in Pakistan, which she left several years ago, was less clear.)

But Fatima says she has no political ambition and, at any rate, is unlikely to eclipse her famous cousin anytime soon. The reasons spring from a half-forgotten chapter of the Bhutto history. It is a story written in broken bloodlines that illuminate the Greek tragedy that this extraordinary South Asian dynasty has become.

Last October, two nights before Benazir was due to return from exile in Dubai, I went to see Fatima and her Lebanese stepmother Ghinwa at their home in Clifton, Karachi's oldest and plushiest suburb. They offered a simple

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dinner - pizza in the box - with apologies: they had just returned from their ancestral home in Larkana, 200 miles to the north, further up the Indus river, where they had been visiting prisoners in the local female jail.

We ate in the upstairs lounge of 70 Clifton, the sprawling house built by Fatima's great-grandfather, Shah Nawaz, in 1954. It reeked of history. Benazir paced these corridors during her detention under the military dictator Zia-ul- Haq in the 70s and 80s. In the garden in 1986, she married Asif Zardari, a polo-playing society lad. Later Benazir would relinquish the house to her brother Murtaza - Fatima's father - but was said still to covet her father Zulfikar's fine library downstairs, rumoured to hold an extensive collection of books about his hero, Napoleon.

That night the city was zinging with excitement. For the first time in years the streets were plastered with Benazir posters, and yahooing men on motorcycles zipped through the traffic, honking their tinny horns. But the gate of 70 Clifton had a lone, defiant poster of Murtaza, who died in a hail of police gunfire in still disputed circumstances in 1996. Since then Fatima and Ghinwa have held Benazir "morally responsible" for his death. The bitterness was palpable and public.

Over dinner, the pair were cheerless at the prospect of her aunt's imminent return. "If she didn't sign the death warrant, then who had the power to cover it up? She did," said Fatima indignantly. In support of her case she cited dead-end investigations, dodgy policemen and the mound of court papers and other testimony about her father's death that she had collected fastidiously in the office next door.

Ghinwa, with a shock of black curls and a supply of long, thin cigarettes, added: "The more there are delays, the more it incriminates those who encouraged those delays."

The origins of the feud stretch back to 1979 and the epochal event that traumatised Pakistan's political psyche and, ultimately, split the Bhutto clan. After the family patriarch Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a charismatic but flawed prime minister, was hanged by Zia, the military dictator who had deposed him two years earlier, his children scattered. Benazir stayed at home in Pakistan, enduring harsh imprisonment, looking after their ailing mother, Nusrat, and tending to the persecuted People's party that would rise from the ashes after Zia's death nine years later. But Zulfikar's sons, Murtaza and Shah Nawaz, took a different path.

Young, brash and angry, they started Al Zulfikar, or the Sword, an armed movement that sought to overthrow Zia. The revolutionaries shot to fame in 1981 with the hijacking of a Pakistan International Airlines jet that was forced to land in Kabul, where the Bhutto brothers lived in exile under the communist government. The precise details of what unfolded are still disputed, and Murtaza's family claims that he was not involved in the plot (but did act as a negotiator). But a young army officer aboard the plane was executed, some Bhutto supporters were released from jail and flown to Libya, and the brothers became A-list enemies of the powerful military establishment.

Along the way, the Bhutto brothers married two Afghan sisters, the daughters of an Afghan foreign affairs official. Murtaza had a daughter, Fatima, with his wife Fauzia, but they divorced three years later. The brothers flitted to Tripoli then to Europe, sheltering with sympathetic governments. But in 1985 exile took a dark turn when Shah Nawaz, the younger brother, was poisoned during a family holiday in the south of France. The Bhuttos blamed Zia, the CIA, or both.

Murtaza and Fatima found a home in Syria where they met Ghinwa Itoui, a Lebanese woman who had fled the war at home and was giving ballet classes in the basement of a Catholic church. Fatima was among her students. Murtaza and Ghinwa fell in love and married in 1989. At home, Murtaza faced serious allegations, but his daughter idolised him. "He was a wonderful father. We had so much fun," she said, recalling one day when he whipped her out of school for an impromptu excursion to the snow-capped Syrian mountains.

The split came in 1993 when Murtaza ended his 16-year-exile. Sparks flew with Benazir, then elected prime minister for the second time. Murtaza wanted to assume a senior role in her party, possibly the leadership - a demand in keeping with the patriarchal assumptions of the Sindh province's landlord classes. Benazir was having none of it. The rows multiplied, the rift grew deeper, and Murtaza formed a splinter party, which had little success.

G2: The broken bloodline: Fatima Bhutto is Benazir's niece. The resemblance is striking: the long nose, the headstrong personality, the burning rage about a fat....

It came to a tragic climax three years later, in 1996, when Murtaza, who used to travel with an entourage of armed bodyguards, got into a gunfight with some police, who were ostensibly trying to arrest him. His death rocked Pakistan - another Bhutto dead - and Benazir was said to be distraught. "Our paths were different but our blood is the same," she said. Her government fell six weeks later.

But the grief-stricken Fatima and her mother came to believe that Benazir or her husband, Zardari, had a hand in the killing. Stories circulated that Zardari had had a fight with Murtaza in which his moustache was shaved off - an immense insult. Benazir believed that the shooting had been orchestrated by her enemies. "Kill a Bhutto to get a Bhutto," she told friends. But as with so many political deaths in Pakistan, the truth has never emerged.

Fatima is at great pains to distance herself from her aunt. She did her masters at London's School of African and Oriental Studies, not Oxford, she points out, and instead of heading a debating society, she wrote her dissertation on the resistance movement to Zia. She published a book of poetry, *Whispers of the Desert*, at the precocious age of 15, followed in 2006 with a collection of stories about the 2005 earthquake that killed 73,000 people in Kashmir and North West Frontier Province. "The comparisons are largely cosmetic," she said. "In terms of political ideology, what we read, how we think, we are very different. I don't think that I'm anything like her."

Her weekly column touches on social and political issues. She won plaudits for her reports of the 2006 war in Lebanon - she was in the country when the fighting started - and keeps a poster of Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah on the door of her office. She yearns to visit Kabul, her birthplace, but her mother discouraged it on grounds of danger.

Benazir clearly loved her niece - her autobiography *Daughter of the East* has several warm references - but Fatima believes she tried to split the family apart. Benazir disparaged Ghinwa as a "Lebanese belly dancer", and six months after Murtaza's death persuaded Fatima's biological mother, Fauzia, to return to Karachi to seek parental custody. "It was just vulgar and crude," recalled Fatima. "I was in biology class in ninth grade. Then the principal came and said, 'There's a woman here who claims to be your mother.'" Fatima locked herself in the nurse's office as the press swarmed outside. A few years later, Fauzia launched an unsuccessful court bid for custody. She later returned to the US. "It sounds like a soap opera but unfortunately it was very real," said Fatima. "It felt very orchestrated and designed to humiliate."

But she was also keen to distance herself from her aunt's shadow. She didn't like her grievances being aired as a "catfight", she said. "As someone who cares about this country, I'm upset by what's happening. The fact that she's my aunt is just a footnote . . . In this country, politics has become entertainment. It's become sleaze, quick and tawdry, because we don't want to talk about things that really matter."

What mattered, she said, was her politics. As she spoke, Ghinwa lit her cigarettes with a box of personalised matches. "For the house of 70 Clifton," read the packet. The box had been printed by a supporter from Ghinwa's political vehicle, the Pakistan People's party - Shaheed Bhutto ("Bhutto the martyr"), which she kept alive after her husband's death. But the flame is barely alive. PPP-SB failed to win even one provincial seat at the last elections. After Benazir's return, and the suicide bombing that killed 140 people, I met Ghinwa again. The rift was raw as ever.

"I hoped that she wouldn't die, of course. I think it will be a bigger punishment for her to live. I feel terrible about all those people, and angry for exposing them like that," she told me.

In life, Benazir was touchy about allegations that she bore any responsibility for Murtaza's death. Instead, she blamed the powerful intelligence services for engineering the killing to split her family. If she was right, the strategy worked spectacularly well. Last month Fatima sent around a link to a YouTube clip of a television interview. It showed Benazir being aggressively questioned about Murtaza's death, breaking into tears and storming out of the studio. "Her reaction is amazing," wrote her estranged niece in an acerbic tone.

Then, two weeks ago, everything changed. In the wake of Benazir's death I found Ghinwa, Fatima and her 17-year-old brother, Zulfikar Ali junior, at the Bhutto ancestral home in Larkana, a 20-minute drive from Benazir's grave. The town centre was still smouldering after the violent reaction to the assassination, and a charred vehicle was parked

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outside the house. Fatima was shrouded in a black veil, her face was drawn, her cheeks were stained with tears. "It's been a real shock," she said.

Fatima and her mother had been on the election trail, canvassing door to door, when the news broke. She went home and wrote a bittersweet farewell to Benazir for the News. The prose was staccato, the sentiment raw. "My aunt and I had a complicated relationship. That is the sad truth," it started. She remembered fondly that they used to read children's books together, shared a passion for sugared chestnuts and were troubled by the same sort of ear infections. "In death, perhaps there is a moment to call for calm. To say enough . . . We cannot, and will not, take this madness any more."

Yesterday Fatima was back in Karachi, still receiving condolences. "My first thought was that it was just too familiar. It felt like we had been through this too many times before," she said by phone. "When I heard that she had been shot in the neck, I thought of my father. The bullet that killed him was also fired into his neck, though at point blank range. It seems like every 10 years we bury a Bhutto killed violently and way before their time."

She had not changed her mind about her father's death, she said. "Her government never adequately explained its role. But now that she's gone . . ." She paused. "We'll remember her differently."

But the Bhutto legacy is not at rest yet. Mumtaz Bhutto, the self-described head of the Bhutto clan, stirred the pot recently in suggesting that Fatima's brother, Zulfikar Ali, is the real heir to Benazir's title. But he is highly unlikely to take on the mantle, and Mumtaz's comments may be a product of his longstanding rivalry with Bilawal's father, Zardari. They are also a product of a bygone age - the succession of Bilawal and the bypassing of the bloodline proves that Pakistan opposition politics are about Benazir more than Bhutto.

Soon Fatima and her mother will return to Larkana, to continue the campaign for elections in five weeks' time. "I don't believe in birthright politics," she said. "I don't think, nor have I ever thought, that my name qualifies me for anything. I am political through my writing. I have no interest in parliamentary politics for now. I'm too young. There's a lot to learn" *

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Too close for comfort

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Highlight: As missiles land in Rahat, the Beduin capital of the South, a tempered condemnation of Hamas is prevalent among the country's Arabs

Body

The southern half of the Israeli Arab sector is a wide scattering of poor Beduin towns and tent camps; its "capital," Rahat, lies within rocket range of Gaza, a little over 20 km. away. In November the Islamic Movement's "southern faction" - which, unlike the northern faction, officially recognizes the State of Israel, but which is far from being a Zionist party - took over city hall from Kadima. On Sunday, the second day of Operation Cast Lead, the parking lot and courtyard of the local police department were crowded with extra cops who had been brought in as part of the nationwide security reinforcement in the Israeli Arab sector. In his office, Supt. Eyal Azulay, chief of Rahat police, said the city was maintaining its usual calm.

"There was a demonstration in the central square yesterday, about 400 people were there, but there were no disturbances, no incitement, no extremism," said Azulay. The only sign of violence anywhere in the region was one burning tire left at the entrance of a nearby Beduin village.

The evening before, several hours after IAF jets began bombing Gaza, 10 Rahat tribal sheikhs came to Azulay's office. "They agreed that no one had any interest in violence, and that they would make this clear to everyone in their tribes. One of them said, 'Eyal, if anyone here gives you any trouble, you tell us and we'll take care of it.'"

Azulay noted that many of Rahat's 52,000 residents serve in the IDF and police. He also pointed out that with a few marginal exceptions, Negev Beduin did not join in the Israeli Arab riots in October 2000, sparking off the second intifada. "There was one incident of stone-throwing at the police station here, and the Beduin themselves got control of the situation." Rahat does have a small "radical element," he said, "but the police and the Shin Bet are keeping an eye on them. On the whole, though, the Beduin have their own tribal interests, they have a different way of looking at things than the Arabs in the North. Rahat is a symbol of tolerance, of coexistence - of all those corny expressions, but it's true."

Theoretically, Rahat was taking part in the nationwide one-day solidarity commercial strike in the Arab sector, but while most shops around city hall closed up, many on the dusty, disheveled streets in the town's periphery stayed open. Unemployed men sitting on the steps of the tall mosques, or outside the little sandwich stands, or in the yards of garages all said the same things: They were pained by the televised images from Gaza, it was just as bad for Jewish children to be killed as Arab children and that, God willing, the fighting would end soon.

Azulay said he and the new mayor, Fayez Abu Sehiban, sent out that message in a joint interview on a Negev radio program. "The mayor said he was sorry for the people being killed in Gaza and for the people under fire in Sderot.

Too close for comfort

Remember, this is a man from the Islamic Movement." By telephone, Abu Sehiban, a former education official, told me that during the rally in Rahat's central square, "we expressed solidarity with the people of Gaza, and we also demanded an end to the Kassams." The main worry on the minds of Rahat residents is the fate of their family members living in Gaza, he said, adding that phone conversations with relatives there have stopped out of fear that the Gazans' phones are being tapped by Israel.

In the week before the war, said Abu Sehiban, Home Front Command installed air raid sirens in Rahat and instructed city officials on what to do in an emergency. This is a jerry-built town without public shelters. Still, the mayor was confident that "if, God forbid, any rockets fall on Rahat, we will be prepared." The next day, a rocket landed near an Ashkelon building site, killing a construction worker and wounding several others. The man killed was a Beduin from a Negev village, and three of the wounded are Beduin who live in Rahat. "Two of them are relatives of mine," said Abu Sehiban, who visited them in the hospital.

And on Tuesday, a rocket landed at the edge of the city, hitting only the ground, but this was an extremely close call. "The rocket landed about 50 meters from a tin shack. A woman was inside with her seven children," the mayor reported. Since the air raid sirens were installed only in the center of town, the woman and her children didn't hear the warning because they live too far out.

I asked him Tuesday night if this had altered his view. "Just the opposite," he said. "This is all the more reason why I say the Israeli government and Hamas should sit down and talk and end the fighting, end the bloodshed. I don't want to see any Beduin getting hurt, I don't want to see any Jews getting hurt and I don't want to see any Palestinians getting hurt."

For all the talk about Israeli Arab radicalization, the level of violence in the air, not to mention on the ground, has in fact gone down radically since those days of rage eight years ago.

Asked why, University of Haifa professor Sammy Smoocha, a leading authority on Israeli Arabs, said it was partly because "they remember the very harsh steps the state took in response to the events of October 2000, so they've become extremely cautious about getting involved in any kind of violence or lawbreaking. But also, Israeli Jews make a mistake when they think Israeli Arabs support Hamas in this war. Israeli Arabs are opposed to the Israeli attacks on Gaza, which they see as disproportionate. They identify with the Palestinian people, and they empathize with what the people in Gaza are going through. But that doesn't mean Israeli Arabs identify politically with Hamas or support their use of violence."

However, because of the strike in the Arab sector, along with the many solidarity-with-Gaza demonstrations, a few incidents of stone-throwing in Galilee, and the furious condemnations of Israel's actions in Gaza by Arab Knesset members, the country's 1.3 million Arab citizens are being watched with great suspicion. The fear among Jews is that Arabs may riot again like they did a couple of days after the outbreak of the intifada.

At that time, masses of Arabs, having watched televised scenes of Palestinian rioters being killed by troops on the Temple Mount, in the West Bank and in Gaza, poured out of their Galilee homes and blocked highways, threw rocks at police and started forest fires while according to the Orr Commission police reacted with often excessive, indiscriminate force. After nine days, 13 Arabs had been killed, along with one Jewish driver hit by a rock. Some police officers suffered minor injuries.

THE NINE-DAY riots began at the highway intersection at the entrance to Umm el-Fahm. Besides throwing rocks at police, the mobs there torched a gas station and an empty bus, then went into the downtown area and burned banks and government offices.

On Monday, day 3 of the IDF operation in Gaza, the TVs on the walls in the cafes and grocery stores in Umm el-Fahm all seemed to be tuned to Al-Jazeera. It was a cold, gray, rainy day, and countermen and customers were watching the scenes of Gazan corpses being carried away, of women screaming hysterically, of crowds running, of jets in the sky, of Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah preaching interminably.

Too close for comfort

"You go into every house in Umm el-Fahm, every Arab house in Israel, and you'll see people crying," said Abdel Basit Mahajna behind the counter of his grocery store. "Look what they're saying on the news: 330 dead, 1,450 injured," as Arabic text ran across the bottom of the screen.

On one of the alleys in this sprawling, jumbled hillside city, Ali Igbariya, a clothing store owner, stood talking with his assistant outside the entrance door he'd draped in black fabric bordered by little Palestinian flags. Black flags and Palestinian flags were a common sight; the day before, thousands of local residents had marched through these alleys in a show of solidarity with Gaza.

"I stay up until 2 a.m. watching the news," said Igbariya. "I'm an old man, I'm 55, and it tears me up. What must it be doing to my son? He's 16. That's what I'm worried about."

Umm el-Fahm, a city of more than 40,000 in the Arab "Triangle" east of Hadera, is the nerve center of Islamism in Israel. This is the capital of the Islamic Movement's "northern faction;" its charismatic founder, Sheikh Ra'ed Salah, preaches at the taller of two towering mosques at the city's summit, just above the narrow alley where Igbariya's clothing store stands.

"I've voted for the Islamic Movement five times. They do things to help the people. They're loyal," he says. "We're very proud of Sheikh Ra'ed," says his assistant, Muhammad Ahmed Muhammad.

The very name "Umm el-Fahm" fills Israeli Jews with fear; the city is seen as an outpost of Hamas, a place Jews shouldn't enter. And on the third day of the fighting, Igbariya told photographer Jonathan Bloom and myself: "I'm worried about you two wandering around here today. People are really in a horrible mood."

However, except for some idle adolescent boys, no one in the alleys and shops of Umm el-Fahm treated us - seemingly the only Jews in sight - with anything but courtesy. The shopkeepers and young men watching Al-Jazeera's coverage had no objection to being photographed. After the noon prayers inside the cavernous Abu Rubeida Mosque, where Salah preaches, two elderly men sitting inside welcomed us in and spoke with us as much as their limited Hebrew would allow. In the clinic downstairs, a devout Muslim nurse in robes and head scarf said the scenes from Gaza "were painful to watch," but she said it shyly, without a hint of accusation against us. Seeing a cut on Bloom's hand, she taped a bandage to it.

On another twisting alley near the top of Umm el-Fahm, a pickup flying a black flag moved slowly forward, and the driver agreed to stop and talk. "No, no, no, no, there's not going to be any trouble like there was back then [in October 2000]. People have more common sense," said Abed Abdel Fattah, a salesman and father of six. He said he put up the black flag after watching "all the scenes of children being killed. I couldn't stand it. But it hurts me the same way when I see innocent Jews killed by Palestinians." While he sympathized with the Gazans and opposed Israel's attacks, Fattah had no complaints about the country's treatment of him as an Arab citizen. "Israel gives me all democratic rights I can ask for," he said. "It just doesn't give them to the Palestinians."

The evening before, a crowd of local demonstrators had gathered at the highway junction down the hill at the entrance to the city, and some threw stones at police. "Those were just teenage boys," stresses Igbariya. "I grabbed hold of my son and told him not to go down there." Otherwise, the solidarity march by thousands in Umm el-Fahm went off without violence. "The mayor gave a speech and repeated 1,000 times that no one should fight with the police or soldiers," added Igbariya, referring to Mayor Khaled Hamdan, a member of the Islamic Movement's northern faction that has long ruled the city.

The October 2000 riots stand in stark contrast to the Arabs' reaction this week to the outbreak of the fighting in Gaza. Except for a few boys hanging around a grocery store who called out "yahoodi, yahoodi" when we walked in (and just as soon walked out), in Umm el-Fahm, the country's most radical Arab city, there wasn't so much as an unfriendly glance aimed in the direction of two Hebrew-speaking Jews carrying a notebook and a camera and asking people's opinions about the war.

Too close for comfort

Three days into the 2000 intifada, Umm el-Fahm and the entire north were under siege, off-limits, a closed police zone. Three days into the 2008 operation in Gaza, the highway junction at the entrance, after one brief episode of stone-throwing, was empty of rioters and police; the only action was the flow of traffic.

AS NIGHT was falling Monday, a couple of dozen riot- equipped police were passing the time in a muddy field at the side of the Arara junction not far from Umm el-Fahm. "Nothing's happened, we're just part of the security reinforcement," he said. "Just maintaining a presence."

In his grocery store in Umm el-Fahm, his TV tuned to Al-Jazeera, Abdel Basit Mahajna spoke of "watching little children lying there in pieces, their faces burned. Oh God. If Israel were only killing fighters, that would be one thing, but they're killing women and children, too." His voice was rising in anguish. The same change came over Ali Igbariya, the clothing store owner, as he went on about what they were seeing in Gaza. They agreed that the Kassams weren't right, either, that a Jewish victim was no less a tragedy than an Arab victim. Yet because of their ethnic identity, and because it is the Palestinians who are getting so much the worst of this war, the Israeli Arabs' hearts are with Gaza and their resentment of Israel is rising.

For now, that resentment is being channeled into peaceful protest. But if Israeli Arabs are still seeing shattering images from Gaza on their TV screens in the days and weeks to come, their emotions will put their common sense to the test. And then what?

"I don't know," said Mahajna. "This is a disaster. It can't go on."

And if it does?

"If it does, then I don't know what to tell you."

Graphic

8 photos: Rahat, now in missile range. The very name 'Umm el- Fahm' fills Israeli Jews with fear; the city is seen as an outpost of Hamas, a place Jews shouldn't enter. Men in Umm el-Fahm are glued to their televisions, not taking to the streets. Abed Abdel Fattah put up a black flag on his car after watching 'all the scenes of children being killed' in Gaza. Pastoral Rahat's silence was shattered Tuesday by a missile launched from Gaza. A black flag in front of Ali Igbariya's clothing store in Umm el-Fahm. Dozens of riot police at the ready at the Arara junction. So far they've mostly remained idle. (Credit: Jonathan Bloom)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Visions of the old settlers

Weekend Australian

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Byline: Rebecca Weisser

Body

The Rudd Government is failing to note in its vote against Israel that some Jewish settlements have a long history, writes Rebecca Weisser

TWENTY minutes out of Jerusalem, an armed guard and a cluster of outsized daisies mark the entrance to Neve Daniel, a Jewish settlement in the Palestinian West Bank. It's a graphic reminder of the threat of violence settlers live with and their determination to create a place that is safe to rear their children, even if the flowers are made of steel.

Israel has few friends left in the international community that are prepared to support the expansion of settlements beyond Israel's 1967 borders. Earlier this month at the UN Australia switched its vote, calling on Israel to stop establishing settlements in Palestinian territories. Only the US, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau and Micronesia still vote against such resolutions.

British Foreign Minister David Miliband, on a visit to Israel this month, also stepped up the pressure on Israel, saying that he would call for European Union tariffs to be imposed on West Bank goods produced by settlements and for labelling that could facilitate consumer boycotts of products.

But Israel President Shimon Peres pointed out that many of the labourers in the West Bank were Palestinians, and that if the products could not gain access because of tariff barriers, it would be Palestinian workers who would be laid off and suffer.

So settlements are a hot issue. But as I drive into Neve Daniel, a settlement in the Gush Etzion region, with Matthew Lawrence, a young New Zealand-born Israeli, his thoughts are elsewhere. "If only there weren't all these clouds, you could see what a magnificent view we have from here," he says.

Can it really be true that he has come to live in one of the most contested places on earth for the view? "Actually, it's a very good place to bring up children," Lawrence explains. This seems even more unlikely. Surely the West Bank is dangerous, at the very least compared with NZ? Lawrence disagrees.

"I let my children wander unsupervised in the street beyond where I live. I wouldn't do that in Jerusalem or even New Zealand. We're a community and we look out for each other."

Visions of the old settlers

In fact, compared with the level of scrutiny I have been subjected to boarding an El Al flight in Bangkok or even entering an Israeli shopping centre, I am taken aback at the seeming indifference of a part-time guard as we drive into the settlement.

“You get to know what you are looking for,” Lawrence explains. Community members, including him, take it in turns to guard the entry. “We can’t expect the Government to meet all our security needs so we organise ourselves to take turns. It’s like neighbourhood watch.” With guns.

As we drive through the streets of Gush Etzion, the appeal is apparent. The houses are attractive villas, not large compared with the McMansions of Australian suburbia but built of honey-white Jerusalem stone with red-tiled roofs. The schools, shops, services are all apparently very good. It is quiet and peaceful.

I am surprised to see a Palestinian car, identifiable by its green numberplate, parked in front of a house. Is that what the neighbourhood watch is on the lookout for? Not at all, Lawrence says. The car belongs to a builder who is well known to the community.

Indeed, it is one of the ironies of this hot-button issue that the settlements have all been built by Palestinians. Last week, Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad called on Israel to halt the expansion of settlements in the West Bank which he claims undermine the standing of the Palestinian Authority and Fatah, which controls it. But building settlements is good work and good money, and Palestinians do it regardless of what the Palestinian politicians say.

Shaul Goldstein, mayor of Gush Etzion, is fluent in Arabic and speaks warmly of his relations with Palestinians, many of whom have worked with him in his construction business. But he says many are pressured into not working with Israelis.

“I was organising a trial of how to respond in the event of a natural disaster, like an earthquake. I rang the Palestinian mayor and asked him if he would participate,” Goldstein says. “He said he would but he didn’t show up. When I asked him why, he said that he’d rang Ramallah (capital of the Palestinian Authority) and they told him not to.”

The persecution of moderate Palestinians who work with Israelis goes far beyond verbal pressure. Khaled Abu Toameh, an Israeli Arab who reports on Palestinian affairs for The Jerusalem Post, says that since the Palestinian Authority was created by the Oslo Accords in 1994, it has targeted and executed what it calls collaborators and continues to do so today.

On the day I meet Toameh, November 15, he says a military court in Bethlehem has sentenced a Palestinian to death for collaborating with Israeli forces, the seventh this year. “The Palestinian authorities are meant to work with the Israelis in maintaining law and order. Yet they sentence people to death for doing what they [the PA] do or are meant to do.”

Ziad Abu Zayyad, a former minister of state in the Palestinian Authority who lost his seat in Jerusalem to Hamas in the 2006 elections, sees the settlements as a fundamental barrier to peace. “A two-state solution is becoming less likely as long as Israel continues to build settlements in the West Bank,” he says.

“The members of the Palestinian Authority are accused of being traitors and collaborators for working with the Israelis but, instead of being partners for peace, they [the Israelis] build settlements.”

But Goldstein doesn’t see it that way. He regards Gush Etzion as a non-negotiable part of Israel. “Abraham and Isaac stayed here on their way to Mt Moriah. David shepherded his flock here. You can see Jordan to the east and the Mediterranean to the west.”

But more important, he points out, from a strategic point of view the settlements of Gush Etzion built atop the high hills between Bethlehem and Hebron overlook Jerusalem and would allow an enemy to fire directly on the city. No government that had to guarantee the safety of Jews in Jerusalem could allow them to be controlled by hostile forces.

Visions of the old settlers

But the battle for settlements isn't just for the high ground in terms of geography but also in morality, and when it comes to Gush Etzion Israel believes it has an unbeatable case. The modern settlements were built in 1927 by Jews from Yemen on lawfully purchased land. All four settlements were razed by the Jordanian legion during the 1948 war of independence, and 240 residents of the kibbutz were massacred and another 260 captured.

After the Six-Day War, descendants of the residents returned, as did others. Today there are more than 44,000 Israelis living in the Gush Etzion region.

Goldstein's view is that Jews have been living in Judea and Samaria, the area known as the West Bank, since biblical times. "The only time they have been prohibited from living there was under Jordanian rule from 1948 to 1967. But Jordan had no right to be there anyway," he says.

That doesn't cut ice with the Australian ambassador to Israel, James Larsen. When I visit his residence in Herzliya, he proudly offers Israeli and Australian wine, but stresses that none of the wine comes from Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Foreign Minister Stephen Smith, when asked to explain the change in the Australian Government's position on settlements, has said Australia is concerned that activity in the disputed settlements undermines confidence in negotiations to secure peace under a two-state solution. The Israeli Government's position is that it will negotiate on the status of settlements as part of a peace agreement. But Israel is convinced that the settlements are not the real obstacle to peace for a simple reason: there are no settlements in Gaza and there is no peace. Unilateral disengagement simply unleashed a barrage of rocket fire.

Jonathan Spyer, a senior research fellow at the Global Research in International Affairs Centre, points to a deeper problem. Iran is not only training and arming Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, he says, but also training and arming Hamas in Gaza. Both areas are beachheads for attacks. Hamas does not want peace with Israel and Iran would never permit it in any case. "Iran needs 'Hamastan' and 'Hezbollahstan' in its war against Israel, but to activate them whenever it wants to, they have to exist." From this perspective, Iran represents not just an existential threat to Israel but the real roadblock to peace.

On my last evening in Israel I dine with rabbi Ron Kronish, a founder and director the Inter-religious Co-ordinating Council in Israel, and with young Israeli and Palestinian women. All have become friends through participating in Kronish's group.

Of the two Jewish girls, one is going to do her military service. The second is applying to be a conscientious objector. A third girl, a Muslim who considers herself Palestinian although she travels on an Israeli passport, says she will live in Palestine when it is independent. Why doesn't she go to live there now? "I want to finish university." She blames the poor services in the Palestinian territories on the corrupt Palestinian leadership. "We just need to choose better leaders."

Indeed. Like her friend, the conscientious objector, who thinks Israel could survive without an army, this seems unlikely. But if there is hope for future, it is not just in the quixotic idealism these women express but in the fact they are all dining at the same table.

Rebecca Weisser travelled to Israel and the Palestinian territories with the assistance of the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council.

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An oasis of tolerance in Turkey; Secular Turks still fear an Islamic-rooted government

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Byline: Sabrina Tavernise, The New York Times

Dateline: KONYA, TURKEY

Body

In the not-too-distant past here in Turkey's religious heartland, women would not appear in public unless they were modestly dressed, a single woman was not able to rent an apartment on her own and the mayor proposed segregating city buses by sex.

Fears of such restrictions, inflamed by secularist politicians, have led hundreds of thousands of Turks to march in major cities in the past month.

A political party with a past in Islamic politics led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has tried to capture the country's highest secular post.

Once it succeeds, the secularists' argument goes, Turkey will be dragged back to an earlier era when Islam ran the state. (Another march drew a million people in Izmir on Sunday.)

But here in Konya, a leafy city on the plains of central Turkey, Erdogan's party has done no such thing. In the paradox of modern Turkey, the party here has had a moderating influence, helping to open a guarded society and make it more flexible.

Konya is still deeply attached to its faith. Mosques are spread thickly throughout the city. There are as many as in Istanbul, which has five times the population. But in a part of the world where religion and politics have been a poisonous mix and cultural norms are conservative regardless of religion, it is an oasis. Women here wear relatively revealing clothing, couples hold hands and bus segregation is a distant memory.

"We've been wearing the same dress for 80 years and it doesn't fit anymore," said Yoruk Kurtaran, who travels extensively in Turkey. "Things used to be black and white."

Now, he said, "there are a lot of greys."

The shift shows the evolution of Turkey's Islamic movement, which has matured under Erdogan, abandoning the restrictive practices of its predecessors and demonstrating to its observant constituents the benefits of belonging to the European Union.

An oasis of tolerance in Turkey ; Secular Turks still fear an Islamic-rooted government

It also follows a pattern occurring throughout Turkey, where the secularists who founded the state out of the Ottoman Empire's remains are now lagging behind religious Turks in efforts to modernize it.

But secular Turks, like those who took part in the recent protests, do not believe Erdogan and his allies have changed.

The mayor who proposed segregation, for example, is now part of Erdogan's party. The protesters argue that the party may say it wants more religious freedom for its constituents, for example allowing observant women to wear their head scarves in universities, but it has never laid out its vision for how to protect secular lifestyles.

Erdogan's party has been the most flexible and open of all parties that consider Islam an important part of Turkish society.

Its politics have so far been respectful of secular freedom in most cases.

But there are harder-line members who would like to see a more religious society and secular Turks fear that highly personal questions like their children's education and rights for unmarried women could be threatened.

In the country as a whole, religious Turks have felt like second-class citizens for generations, in part a legacy of Ataturk's radical, secular revolution in the early 20th century.

Now, elevated by a decade of economic growth, they are pressing for a bigger share of power.

In Konya, some of the change started from the top. In 2003, around the time Erdogan's party came to power, an irreverent ophthalmologist and a veterinarian with long hair were appointed to run Selcuk University in Konya. They immediately began challenging the sensibilities of this conservative city, organizing concerts and encouraging student clubs. Kursat Turgut, the veterinarian, who became vice rector, said he had been confronted by a group of students who went to his office and demanded he cancel a concert because they did not like the singer. He refused.

"Change is the most difficult thing," Turgut said, sitting in the rector's office, where paintings lined the walls. "It takes time to change a mentality."

The students were from a nationalist group with an Islamic tinge that for years had used scare tactics to enforce a strict moral code on campus.

When Umit, who did not want to give his last name, started at the university's veterinary school five years ago he was chastised by students from the group for cuddling with his girlfriend and, on another occasion, for wearing shorts.

"They thought they were protecting honour and morals," said Aliye Cetinkaya, a journalist who moved here 12 years ago for college. "If we crossed the line, there was a fight."

Turgut and the rector, Suleyman Okudan, shut down the group's activities. Now, four years later, there are more than 80 student clubs, students like Umit behave and dress any way they choose and Turgut's concerts, open to the public, draw large crowds.

"It is like a different century," Cetinkaya said.

She still faces limitations. When she covered a demonstration in Konya early last year against the Muhammad cartoons published in Denmark, stones and shoes were thrown at her because she was not wearing a scarf. But such incidents are rare and far outweighed by improvements. For example, there were only about 50 women in the two-year degree program she attended a decade ago. Now the number is above 1,000, she said.

The deeply rooted religiosity in Konya found public expression in politics in the late 1980s, when the city became one of the first in the country to elect a pro-Islamic party -- the Welfare Party of Necmettin Erbakan, the grandfather of the Turkish Islamic movement -- to run the city. Erbakan himself was elected to parliament from Konya.

An oasis of tolerance in Turkey ; Secular Turks still fear an Islamic-rooted government

The administration was restrictive. It was a Welfare Party mayor, Halil Urun, who proposed, unsuccessfully, segregating the buses in 1989. But the city kept electing the party until the late 1990s, when it was shut down by the state establishment for straying from secularism.

Then, in 2000, a young member of the banned party, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, began the Justice and Development Party. Erdogan had made a concerted effort to take Islam out of politics altogether -- aware that continuing to push religion would lead to the same end -- and it was unclear whether Konya voters would accept it.

They did. Of the 32 members of the city council, all but two are now members of Erdogan's party.

It was economics that convinced Ahmet Agirbasli, 57, a businessman who sells car parts and pasta. When he was younger, he did not shake hands with women. For years, he voted for Erbakan's party. He did not believe Turkey's future was with Europe, but he changed his mind after Erdogan's party began reforms with the intention of joining the EU and his business began to grow.

"Erbakan didn't have an open mind," Agirbasli said, eating a club sandwich in a hotel restaurant. "He didn't believe the country needed links with the rest of the world." Now he sells macaroni to 50 countries. Five years ago, he sold to only 10. Akif Emre, a columnist at Yeni Safak, a conservative newspaper in Istanbul, argues that Erdogan has helped to bridge the gap between Turkey's religious heartland and urban, secular Turks.

"They really accept secularism," he said of Erdogan and his allies. "They are changing the mentality. Conservative people changed their lifestyle toward a more secular way."

Religious Turks, for their part, still harbour an unspoken wariness of the state. New civil organizations are more focused on building mosques than engaging in public debate and people scrupulously avoid talking about politics.

Religious extremists have been found on the fringes. In January the authorities arrested a man they said was the leader of al-Qaeda in Turkey and in 2000 a pile of bodies that showed signs of torture was found buried under a villa rented by a homegrown Islamist group called Hezbollah.

"Konya is one of the main hubs of traditional and conservative, anti-Ankara countryside," said Ersin Kalaycioglu, a professor of political science at Isik University in Istanbul. "It has a structure that takes religion very seriously and formulates social life around it."

Rahmi Bastoklu, the leader in Konya of the secularist Republican People's Party and the only one of the Konya district's 16 members of parliament who is not from Erdogan's party, put it bluntly: "People have to leave Konya to enjoy themselves."

But an unspoken understanding between Konya's religious Turks and the secular state is in place, in which the mosques are left alone, but religious Turks do not press too many demands on the state. The balance is often held steady by Erdogan's party.

Still, pushing too hard against the secular establishment might mean the loss of recent gains. "It's not a useful thing to talk about," said Ilhan Cumrali, 36, sitting in his clothing store among racks of floor-length skirts. "We are trying to find the right path. If we do it too aggressively, there will be a negative reaction."

Graphic

Photo: Murad Sezer, the Associated Press , This girl was among a million secularists who demonstrated last Sunday.; Photo: Reuters , A million people marched in Izmir Sunday in favour of secularism over an Islamic-rooted government ahead of general elections July 22.

An oasis of tolerance in Turkey ; Secular Turks still fear an Islamic-rooted government

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End of Document

Delights amid the dangers; Beirut's hardy people buzz with a lust for life, even though the city bears the scars from decades of strife

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Body

"We Lebanese are excellent drivers," says our guide for the night, 21-year-old student Adonis.

"If not, we'd be dead," adds her friend Diane, 20. "The only rule is not to hit the other cars."

Adonis is weaving her bulky, old-style Mercedes through Beirut's insane traffic. Dodging past both clapped-out cars and the latest Porsche Cayennes or even army jeeps, I feel at ease.

It's a long way from the apprehension and anxiety I felt while sitting on the incoming flight just a few days ago. Of course, I'd heard that Lebanon was the Switzerland of the Middle East, that its natural and historical assets were making it a new "must-do" for tourists, but you can't undo decades of news footage.

Tonight, Adonis and Diane are showing us their beloved Beirut, a buzzing city where extremes cohabit and party.

Having met for drinks at the lively Kahwat al ezez (the glass coffee shop), we chat for a while before setting out.

Have we tasted the food? the young women ask.

Of course. I proudly list everything I've tried, from labenah, the creamy white cheese, to the garlic-intense shawarma wraps. And, yes, I'm loving it.

My partner has embraced local fare enthusiastically, even the raw liver. I draw the line at kibbeh naye (raw lamb), which was rather like a beef tartare. My favourite has to be the baba ghanouche eggplant caviar, and I've become addicted to the deliciously sweet pastries: layers of phyllo laden with pistachio nuts, honey and other delights.

The two women order "Mexican" beer, a popular cocktail: beer with salt and lime.

Outside, the heat knocks you sideways, but it's the humidity that really gets you. Although it's still early and the street is quiet, I am assured that later the Gemayze area will be "crazy busy."

We hop into Adonis' car and she navigates around the Hezbollah's tented camp in the centre of town. It's unavoidable. The girls explain that Solidiere, the entirely renovated downtown Beirut area, has been stifled by the "strike," a euphemism used for the encampment. The protest has turned what was briefly home to the city's

Delights amid the dangers Beirut's hardy people buzz with a lust for life, even though the city bears the scars from decades of strife

sleekest shops, banks and embassies into a ghost town. Today, it's just a congregation of checkpoints, barbed wire and concrete breeze blocks.

We carry on to Al Hamra, a Muslim area with bustling pavements, flashing neons and Starbucks. Adonis plunges into the hottest topic of all: religion.

"It's not just about Muslims and Christians," she says. "There are 17 separate confessions, all living side by side." As a Christian Maronite, she's happy to venture into majority Muslim areas, but knows people who won't. As they talk politics, the girls suddenly burst into Arabic, bickering, before apologizing profusely for switching languages and leaving us out.

We cruise down the Corniche on the coast, where the air is heavy with aromas from a corn-on-the cob stall, exhausts and the sweet smoke from the narghile pipes.

On the way back, our guides want to show us the working-class neighbourhood of Basta. Sunnis and Shiites live side by side here, but tensions are constant. As the car slows, there's a commotion up ahead. The air is electric and dozens of young men swarm over the street rushing away from something. Although I'm not quite comfortable, having seen armed soldiers and tanks all day, I'm getting used to the edgy atmosphere.

Back in Achrafieh, we stop at our hotel. The four-storey Albergo town house is a beautiful mix of French, Lebanese, Italian and Ottoman styles, refurbished by interior designing legend Jacques Garcia.

The duty manager is adamant we must stop by Rue Monnot. With traffic getting increasingly chaotic, we venture out on foot. The tiny street in the old French Quarter is a hive of activity. Bars like Pacifico, Lila Brown and Aqua are all heaving. It's the ideal spot to people-watch and quench our raging thirst. The air is Beirut balmy: loaded with heat and chatter from locals and expats alike. Another 15 minutes' walk and we are back in Gemayze where the traffic is gridlocked and the crowds have materialized. Beirut's beautiful people are out in droves.

Diane accounts for the locals' lust for life by saying that when she hid throughout the bombings in 2006, she swore to herself that as soon as it was over she would go out and make the most of everything. And so they do.

The Lebanese nightlife is flashy, showy and in your face. The young women are done up to the nines: spray-on jeans, tiny tops, plenty of jewellery, makeup and heels.

At Bar Louie on Rue Gouraud, we enter a cryptlike restaurant where '80s favourites blare out so loudly that conversation is impossible. Tucking into seafood tapas, we are spoiled with huge grilled shrimps with a fantastic creamy sauce, fresh salmon ceviche and octopus.

The restaurant's clientele is young, sleek and into singing along with George Michael or Depeche Mode.

The atmosphere is euphoric and slightly surreal.

According to Adonis, growing up in a war zone means no incentive to live for tomorrow, or to save.

It's all about carpe diem: spend, party and live for today.

Although it's all said with a smile, the party-loving girls who act like they don't have a care in the world are deadly serious. Wise beyond their years, they are admirably pragmatic.

"People always worry about something," Adonis says. "For us it's whether we're going to live, whether there's another bombing. Maybe elsewhere you worry about getting a job, or about your personal life. Only here it's a little more serious."

Defiant Diane adds that nothing can break their spirit.

Delights amid the dangers Beirut's hardy people buzz with a lust for life, even though the city bears the scars from decades of strife

"This is like the calm before the storm or after the storm. First, you wait, then you get used to it, then you just don't care. It's almost like you are waiting for it to happen, like 'come on! What's going to happen will happen." All said with a smile.

Walking through central Beirut, it's impossible to miss the city's scars, whether it's a rainbow of bullet holes in the ochre plaster, shattered windows or simply a gaping hole in a block where an entire building disappeared. Rebuild and forget? No way. Adonis insists: "We have to leave those buildings there so we don't forget what we did to our own country."

Next stop is the ultra-hip Central Bar. A round lift takes you up into the "tube bar," which appears to be an oversized air duct dropped on top of a building with retractable windows.

It's worth coming for the view alone, stretching across the city over the mosque and to the twinkling harbour. The margaritas are pretty good, too.

Another bar, more beautiful people, more loud music and more people living it up. This city has definitely got two distinct personalities: daytime, with its war-zone feel, and night, with its glamour easily putting New York or Paris to shame.

In the early hours, we call it a night and head back to the Albergo, a haven of peace in this supercharged city. Outside, Beirut is wide awake, a never-ending parade of snazzy cars honking bumper to bumper, their zealous owners singing and celebrating.

What was it Adonis had said? "I don't like boring places. Beirut's a bit crazy but this is really living."

As I fall asleep, I wonder if the girls' driving analysis applies to life here. "It's very chaotic," they said, laughing. "Sometimes, you just have to close your eyes."

Rowena Carr-Allinson is a freelance writer based in London, England. Her visit was subsidized by Czech Airlines (czechairlines.com).

Graphic

mowgli frere photos ap photo ap photo A rock band performs in one of Beirut's popular clubs, top, and revellers pack a sidewalk cafe in the city's downtown area. Beirut's nightlife is vibrant, even though political and religious tensions still simmer. ap photo Young men smoke water pipes along the Corniche, one of Beirut's landmarks MIDEAST FIGHTING LIVING IN WAR##KEVORK DJANSEZIAN#ASSOCIATED PRESS#AP#Lebanese men smoke a tobacco water bottle on the famous Corniche of Beirut, Lebanon, Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2006. It was hard to tell that a war was on for a visitor strolling down the city's famed Hamra Street, a shopping thoroughfare near the American University of Beirut that is known to travelers across the Middle East. (AP Photo Kevork Djansezian) ap photo Young men smoke water pipes along Beirut's famous waterfront Corniche, above. The city's abundance of cultural and historical landmarks coexist alongside modern shopping and entertainment centres.ap photo A rock band performs in one of Beirut's popular clubs, top, and revellers pack a sidewalk cafe in the city's downtown area. Beirut's nightlife is vibrant, even though political and religious tensions still simmer.ap photo Young men smoke water pipes along the Corniche, one of Beirut's landmarks MIDEAST FIGHTING LIVING IN WAR##KEVORK DJANSEZIAN#ASSOCIATED PRESS#AP#Lebanese men smoke a tobacco water bottle on the famous Corniche of Beirut, Lebanon, Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2006. It was hard to tell that a war was on for a visitor strolling down the city's famed Hamra Street, a shopping thoroughfare near the American University of Beirut that is known to travelers across the Middle East. (AP Photo Kevork Djansezian)

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