

Date and Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 4:31:00 PM EEST

Job Number: 223447056

Documents (100)

1. [*Syracuse guard has feet on court, heart in Israel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

2. [*Bloggers in Tel Aviv 'Bubble' sidestep politics and focus on life and love*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

3. [*Gaza crisis: Refuseniks: 'We are creating suicide bombers from the sons of the dead'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

4. [*Around the world*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

5. [*INSIDE THE TIMES: March 18, 2009*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

6. [*What happened in Iran was not an election*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

7. [*Kasrils could take a leaf out of Obama's book in Middle East analysis*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

8. [*Praise from Muslims tempered by caution*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

9. [*Hopes surge with Iraq ballot*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

10. [*Abbas-backed mobile network gets US aid earmarked for Palestinian farmers*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

11. [Features - Let the bombs fall](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

12. [Tribal battles and robot warfare U.S. drone strikes may be cementing Pakistani militancy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

13. [Drone strikes may work against U.S. in Pakistan Attacks can bolster Taliban, experts say](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

14. [Radically new strategy needed for deeply troubled region](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

15. [A Yom Kippur for the Left](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

16. [*Comment*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

17. [*Why everyone wants to buy British*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

18. [*The BBC is too impartial to suffering*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

19. [*Israeli refuseniks determined to resist the war*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

20. [*Will the Colombians silently move to the victor?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

21. [*Facebook users stir up political debate online*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

22. [Time to dispel media untruths about Palestine](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

23. [Beirutis put little faith in protest as means of ending Israeli war on Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

24. [Zuma](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

25. [Free elect ions in Iran 4 Don't make me laugh LEADER](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

26. [Free elect ions in Iran 4 Don't make me laugh LEADER](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

27. [*The coming storm: Obama and American Jewry*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

28. [*In Iran , a Real Race, and Talk of a Sea Change*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

29. [*Free elect ions in Iran 4 Don't make me laugh LEADER*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

30. [*New female judge transforms Islamic court Khoulood el-Faqeeh is part Judge Judy , part Sunday School teacher.*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

31. [*Bridging the Gulf International politics The West claims that it wants democracy in the Middle East, but is it ready for the consequences?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

32. [Amos Oz, Approaching 70, Sees Israel With a Bird's-Eye View](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

33. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

34. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

35. [The double vision of Amos Oz Israeli author separates his roles as storyteller and as political essayist](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

36. [Israelis would trust NATO peacekeepers in West Bank, want to join EU, says poll. Survey shows Obama most admired foreign leader, with 74% approval](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

37. [LETTERS VIEWPOINT](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

38. [World DIGEST](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

39. [Jewish blood libels](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

40. [Canada's Mideast conflict Minister's threat crosses the line into wedge politics](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

41. [Battling mistrust in the growing shadow of Iran DIPLOMACY](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type

Narrowed by

News

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

42. [*Siniora: Lebanon benefits from Arab reconciliation*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

43. [*LETTERS EDITORIAL*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

44. [*From Iran 's hard-liners, tough talk - but pragmatism as well*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

45. [*Job-offer spam gets makeover; Tech talk*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

46. [*A fair point: everyone is equal in their suffering during wartime Robert Fisk's World*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

47. [Tough-talking Lieberman offers southern comfort on successful road trip. From Nirim to Ofakim , Israel Beiteinu leader draws crowds](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

48. [Storm clouds gather over Dubai debacle. Andy Ram's visa concern for lucrative event escalates volatile situation facing ATP, WTA](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

49. [Deceived bride struggles for justice](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

50. [Sense of defeat](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

51. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

52. [Saturday: Interview: 'I'm Cameron's warm-up act': Sayeeda Warsi - a working-class Muslim single mother - explains why the government's attitude to minorities makes her proud to be a Tory](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

53. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

54. [Turning rockets into roses](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

55. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

56. ['I was the resident skeptic'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

57. [In Reversal, Netanyahu Backs Palestinian State, With Caveats](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

58. [Haggling over the price](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

59. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

60. [The world was wrong to oppose a military solution in Sri Lanka](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

61. [A new cold war in the Mid-East](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

62. [MOST TEENAGE PREGNANCIES NOW END WITH AN ABORTION](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

63. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

64. [Everyone should apologise during papal visit](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

65. [Tehran is terrified: America is being friendly Iran 's hardline leadership has been knocked sideways by Barack Obama's conciliatory tone. But how will it affect the election?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

66. [Israel still looks good, warts and all](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

67. [Let's not die for timid and misguided political correctness](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

68. [*The Downside of Letting Robots Do the Bombing*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

69. [*Accounts of Gaza Killings Raise Furor in Israel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

70. [*Working hard to deserve better*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

71. [*Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

72. [*Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type

Narrowed by

News

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

73. [Tzipi's Shavit problem](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

74. [Can social networking turn disaffected young Egyptians into a force for democratic change?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

75. [Thalif Deen interviews Philly's Bennis, Institute for Policy Studies Q&A: Israel May Escape War Crimes Charges](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

76. [Other Voices: The Goal Should Be Telling the Truth](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

77. [Bye bye 'Big Brother,' hello Yonit Levy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

78. [*From Tripoli to Damascus*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

79. [*Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

80. [*Obama reaches out to the Islamic world*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

81. [*Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

82. [*US not tied to 'old formulas,' Clinton tells Netanyahu. Secretary of state focuses on Iranian threat * Abbas presses for Israel to accept two-state solution and stop settlement building*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

83. [THE BUZZ: FLORIDA POLITICS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

84. [Hail to the chief](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

85. [When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews, said Martin Luther King](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

87. [Washington's approach to the rest of the world .S.: Clinton Stresses 'Cooperative Engagement', 'Smart Power'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

88. [As Obama offers Muslims 'a new beginning,' Israel gives a wary pledge to play its part. US president, in landmark Cairo speech, hails ties to Israel but says Palestinian plight 'intolerable,' demands 'stop to settlements,' says Iran has right to peaceful nuclear power](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

89. [Feature - From 21st century back to the 19th Obama's speech in Cairo last week suggested a new approach to global politics, says Uri Avnery, but Israel is still stuck in the past](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

90. [Obama speech falls short of Muslim expectations](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

91. [Spying trouble](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

92. [Obama cites Quran to reach Muslims from Egypt](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

93. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

94. [ISLAM UNCOVERED After 9/11, Magnum photographer Abbas began a seven-year journey around Islamic countries. As these striking images show, he found the spread of a new orthodoxy, from African ports to the beaches of Asia](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

95. [Deputy takes it all in her stride Gillard at ease in the hot seat](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

96. [Can Games Save the News?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

97. [Can Obama turn rhetoric into the reality of peace with the Muslim world? The President's bridge-building is welcome. But it will take more than words to erase the damage done by his predecessor, argues Patrick Cockburn](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

98. ['We will align our policies with those who pursue peace'. President Obama calls for open dialogue and honesty as he seeks 'new beginning' with Muslim world](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

99. [Sex, lies and red tape](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

100. [BRITAIN BARS 'RACE HATE' EXTREMIST](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 14, 2009 to Jun 30, 2009

Syracuse guard has feet on court, heart in Israel

University Wire

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 Daily Orange via U-Wire

Length: 830 words

Byline: By Zach Schonbrun, Daily Orange; **SOURCE:** Syracuse

Dateline: SYRACUSE, N.Y.

Body

As a young girl growing up in Israel, there were always certain things that tested Syracuse's sophomore guard Marisa Gobuty's resiliency - like when security guards were posted on the hotel floor where her youth basketball team slept. Or when she'd have to turn her "Israel" jersey inside out before going outdoors. Or when the team bus would be checked and rechecked before the girls could board.

"In Israel, there's an atmosphere that you have to just live your life," she says.

Which is why there was not so much shock on Dec. 28, when her parents called her to say Israel had attacked Gaza, only some feelings of helplessness and a quick shuffle to her computer, where she sent out countless emails to friends and acquaintances from home. Many were preparing for military deployment; some had Facebook statuses which already read "in Gaza."

There was also the realization that if Gobuty was not a sophomore guard for the Syracuse women's basketball team, she'd be over there fighting, too.

If basketball can get kids out of ghettos and slums, it can also get them out of the line of fire. So today Gobuty's trigger finger is only aimed at a rim; her focus is on hoops, not Hamas.

It was a scholarship to Syracuse that permitted her deferment - or, rather, postponement, for she will still likely have to serve in the Israeli military once she graduates. (In Israel, every citizen is required by law to serve for two years.) The thing is, though, that Gobuty said even now she would gladly trade uniforms: Her love for her country and her support for Israel hasn't been tempered by 5,000 miles, or the current crisis.

"It's something that means a lot to me and I'm very passionate about," Gobuty said. "It's home, and if everybody else has to pay their dues, so do I."

Instead, she's here as a vocal supporter, an armchair witness and a college sophomore with a Blackberry never far from reach. She drifts to CNN.com or the Jerusalem Post Web site constantly, longing for updates, waiting for emailed responses from friends who haven't answered. Since the day fighting broke out, the conflict hasn't strayed far from her thoughts.

It's a battle with split emotions, of course, because one hour she's in the Carrier Dome shooting basketballs in practice, the next she's in Schine Student Center sitting at a support table for Hillel. She was at last night's game vs. Seton Hall and played 11 minutes, but perhaps her mind drifted off to the other side of the world, or the other side of town, where the Jewish Community Center was holding a rally at the same time.

Syracuse guard has feet on court, heart in Israel

She insists it hasn't been a distraction - a heavy heart hasn't weighed down her follow-through - and that basketball has in fact been somewhat therapeutic.

"It puts everything into perspective more," Gobuty said. "It really makes me understand I have a great opportunity, and at the end of the day, I get to be on this court and play basketball every night and my friends are dealing with things that are a lot more serious - life or death situations."

Israel is her home, Gobuty says, a statement that should not be taken lightly, considering she was born in Canada, lived in California, attended high school in Florida, and now goes to SU. But her family moved to Herzliya, Israel, when she was nine. She didn't know Hebrew. She didn't know anybody. She did know she wanted to go into the army. And play for the national basketball team.

In a few years she was the starting point guard for the Under-16 Israeli national team, Bnei Herzliya, with security guards detailing every trip and precautions taken before every step.

A week ago, an Israeli men's basketball team, Bnei Hasharon, was forced to cancel a game in Turkey as a mass of protesters swarmed the court, prompting riot police to intervene.

"That team plays five minutes from my house," Gobuty said.

So now she knows Hebrew, she knows countless Israelis, and she knows a little something about adversity, and a packed XL Center - where Syracuse will be playing when it travels to Connecticut on Saturday - won't do much to make her sweat. Does crowd noise make the anxiousness go away?

Not when gunfire is the persistent ringing in her head. Not when the e-mail inbox still waits for responses from dear friends. Gobuty knows if she can't help Israel physically, she can support it emotionally. She's not afraid to wear her Star of David on her sleeve.

"I'm out there, I'm pro-Israel, I'm Jewish, and I'm not shy about it," Gobuty said. "Sometimes it concerns me a little bit. But I think, after living in Israel, that's not something that I really think about. ...After everything they've been through, you don't stop living your life. I think that's the attitude I've developed."

She has "Syracuse" across her chest now, but there's never been a doubt what team her heart belongs to. This summer she plans to play for the Israeli national team again: She'll wear a uniform on a court, not a battlefield, with "Israel" facing right side out.

(C) 2008 Daily Orange via UWIRE

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

Bloggers in Tel Aviv 'Bubble' sidestep politics and focus on life and love

Guardian.com

February 6, 2009

Copyright 2009 Guardian Unlimited (© Guardian Newspapers Limited) All rights reserved

theguardian

Length: 831 words

Highlight: Internet-savvy weary of political crises, war and corruption scandals

Body

One of Israel's most famous bloggers never writes about politics. "It bores me," explains Liat Bar-On, a 36-year-old journalist. "I consider myself a leftist and I was against the Gaza war, but I don't want to write about the violence and the corruption and the crappy reality around me. I prefer to bury my head in the sand and ignore it all."

Bar-On's blog, Doda Malka (Auntie Malka), is about "life and relationships - that is, about my relationships." She channels her considerable writing talents into musings about topics that range from why she gets irritated with friends who send long text messages to her mobile phone, to whether or not she would like to become a single mother via artificial insemination.

"If I lived in the United States and were as famous there as I am here," she observes, "I'd have between 3 and 4 million readers each day." But Israel is a small country of less than 7 million, so Doda Malka attracts about 500 readers per day. Which is why, Bar-On points out, no Hebrew-language blogger is ever going to make money from banner adverts. Besides, she adds, bloggers are not influential in Israel. Basically, they are just talking among themselves.

This sentiment is echoed in a recent comment posted on Yohay E's blog, Things. After announcing that he had decided, after much deliberation, to vote Hadash, Yohay explains why he decided against the Green Movement-Meimad. He adds that, given the latter party's popularity in the blogosphere, he is certain it will win enough votes to sit in Knesset. A commenter, Suedehead, responds, I am prepared to bet any amount of money that the Green Movement-Meimad will not even come close to winning the minimum required number of votes [to sit in the Knesset]. There is a bubble of bloggers who think they have influence over the public, but in fact they're just creating a buzz among themselves.

In Israel people often accuse those with whom they disagree of living in a bubble that is detached from reality. This is particularly true of those who love to sneer at Tel Aviv - Israel's dynamic, 24-hour capital of culture, finance and nightlife.

Tel Avivians are described as navel gazers, draft dodgers and leftists who spend all their time sitting in cafes, sipping espressos, apathetic or indifferent to what goes on in the rest of the country.

By 2006 the nickname had become so firmly attached to Tel Aviv, that Gal Uchovsky and Eytan Fox made a film called The Bubble. In it, they explore the idea that Tel Aviv is detached from the rest of the country, by observing

Bloggers in Tel Aviv 'Bubble' sidestep politics and focus on life and love

the conflict through the eyes of a group of hip young friends - gay, straight, female and Palestinian - living on the city's fabled Sheinkin Street.

During the Gaza offensive some students at an academic college in Sderot created a YouTube clip that simulated Tel Aviv under attack from Hamas rocket fire. The idea, they said, was to "wake up apathetic -people in Tel Aviv".

In response, journalist Yair Lapid wrote an angry column for Ynet, Despite all the admiration I hold for all those studying in the south these days, this does not grant them a licence to be nasty. A total of 22 Tel Avivians were killed in one terror attack, on Tel Aviv's Route 5 bus - more than all those killed by Qassams in the past four years - yet I don't remember us saying that it makes our blood redder Lapid goes on to list the many suicide bombings that took place in Tel Aviv over the past years not to mention the Iraqi Scuds of the first Gulf war.

The truth is that all of Israel has been under attack at one point or another over the past few years. Tel Aviv is different not because it escaped political violence, but because it remained a liberal, dynamic, creative city even during the worst days of the second intifada when suicide bombings were a daily occurrence.

But it is undeniable that most people eschew political discussions these days - mostly out of accumulated weariness and cynicism. After eight years of unending violence, political crises and government corruption scandals, this attitude is easy to understand. But it is a worry for a democratic society. In the last elections, just over 52% of eligible voters arrived at the polling stations even though election day is a national holiday.

And so, Israelis have turned inward - to family and nesting at home. Many of my friends boast they have stopped reading newspapers and rarely watch television news.

The West Bank and Gaza are out of sight, out of mind. Palestinians from the occupied territories do not come to Israel, and Israelis, who used to shop and eat in the West Bank and Gaza, stopped visiting when the second intifada began in 2000. I am one of the few Israelis who does visit the West Bank quite regularly, but I no longer discuss with my friends what I see there.

I stopped last year when a friend, over cappuccinos at a fashionable neighbourhood cafe, said: "I know it's bad there, but I feel helpless. And I have to live my life. So I really don't want to hear the details."

Load-Date: February 6, 2009

Gaza crisis: Refuseniks: 'We are creating suicide bombers from the sons of the dead'

The Guardian - Final Edition

January 17, 2009 Saturday

Copyright 2009 Guardian Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

theguardian

Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 20

Length: 888 words

Byline: Chris McGreal, Tel Aviv

Body

The call came at 11pm on a Saturday. Yitzchak Ben Mocha's mobile flashed up "unidentified number" but he knew who it was. A recorded voice ordered him to report for duty at eight the next morning. As he packed his uniform he wondered if he was heading to prison. The 25-year-old paratrooper was about to tell his commanders that not only would he refuse to join Israel's war in Gaza but would not serve in any capacity that helped perpetuate the conflict.

He reported for duty and was ordered to erect tents for combat soldiers.

"I told my officer, I am not going to do this. The next morning I was sent home. They told me they'd call me again if there was need. They have not called yet. In the past the army used to put refuseniks in jail for weeks. When they were released, sometimes they would be arrested again and this would go on for months.

"But now it seems the army doesn't want to admit publicly there are refuseniks. (It) is embarrassed. It would go against the image of the whole army and country united behind this war."

The Israeli military has told the press there is so much support for the assault on Gaza that more soldiers have turned up to fight than have been called up for what the local media is characterising as a "righteous war". Ben Mocha says that obscures the increasing number of Israeli men of fighting age, almost all of whom are military reservists, who are refusing to serve the occupation.

One resisters' organisation, Courage to Refuse, published a newspaper advert condemning the killing of hundreds of Palestinian civilians and calling on soldiers to refuse to fight in Gaza. "The brutal, unprecedented violence in Gaza is shocking. The false hope that this kind of violence will bring security to Israelis is all the more dangerous. We cannot stand aside while hundreds of civilians are being butchered by the IDF (Israel Defence Force)," it said.

But it is not clear how many have refused to go to Gaza, because the army is sending people home, quietly. So far, only one reservist has been jailed for refusing to fight. No'em Levna, a first lieutenant in the Israeli army, was sent to a military prison for 14 days. "Killing innocent civilians cannot be justified," he said. "Nothing justifies this kind of killing. It is Israeli arrogance based on logic. It's saying, 'if we hit more, everything will be okay'. But the hatred and anger we are planting in Gaza will rebound on us."

Gaza crisis: Refuseniks: 'We are creating suicide bombers from the sons of the dead'

Ben Mocha is hardly a pacifist or anti-Israeli. He grew up in a Jewish orthodox family, attended a religious school, and served full-time in one of Israel's elite combat parachute units.

He says he joined the Israeli army believing he would be fighting "terror organisations". He found himself suppressing Palestinian aspirations for freedom and putting down protests of Palestinian farmers "against the incontinent theft of their lands". He also saw abuses, such as Israeli troops sending Palestinian women and children into houses to ensure they were not booby-trapped, and using civilians as human shields.

"I am not a pacifist. I recognise the necessity of Israel to have a strong defensive army but I'm no longer going to play a part in 40 years of occupation. I told the army I will report for training so that I can always be ready to defend Israel, but attacking Gaza and perpetuating occupation is not defending Israel."

That is not a popular view in a country where worship of the military begins in school and many political leaders are former generals. But the war is likely to strengthen the resisters once Israelis can reflect on the scale of the killing.

In 2003, the army sent Yoni Ben Artzi to prison for 18 months for declaring himself a conscientious objector. Ben Artzi, the nephew of Binyamin Netanyahu, the former prime minister favoured to return to power in the next general election, was called before a "conscience committee", made up just of military officers. It said he was not a pacifist - on the remarkable grounds that his persistent resistance to the army was evidence of the qualities of a soldier.

He spent longer in jail than any other refusenik, but recently the military has preferred to pretend simply that dissenters don't exist - as hundreds of soldiers and reservists signed petitions refusing to enforce the occupation.

The government was particularly embarrassed when 27 pilots said they would no longer carry out killings of Palestinian leaders in Gaza, and when a group of elite commandos refused to serve in the occupied territories.

Still that remains a minority view. "Some of my comrades from the army don't like what I'm thinking. Some said they don't agree but they support my right to say it. But now, with the war, they say I'm giving my unit a bad reputation," said Ben Mocha.

He is disturbed that most of the Israeli public and much of the media is blind to the fact that hundreds of Palestinians have been cut to pieces by Israeli fire power. "In the long run, it's not a war of defence. We are creating a thousand suicide bombers for the future from the brothers of the dead, the sons of the dead . . . in the long term, we are creating more terror. You can't separate the war in Gaza from the fact that the Palestinian nation is under occupation for more than 40 years. I'm not justifying Hamas firing rockets but we Israelis should first look at what we are doing."

Load-Date: January 17, 2009

Around the world

Townsville Bulletin (Australia)

January 15, 2009 Thursday

1 - Edition

Copyright 2009 Nationwide News Pty Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 15

Length: 897 words

Body

SAN FRANCISCO: A man in California has been arrested for arranging to sell his 14-year-old daughter for \$US16,000 (\$A23,577.95), 100 crates of beer and several cases of meat, police said.

Authorities in the rural farming community of Greenfield, 225km south-east of San Francisco, said the 36-year-old Hispanic man sold the child to an 18-year-old man who was to marry the girl.

The case came to light after the parent complained to police that his daughter's prospective husband had failed to pay him under the terms of their deal, which was brokered by a third party.

LONDON: A British adventurer plans to set off in a home-made vehicle which can transform itself from a car into an aircraft in minutes -- destination Timbuktu.

On the ground the Skycar runs on a biofuel-powered engine. But with a powerful fan on the rear its take-off speed is 60km/h, and once in the air it can fly at speeds of up to around 110km/h, cruising at 2000 feet to 3000 feet with a paraglider canopy holding it aloft. Inventor Giles Cardozo, 29, will leave for the 6000km trip through France, Spain and north Africa, across the Sahara to the fabled desert city of Timbuktu in Mali.

LONDON: Britain's Prince Charles has been addressing an Asian friend at a polo club as 'Sooty' for decades, it has emerged, as the Palace rejected as 'completely ridiculous' any suggestion that the heir to the throne could be racist.

Prince Charles, 60, had used the term as an 'affectionate nickname' for 25 years to address Kuldip Singh Dhillon at the private polo club in Cirencester, near his country retreat in the south-western county of Gloucestershire.

Dhillon was 'utterly comfortable' with being addressed in that way, a member of the club said.

OSLO: The captain of a Russian trawler was killed when the ship took on water and sank in the Arctic waters of the Barents sea, Norwegian rescuers said.

Eighteen other crew members were picked up by lifeboats from other Russian vessels in the area, the Rescue Coordination Center for northern Norway said. Their condition was not immediately known.

The center said two of the crew members were flown to a hospital in the Norwegian settlement of Longyearbyen on Norway's Svalbard Islands. The rest will be brought to the Norwegian mainland on a Russian ship.

Around the world

NADI: Fijians are bracing themselves for more rain after five days of torrential downpour which has ruined homes, businesses and claimed at least eight lives.

Fiji awoke yesterday to more flooded streets and swamped homes and businesses after a fifth night of heavy rain.

Eight people have been killed, and a 20-year-old man is missing, as the tourist town of Nadi deals with bursting river banks.

Officials say a further 9000 people are hunkered down in emergency shelters on the mainland island of Viti Levu.

WELLINGTON: A forklift based in Invercargill, on the southern tip New Zealand's southern island, has been booked for speeding at 119km/h on the Kapiti Coast, at the southern end of the northern island.

Police had identified the forklift belonging to Lindsay Carrying Co as the offending vehicle, despite it never having left Invercargill and having a top speed of 19km/h.

Assistant manager Shelley Kempton said she thought someone was 'taking the p---' when she opened a letter from police.

BEIJING: China's fast-growing population of internet users has risen to 298 million after passing the United States last year to become the world's largest, a government-sanctioned research group said.

The latest figure is a 41.9 per cent increase over the same period last year, the China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC) said in a report.

China's internet penetration rate is still low, with just 22.6 per cent of its population online, leaving more room for rapid growth, according to CNNIC.

RIYADH: A Saudi rights organisation has freed two women held captive by their half-brother in a small room in their parents' home for 10 years.

The Saudi National Association for Human Rights said it discovered the two women in their early 20s after receiving an anonymous tip. The two women were hospitalised after being freed.

"The two girls are in a very bad physical and psychological condition. They need utmost care and total rehabilitation," Dr Ahmad Yehia, a regional supervisor at the rights organisation told local media.

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon says that up to 61 former detainees have returned to terrorism since their release from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a big increase from its last count.

Geoff Morrell, the Pentagon press secretary, used the new numbers to highlight the challenges of quickly closing the prison despite reports that US president-elect Barack Obama will move immediately to direct its closure.

"There, clearly, are people who are being held at Guantanamo who are still bent on doing harm to America -- Americans and our allies. So there will have to be some solution for them."

ISRAEL: Troops battled Palestinian gunmen on Wednesday in Gaza, where nearly 1000 people have been killed in the war on Hamas, and rockets slammed into northern Israel from Lebanon for the second time in less than a week.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon arrived in Cairo at the start of a regional tour aimed at stopping the 'unacceptable' violence that has sparked outrage across the world.

Egypt has been spearheading efforts for a truce in the war, now in its 19th day, in which another 4500 Palestinians have been wounded.

Around the world

End of Document

INSIDE THE TIMES: March 18, 2009

The New York Times
March 18, 2009 Wednesday
Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

Section: Section A; Column 0; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 2

Length: 2031 words

Body

International

OBAMA TO TAP RETIRED GENERAL

As Special Envoy to Sudan

President Obama plans to appoint Maj. Gen. J. Scott Gration, a close adviser and retired general, to be his special envoy to Sudan as the administration ratchets up pressure against the government in Khartoum for expelling humanitarian relief organizations from the ravaged region of Darfur, administration officials said. Page A6

MADAGASCAR PRESIDENT STEPS DOWN

President Marc Ravalomanana of Madagascar resigned and handed control of the government over to the military, which then handed power to a political rival of Mr. Ravalomanana's, Andry Rajoelina. Page A6

Pingyao Journal

A Faded Hub of Banking Lore

Pingyao was home in the 19th century to the first banks in China. Money flowed and so did the loans. But then the system collapsed and the town crumbled. The current financial crisis harkens to a sense of nostalgia over Pingyao, which is also one of the nation's best-preserved medieval towns. The memories of that long-gone golden age linger in the buildings. Page A7

HERO TO PAKISTANI WOMEN MARRIES

The plight of female rape victims in Pakistan is grim and often fatal; many commit suicide. So when Mukhtar Mai, who was gang-raped in 2002, successfully faced her attackers in court, she became a symbol for victimized and oppressed women. Ms. Mukhtar is now married to a police constable who guarded her after the attack. Page A8

OLMERT REFUSES HAMAS DEMANDS

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel has said he would not grant all of Hamas's demands for the release an Israeli soldier who was captured in 2006. Page A8

RUSSIA PROMISES TO REARM

INSIDE THE TIMES: March 18, 2009

President Dmitri A. Medvedev of Russia said that his country would begin a large-scale rearming in 2011. In a speech before generals in Moscow, he cited encroachment by NATO as a reason. Page A9

U.N. OFFICIAL LASHES OUT AT WEST

Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua, the president of the United Nations General Assembly, said that the West, and the United States in particular, had been unfair in its treatment of Iran's president and that the indictment of the Sudanese president was racist. Page A10

POPE SAYS CONDOMS NOT ANSWER

In the first stop on Pope Benedict XVI's weeklong trip to Africa, he said that condoms were not the solution to Africa's fight against the spread of H.I.V. Page A110

National

OUTRAGE GREET'S KILLER'S ARRIVAL

In New Hampshire Town

Residents of Chichester, N.H., have been on edge since they received word that Raymond Guay, a man who was recently released from prison after 35 years for killing a child, was staying with a local minister. But the minister housing Mr. Guay defended him, saying that the felon was a changed man. PAGE A11

A DELICACY FOR THE HARDY

The annual International Comstock Mountain Oyster Fry in Virginia City, Nev., brings together harried cooks hoping to impress with their recipes for the not-for-the-faint-of-heart culinary tradition. Mountain oysters, a delicacy made from the testicle of gelded calves and lambs, have long been a staple of Western ranching culture. "Everybody is going to tell you they taste like chicken," said one attendee. "That's a lie." PAGE A11

BLAST WOUNDS CITY TO ITS CORE

A large natural gas explosion Bozeman, Mont., two weeks ago killed one woman and leveled five historic buildings that contained thriving businesses. The blast also delivered a deep psychic blow to the business district, which has been struggling as the economy declines. PAGE A12

Agency Faulted on Health Care A12

CONDEMNING A PRISON PROPOSAL

Religious organizations and civil liberties groups joined to oppose a proposed ban on materials in penitentiary libraries "that could incite, promote, or otherwise suggest the commission of violence or criminal activity" on the grounds that the rule would prohibit some religious texts. PAGE A13

New Earmark Rules, Old Problems A14

PUSHING HARD ON BUDGET

The White House's full-throated effort to push President Obama's \$3.6 trillion budget through Congress has echoes of the fall campaign. PAGE A14

Senator Wants Remorse From C.E.O.'s A15

CALLS TO OVERHAUL VISA POLICY

A coalition of academic and civil liberties groups is calling on the Obama administration to break with the Bush administration's policies on blocking visas of some foreign scholars, writers and activists. PAGE A16

Obituaries

JACK LAWRENCE, 96

He left podiatry to write lyrics for songs, some of which became big hits for Frank Sinatra and Rosemary Clooney. PAGE A20

New York

LEAPING ONTO THE TRACKS;

Saving a Life, Catching a Train

Chad Lindsey joined the storied ranks of New York's subway heroes when he rescued a man who had fallen onto the tracks at Penn Station, before hurrying to catch his own train. Mr. Lindsey gave an account of the events and explained why his role as an actor might have made him uniquely suited for it. Page A19

THE MEN BEHIND MASS TRANSIT

The future of mass transit in New York City and the region rests in the hands of two men, but neither seems to be able to drum up the requisite support to get the job done. Jim Dwyer, About New York. Page A19

Business

PLANS ON ENERGY HIT OBSTACLE: OFFSHORE DRILLING

President Obama is finding himself in a tricky situation. He is caught between oil companies pressing him on offshore drilling and environmentalists who are demanding a reinstatement of the ban on the practice, which was lifted in September. This fight has landed in his lap just as the White House sits down to map out a new energy plan. Page B1

CHANGES FOR MUTUAL FUNDS

If regulators agree to a set of changes proposed by leaders of the mutual fund industry, investors would be offered greater security but at lower yields. Page B1

Economic Scene

Beneath a Rock on Wall Street

Retention pay, David Leonhardt writes, is one of the greatest excuses for showering executives with money no matter their level of performance. And almost nothing else highlights the fiction of performance-based pay quite so well as retention pay does. Page B1

I.R.S. POLICY FOR MADOFF VICTIMS

The Internal Revenue Service said it would allow investors in Bernard L. Madoff's investment scam to claim a tax deduction based on their losses. Page B3

IT'S A DEAL. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Commercial space in a new building, located on a major train line and available nearly for free for 10 years. This kind of deal is made possible by the Urban Transit Hub Tax Credit program, which applies to properties within a half-mile of rail centers in New Jersey cities. But none of the projects have actually landed a tenant, nor begun instruction. Page B7

Sports

INSIDE THE TIMES: March 18, 2009

EXCLUSIVITY AND PRIVILEGE ARE FINE,

But There Are Still Bills to Pay

The country club: A world of privacy, exclusivity and privilege. The economic crisis may have ended that. Scores of people have either suspended or given up their memberships, causing clubs to offer deals and bargains to attract members. Page B10

BRODEUR SETS RECORD FOR VICTORIES

Martin Brodeur set a National Hockey League record by winning the 552nd game of his 15-year career, stopping 30 of 32 shots in the Devils' 3-2 victory over the Chicago Blackhawks. PAGE B11

ARTS

BILL SEEKS TO REGULATE

Museums' Art Sales

Selling parts of a collection to cover museum operating costs would be illegal under a bill drafted by Assemblyman Richard L. Brodsky in collaboration with the New York State Board of Regents and the Museum Association of New York and introduced in the New York State Legislature. PAGE C1

Art Review

Show for Creator of Obama Poster

The surprise of Shepard Fairey's retrospective, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, is that almost everything Mr. Fairey does, from his abstracted images of Andre the Giant to his famous Obama Hope poster, is visually arresting. A review by Ken Johnson. PAGE C1

IN AUSTIN, MESSAGES ARE THE MEDIA

Twitter is now the dominant platform at South by Southwest, the annual music festival in Austin, Tex. Feedback begins before events, with people critiquing stage setups and anticipating who might say what. At times, it seems to have overtaken actual conversation. PAGE C1

Television Review

The Office Sitcom Goes Corporate

"Better Off Ted," which begins this week on ABC, is a charmingly offbeat comedy that brings some of the inspired lunacy of "Arrested Development" and "30 Rock" to the offices of a giant multinational corporation, Alessandra Stanley writes. PAGE C1

TV'S ROAD TO DIVERSITY

The recent discontinuations of television programs that featured black hosts or had mostly black performers raises questions about how much progress television has made in better reflecting the audience it serves. (This capsule summary was published in error on Tuesday. The article did not appear in any editions of that day's paper.) PAGE C1

Dining

DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK,

They've Been Here for Years

INSIDE THE TIMES: March 18, 2009

They've kept cash registers in convenience stores company from New England to Ohio. An unassuming little black-and-white circle of taste, the whoopie pie has been making its way into more upscale environs. But as bakers and fans of the little dessert will tell you, try to dress it up too much and you miss the point. Page D1

IS OPTIMISM TO BLAME?

Chefs, restaurant owners and workers say they can't remember a time when business was this bad. The economy is to blame, of course, but some say it is also a result of a decade of expansion that was not sustainable. A few contend that the industry was due for a pruning and that this slump will be good for chefs and diners. Page D1

Critics Notebook

Food: The Remix

The entirety of Bazaar by Jose Andres can be summed up by the olives, Frank Bruni writes. The liquid olives are to be eaten in one bite, held together as they are by a thin membrane protecting a liquid center of olive essence. Mr. Andres's avant garde approach to cooking distills and amplifies old favorites, like caipirinhas made with liquid nitrogen or foie gras cotton candy. Page D1

Food Stuff

Much More Than a Dried Bean D2

The Cupcake as Morsel D2

Spring Balanced on a Fork D2

The Minimalist

Bringing New Flavor to a Roast

Cooking the roast can be as simple as sticking a hunk of meat into the oven, writes Mark Bittman, but it does not have to be. One option is to core a hole through the roast with a wooden spoon and stuff the cavity with figs. Page D3

A Good Appetite

Cake? Um... Yes.

As if the eating of cake weren't excuse enough to make it, there is the chance to use that cake stand that's been collecting dust, Melissa Clark writes. Page D3

Wines of the Times

Spanish Wines and Contemplation

Wines from the Bierzo region in Spain have emerged in the larger industry in the last 10 years. They're doing well, Eric Asimov writes, and show how an ancient and isolated region makes a product that attracts the attention of the world. Page D6

Restaurants

Feta and Olives at Kefi - D8

\$25 and Under

The Longshoreman Vs. the Diplomat D8

Editorial

STILL BROKEN

In last year's presidential election, as many as three million registered voters were not allowed to cast ballots, and millions more chose not to because of lines with waits of many hours and other frustrating obstacles. More than eight years after the Florida voting debacle, Congress must finally deliver on its promise of electoral reform. PAGE A22

THE POPE ON CONDOMS AND AIDS

Pope Benedict XVI has every right to express his opposition to the use of condoms on moral grounds, in accordance with the official stance of the Roman Catholic Church. But he deserves no credence when he distorts scientific findings about the value of condoms in slowing the spread of the AIDS virus. PAGE A22

Op-Ed

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

If you didn't like reading about A.I.G. bankers getting millions in bonuses after the company reported the biggest quarterly loss in the history of the Milky Way Galaxy, you're really not going to like the bank bailout plan to be rolled out soon by the Obama team. PAGE A23

A NUCLEAR WASTE

President Obama has made clean and efficient energy a priority, and Congress has obliged with billions of dollars in stimulus money. In an Op-Ed article, Stephanie Cooke, author of the forthcoming "In Mortal Hands: A Cautionary History of the Nuclear Age," argues that Mr. Obama will not be able to achieve his energy goals until the Department of Energy is freed from the nuclear weapons establishment. PAGE A23

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS (pg.A2

pg.A3) DRAWING (pg.A3)

Load-Date: September 8, 2011

What happened in Iran was not an election

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

June 16, 2009 Tuesday

Final Edition

Copyright 2009 The Calgary Herald, a division of Canwest MediaWorks Publication Inc. All Rights Reserved

Section: Q: QUERIES - QUIBBLES - QUIRKS; Pg. A15; Christopher Hitchens

Length: 995 words

Byline: Christopher Hitchens, For The Calgary Herald

Body

For a flavour of the political atmosphere in Tehran, Iran, last week, I quote from a young Iranian comrade who furnishes me with regular updates:

"I went to the last major (President Mahmoud) Ahmadinejad rally and got the whiff of what I imagine fascism to have been all about. Lots of splotchy boys who can't get a date are given guns and told they're special."

It's hard to better this, either as an evocation of the sexual repression that lies at the nasty core of the "Islamic republic" or as a description of the reserve strength that the Iranian para-state, or state within a state, can bring to bear if it ever feels itself even slightly challenged. There is a theoretical reason why the events of the last month in Iran (I am sorry, but I resolutely decline to refer to them as elections) were a crudely stage-managed insult to those who took part in them and those who observed them. And then there is a practical reason. The theoretical reason, though less immediately dramatic and exciting, is the much more interesting and important one.

Iran and its citizens are considered by the Shiite theocracy to be the private property of the anointed mullahs. This totalitarian idea was originally based on a piece of religious quackery promulgated by the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and known as velayate faqui. Under the terms of this edict--which originally placed the clerics in charge of the lives and property of orphans, the indigent, and the insane--the entire population is now declared to be a childlike ward of the black-robed state. Thus any voting exercise is, by definition, over before it has begun, because the all-powerful Islamic Guardian Council determines well in advance who may or may not "run." Any newspaper referring to the subsequent proceedings as an election, sometimes complete with rallies, polls, counts, and all the rest of it, is the cause of helpless laughter among the ayatollahs. ("They fell for it? But it's too easy!") Shame on all those media outlets that have been complicit in this dirty lie all last week. And shame also on our pathetic secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, who said she hoped that "the genuine will and desire" of the people of Iran would be reflected in the outcome. Surely she knows that any such contingency was deliberately forestalled to begin with.

In theory, the first choice of the ayatollahs might not actually "win," and there could even be divisions among the Islamic Guardian Council as to who constitutes the best nominee. Secondary as that is, it can still lead to rancor. After all, corrupt systems are still subject to fraud. This, like hypocrisy, is the compliment that vice pays to virtue. With near-incredible brutishness and cruelty, then, the guardians moved to cut off cellphone and text-message networks that might give even an impression of fairness and announced though their storm-troop "revolutionary guards" that only one form of voting had divine sanction. ("The miraculous hand of God," announced Supreme

What happened in Iran was not an election

Leader Ali Khamenei, had been present in the polling places and had announced a result before many people had even finished voting.)

The obvious evidence of fixing, fraud, and force to one side, there is another reason to doubt that an illiterate fundamentalist like Ahmadinejad could have increased even a state-sponsored plebiscite-type majority. Everywhere else in the Muslim world, in every election in the last two years, the tendency has been the other way. In Morocco in 2007, the much-ballyhooed Justice and Development Party wound up with 14 per cent of the vote. In Malaysia and Indonesia, the predictions of increased market share for the pro-Sharia parties were likewise falsified. In Iraq this last January, the local elections penalized the clerical parties that had been making life a misery in cities like Basra. In neighbouring Kuwait last month, the Islamist forces did poorly, and four women--including the striking figure of Rola Dashti, who refuses to wear any headgear--were elected to the 50-member parliament. Most important of all, perhaps, Iranian-sponsored Hezbollah was convincingly and unexpectedly defeated last week in Lebanon after an open and vigorous election, the results of which were not challenged by any party. And, from all I hear, if the Palestinians were to vote again this year--as they were at one point supposed to do--it would be highly improbable that Hamas would emerge the victor.

Yet somehow a senile and fanatical religious clique that has failed even to condition the vote in a country like Lebanon, where it has proxy and surrogate parties under arms, is able to reward itself by increasing its "majority" in a festeringly bankrupt state where it controls the media and enjoys a monopoly of violence. I think we should deny it any official recognition of this consolation.

Mention of the Lebanese elections impels me to pass on what I saw with my own eyes at a recent Hezbollah rally in south Beirut, Lebanon. In a large hall that featured the official attendance of a delegation from the Iranian Embassy, the most luridly displayed poster of the pro-Iranian party was a nuclear mushroom cloud! Underneath this telling symbol was a caption warning the "Zionists" of what lay in store. We sometimes forget that Iran still officially denies any intention of acquiring nuclear weapons. Yet Ahmadinejad recently hailed an Iranian missile launch as a counterpart to Iran's success with nuclear centrifuges, and Hezbollah has certainly been allowed to form the idea that the Iranian reactors may have non-peaceful applications. This means, among other things, that the vicious manipulation by which the mullahs control Iran can no longer be considered their "internal affair." Fascism at home sooner or later means fascism abroad. Face it now or fight it later. Meanwhile, give it its right name.

Christopher Hitchens Is A Columnist For Vanity Fair And The Roger S. Mertz Media Fellow At The Hoover Institution In Stanford, Calif.

Graphic

Photo: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad ;

Load-Date: June 16, 2009

Kasrils could take a leaf out of Obama's book in Middle East analysis

Cape Times (South Africa)

June 25, 2009 Thursday

e1 Edition

Copyright 2009 Independent News and Media Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: Pg. 9

Length: 1043 words

Byline: David Saks

Body

A few weeks ago, US President Barack Obama addressed a largely Arab audience in Cairo, eloquently laying out his vision for a positive new era in international relations concerning the Middle East and his own country's interaction with the Arab and Muslim world.

Naturally, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict formed an important part of his address. Here, with admirable sensitivity and insight, he summed up the most pressing hopes, fears and grievances of all parties and what both sides need to do to bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Not everyone will agree with Obama's analysis, but who can deny his sincerity in seeking to mediate between the conflicting claims in a fair, balanced manner?

How very different to Obama's wise and fundamentally humane approach to this most vexed of international disputes was Ronnie Kasrils's article of June 17. At a time when a window of opportunity has opened for the different parties to begin reaching out once more across the gulf that divides them, all Kasrils can come up with is the same tired old anti-Israel rant, banging on like the proverbial broken record as he trots out the usual string of tendentious propaganda canards.

Kasrils's inconsistency is immediately evident in his calling Israel's defining of itself as a "Jewish" state "reminiscent of the worst days of apartheid". Apparently, he has no problem with the fact that numerous other countries define themselves in religious or ethnic terms. Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania and Saudi Arabia declare themselves to be "Islamic". Bahrain defines itself as "an Arab Islamic State... its people are part of the Arab nation". Turkey defines itself as a Turkish state, even though a significant proportion of the population are not ethnic Turks but Kurds. In the Palestinian territories, Hamas envisions a state defined along religious, ie Islamic, lines, while for Fatah, ethnic Arab nationalism is the defining feature. In other words, Kasrils denies Israel's right to define itself as a "Jewish state", but allows other countries to define themselves however they wish. So much for "justness and fairness".

Kasrils describes the position of non-Jews in Israel as being similar to that of non-whites in apartheid South Africa. While space does not permit a detailed rebuttal of this ludicrous claim, consider the following: in South Africa, "colour bar" legislation restricted non-whites from most professions, and wage legislation fixed their wages at lower levels than whites. In Israel, access to all levels of the economic and professional sectors is open to all; under apartheid, public amenities such as parks, buses, hospitals, libraries and beaches were segregated, with whites

Kasrils could take a leaf out of Obama's book in Middle East analysis

enjoying the best facilities. In Israel, such discrimination would be illegal; only whites had political rights under apartheid, but all Israeli citizens have them; public education was segregated under apartheid, with race determining what school or university one could attend. Israelis can attend which-ever school or university they wish (a right enforced by the courts); in South Africa, 87% of the land was reserved exclusively for white ownership, whereas in Israel (apart from the 13% owned by the Jewish National Fund, and even that is changing), the land is available for lease or purchase to all citizens and it is illegal to discriminate in this regard; apartheid prohibited racially mixed marriages and even sexual relations across the colour line, something entirely absent in Israel; unlike apartheid South Africa, Israel does not have pass laws and influx control based on race.

Kasrils moves on to the situation in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war, where he believes comparisons with apartheid South Africa have particular resonance. Here, it cannot be denied that an atrocious situation has emerged in recent years.

Checkpoints, roadblocks, security fences and separate road systems have indeed imposed a stranglehold on basic Palestinian freedoms, rendering the emergence of a viable, sovereign state impossible. Nor have successive Israeli administrations been guiltless in this regard.

The fact that several hundred thousand Israeli Jews now live in the West Bank against the wishes of the majority Palestinian population has enormously complicated an already fraught situation. Much of the extraordinary security measures imposed by Israel are motivated by the need to protect this Jewish minority.

But that is not the whole story. The often draconian restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement were not imposed in a vacuum, but came about following the most sustained period of terrorism against the citizens of Israel in over half a century.

Since September 2000, the Palestinian leadership has pursued a campaign of violence that has reached levels of sheer barbarity never remotely seen even during the worst years of apartheid repression. (In March 2002 alone, twice as many Israeli civilians were killed by Palestinian terrorism than the number of white South Africans killed in terrorist attacks over more than 30 years). This reality renders meaningless accusations that Israeli policies are even worse than under apartheid.

Kasrils, blinkered as ever, cannot bring himself even to acknowledge that such violence is even taking place. By contrast, Obama was unequivocal in spelling out to the Palestinians that in order to achieve their independence, violence has to be abandoned. "Violence," he said, "is a dead end. It is a sign neither of courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus. That's not how moral authority is claimed; that's how it is surrendered."

Obama said another wise thing that we would all do well to bear in mind: "If we see this conflict only from one side or the other, then we will be blind to the truth."

True statesmanship means being able to empathise with the legitimate concerns, grievances and aspirations of all sides of a dispute. Serving up emotive and highly misleading caricatures of Virtue and Villainy is not merely worthless, but positively harmful. It is something Kasrils, for all his years in high political office, has evidently never learned.

I Saks is associate director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies.

Load-Date: June 24, 2009

Praise from Muslims tempered by caution

Financial Times (London, England)

June 5, 2009 Friday

London Edition 1

Copyright 2009 The Financial Times Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: OBAMA REACHES OUT; Pg. 6

Length: 970 words

Byline: Abeer Allam in Riyadh, Najmeh Bozorgmehr in Tehran and Tobias Buck in Jerusalem

Highlight: US proposals cheer Saudi Arabians

Speech welcomed by Palestinians

Body

When Barack Obama strode on to the podium at Cairo University to deliver his address to the Muslim world yesterday, Saudis were glued to their television screens.

They were already delighted that the US president had recognised the crucial role of their kingdom, the birthplace of Islam, and had visited King Abdullah before travelling to Egypt.

It was their society that had felt most stigmatised by the terror attacks of September 11 2001, an atrocity carried out largely by Saudis.

Americans turned against the kingdom, student visas dried up and the "special relationship" between the allies soured.

But even Saudi Islamists expressed their satisfaction after Mr Obama spoke yesterday.

"It is a beautiful speech in general," said Mohsen al-Awaji, an activist. "He talked about peace in Islam and we are saying yes, Islam is a religion of peace towards those who are peaceful with us but a religion of war for those who are fighting us."

This was a great opportunity to open a new chapter in US-Muslim relations, he added. "I hope everyone, especially radical Muslims, will use this opportunity to mend fences with the US."

Mr Obama's main objective was to chart a new, more co-operative, course for US relations with the Muslim and Arab world, improving America's standing and countering the appeal of extremism.

In a speech that delivered a message to every sector of society - from liberals, to Islamists, to women and the young - he struck a chord in Saudi Arabia with his more concrete promises.

Young Saudis said they were impressed by his pledge to offer more scholarships to Muslims, encourage entrepreneurship, and launch a fund to support technological development.

Praise from Muslims tempered by caution

"He was extremely smart and sensitive. I liked his proposal about increasing education opportunities for Muslim students in the US because, as he said, human capital is what matters, not the underground wealth," said Najla Alfaraj, a law student at Prince Sultan University.

But in Saudi Arabia, as elsewhere in the region, enthusiasm was tempered by caution.

"We know that no single speech can eradicate the mistrust or dismantle the hostility inherited from the Bush and Cheney era," said Mr Awaji, referring to the former US administration.

In Cairo, Badawi al-Sawi, an Egyptian language teacher, summarised the region's expectations after the speech. "These were good words but the eloquence of action is more powerful than the eloquence of words," he said.

A similar tone was heard in Pakistan. "He hit all the right notes," said Maleeha Lodhi, former Pakistani ambassador to the US and UK. "But the test will come in the conduct of US policy, not the offer of promises."

Reaction was mixed in Iran, where Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader, had warned hours before Mr Obama spoke that "sweet and beautiful talk cannot make a change".

Some Iranians said evidence of Mr Obama's sincerity would come if he lifted sanctions against Tehran, while others predicted that the speech might have an impact on next week's presidential election by encouraging people to vote for a more moderate leader.

Mr Obama's speech did not, as had been hoped in some Arab capitals, lay out the administration's plan for peace in the Middle East. But it included a pledge that the president would "personally pursue" a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The president was careful not to alienate Israelis or Palestinians.

He said the US relationship with Israel was "unbreakable", and that those who denied the Holocaust were "ignorant" and "hateful". But he had sharp words for the Jewish state, insisting that the US "does not recognise the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements" on occupied Palestinian land and called on Israel to improve the daily lives of Palestinians.

"Let there be no doubt . . . the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable," he said.

The Palestinian Authority praised the speech as "an important step towards a new American policy". But among Israelis in downtown Jerusalem the reaction was far from enthusiastic.

Barry Korzen, a Canadian-born Israeli, said: "I am not happy . . . Obama is telling Israel what its policy should be - that's just not right."

The Israeli government issued a statement expressing its hope "that this important speech in Cairo will indeed lead to a new period of reconciliation between the Arab and Muslim world and Israel".

Seven tensions

Barack Obama identified seven areas - tensions he called them - which he said the US and Muslim world should "confront together":

Violent extremism Describing the conflict in Afghanistan as a "necessity" in the fight against al-Qaeda, Mr Obama went on to say that the US accepted "military power alone" would not solve extremism in Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan **Arab-Israel peace** Describing the US bond with Israel as "unbreakable", Mr Obama went on to criticise the Jewish state for its settlement policy, call on the Palestinian group Hamas to end violence and called for both sides to come together

Nuclear weapons Insisting a nuclear arms race in the Middle-east could not be allowed, he called on Iran to rethink its nuclear programme **Democracy** In a pointed reference to some Arab leaders, Mr Obama said: "There

Praise from Muslims tempered by caution

are some [in the region] who advocate for democracy only when they are out of power; once in power, they are ruthless in suppressing the rights of others.

"No matter where it takes hold, government of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who hold power: you must maintain your power through consent, not coercion" **Women's equality** **A commitment to partner with Muslim-dominated countries'** **female** literacy programmes **Religious freedom** A call for all societies to be more accommodating of all religious groups **Economic development** A call to create a better environment for economic opportunities

Load-Date: June 4, 2009

End of Document

Hopes surge with Iraq ballot

Weekend Australian

February 7, 2009 Saturday

1 - All-round Country Edition

Copyright 2009 Nationwide News Pty Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 19

Length: 2037 words

Byline: William Shawcross

Body

We can see more than light at the end of the tunnel; we can see a potential model democracy for the Middle East, writes William Shawcross

IN Iraq's provincial elections last weekend, the polling stations were cheerful places -- as they tend to be in countries where people have recently been given the vote after years of dictatorship.

One blogger, Dr Mohammed of ["last-of-iraqis.blogspot.com"](http://last-of-iraqis.blogspot.com), wrote that he voted for the candidates he thought best for Baghdad and then dipped his finger in the indelible ink provided to make sure no one voted twice. "It might look ugly, but I like it and I'm proud of it. At the same time, a child reached the table and insisted on painting his finger, too; everybody smiled because he was so happy about it."

This was the first post-Saddam election that the Iraqis handled themselves. General Ray Odierno, the US military commander in Baghdad, had predicted that al-Qa'ida would try to disrupt the elections. They did not. People seemed to sense in advance that the day would be safe.

For that much credit must be given to the new, US-trained Iraqi Security Forces. They are effective and it was clear on polling day that they enjoy the trust of the population. For the first time US troops played no part in protecting the voters. This was an entirely Iraqi show.

These provincial elections were held in 14 of the country's 18 provinces (Kurdistan will hold its own separate elections and the disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk was deemed "too hard" at the moment.) It was the first election to have international observers in all 712 constituencies. In 2005 terrorist attacks made that too dangerous. In 2005 more than 200 candidates were killed; this time 8. There were 14,412 candidates standing for office, an impressive number, indeed arguably too many. In 2005 there was considerable fraud. This time there seems to have been very little.

This was also the first election in which there was no boycott on either ethnic or sectarian grounds. There was an enormous spread of views represented on the ballot papers: Iraq is the only Arab country that offers almost everyone, including Trotskyites and monarchists, the freedom to stand for election.

The turnout was 51 per cent; this was less than some predicted but importantly it included many Sunnis who had boycotted the last elections in 2005. Turnout in some of the Sunni areas was as high as 60 per cent. The hope is

Hopes surge with Iraq ballot

that Sunnis, who felt deposed and threatened by the removal of Saddam and the rise of the Shia majority, have now rejected the vile methods of al-Qa'ida in favour of the political process.

If the peaceful polling was remarkable, so were the results. All the Islamic parties lost ground, especially those associated with so-called "Shi'ite firebrand" Moqtada al-Sadr, whose share of the vote shrank from 11 per cent to 3 per cent. The principal Sunni Islamic party, the Islamic Party of Iraq, was completely wiped out. A leading Shi'ite cleric, Abdul Kareem, told the Al Jazeera TV network, "Those candidates who campaigned under the banner of religion should be rejected. They corrupted the name of religion because they are notorious for being thieves." The voters clearly agreed.

The only Islamic party to gain ground was the Dawa Party of the Shi'ite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, and even that party dropped the word Islamic from its name. Maliki's coalition ran on a nationalist platform and he gained a great deal of traction from the fact that as Prime Minister he has saved Basra, Sadr City in Baghdad and other parts of the country from sectarian violence.

It is remarkable that now no Islamic parties will be able to control any provinces on their own. The election is thus a big defeat for Iran which had hoped that Shi'ite religious parties would dominate the south, along the border with Iran, and thus enable Iran to turn them into a mini Shi'ite republic. Critics of the US-led invasion often said that its main result would be to strengthen Iran; these elections have dramatically diminished the power of Iran in Iraq. The Shia of the southern provinces have, by their votes, shown that they prefer the moderate Shi-ism of Prime Minister Maliki to the cruel fundamentalist vision of Iran.

The elections have enhanced Maliki's power; indeed, some fear he is too strong already. But with the power of the Shi'ite religious parties diminished, he should now be able to collaborate more effectively with the Sunni parties, and on the peaceful co-existence of Sunni and Shia the future of Iraq depends.

Now a new generation of Iraqi politicians is coming forward. Many of them are young and secular. They have lived always in Iraq, not in exile; they are Iraqis with local roots first and foremost, they are not pan-Arabs or pan-Islamists. Nor do they have connections to the US. There will be more of them in the parliamentary elections later this year. These will be another and perhaps more difficult test of whether the horrific inter-Islamic violence of recent years is over. Iraq's polity is still delicate. The country is still far from united and its infrastructure still needs massive investment. It is highly likely that al-Qa'ida and other terrorist groups who have been, in effect, defeated by the phenomenon of these elections, will stage further attacks.

But there are now real grounds to hope that Iraqis are finally on track to creating a far more decent society than they have ever had. This would never have been possible without the US-led overthrow of the psychotic Saddam gangster family. Now astonishing though it may seem, Iraq may yet even become a model for democratic change in other Arab countries. Which means that one should perhaps reassess some of the Western conventional wisdom of the years since the US-led invasion of 2003, in which the Australian government led by John Howard was a significant partner.

The American "neo-cons" who served in the first Bush administration at the time of 9/11 have since been denigrated for their belief that democracy could be built in Iraq and exported from there around the Middle East. That always seemed to me to be a decent rather than a contemptible ambition, but perhaps unrealistic. In 2006 an election brought Hamas to power in Gaza, and they immediately mounted a putsch against their Palestinian enemies in Fatah. Hamas's utter illiberalism was not a good advertisement for democracy in the Arab world.

Could Iraq be different?

We may now have arrived at an extraordinary moment. Before the US-led invasion, the Saddam family sowed mayhem, murder and misery at home and abroad.

There were lamentable failures in the subsequent US occupation, which allowed the rise of the hideous sectarian violence that threatened to tear the country to pieces. But it is important to remember that the vast majority of dead civilians (about 100,000) were not killed by Coalition forces but by Islamic terrorists whose strategy was to turn Iraq

Hopes surge with Iraq ballot

into a land of total desolation. Their utter depravity was recently displayed, yet again, in the confession of a 51-year-old woman, Samira Jassim, who claimed to have recruited female suicide bombers for one group allied to al-Qa'ida. According to newspaper accounts, she organised for some of the women to be raped so that she could then convince them that only martyrdom could obliterate their shame.

By 2006-07, despair of Iraq became the prevalent response in the West. In Washington almost all opinion formers and political leaders (Republican as well as Democrat) decided that the country was lost and told Bush that the only option was withdrawal.

The failure of Vietnam was often cited as the only valid precedent. The New York Times went so far as to declare, in a shocking editorial, that the US must quit Iraq even though the country could become so much "bloodier and more chaotic" as a result that there might be "further ethnic cleansing, even genocide".

Bush agreed with The New York Times prediction of the results of US withdrawal. He too considered the Vietnam precedent. But he learned a very different lesson. He argued that the costs, to Iraq and the region, of America scuttling on its commitments, were too horrific even to be considered. He also argued, against his critics, that all was not lost but that security was essential before any political reconciliation between the various Iraqi factions and peoples would be possible. Instead of abandoning Iraq, he turned to another general, David Petraeus, who devised a new strategy: a "surge" of 30,000 more US troops with a bold counter-insurgency mission that saw them embedded in dangerous neighbourhoods.

Almost no senior political leaders or commentators in Washington agreed with Bush. But he was right: Petraeus succeeded beyond all expectations. The surge appears to have destroyed much of the terrorists' infrastructure and support. In recent months blast walls, which defaced and disrupted many neighbourhoods of Baghdad have been taken down. Shops all over the capital and other towns have re-opened. Anbar province, two years ago an al-Qa'ida concentration camp into which no one dared venture, is now at peace. Throughout huge areas of Iraq more than a semblance of normal life has been restored. Nothing demonstrates that so much as the success of last week's elections. Critics of John Howard, George Bush and Tony Blair should all remark on it.

The most important critic is President Barack Obama. As a senator he opposed the surge. Last year, as a candidate he constantly insisted that the US should leave almost at once. In his inaugural address on January 20, he only mentioned Iraq to say that the US would leave as soon as responsibly possible: no mention of the sacrifices of Iraqis, Americans or others. This week his praise of the election success has been muted. "This important step forward should continue the process of Iraqis taking responsibility for their future," he said.

Indeed they are doing just that.

Perhaps a man who has committed himself so to the promise of change -- "yes we can" -- should be able to change his own mind about Iraq. Far from being a horror show foisted on the region by the wicked or idiotic president Bush, Iraq is on the way to becoming a model for the region. The election that has just taken place was imperfect, but it was far more democratic than the elections that take place in other Arab countries. Iraq is thus not only becoming a model for Arab peoples. It is also emerging as an important pillar of support for the US.

Last December, the US and Iraq signed a status of forces agreement that was widely seen as merely endorsing a timetable for the withdrawal of all US troops by the end of 2011. In fact the agreement endorsed military and strategic co-operation between the two countries. It was bitterly resisted by Iran which threatened any Iraqi politician who supported the text. Parliament nonetheless approved it. This can be seen as one of the most important American strategic successes in the region since Henry Kissinger turned Egypt from a Soviet client to an American ally in the 1970s.

One should not exaggerate the achievements of Iraq. They are fragile. Its future progress will be fitful, the murderous attacks upon its people will continue. But a remarkable thing is now happening. The most important Arab country after Egypt has freer speech, freer elections and more serious free politics than any of its brother states.

Hopes surge with Iraq ballot

If Obama is as wise as his legions of followers believe, he will forswear his previous partisan positions which have been opposed to the war in Iraq. He will acknowledge that after terrible teething troubles, the transformation of Iraq, hoped for by Bush, with the support of Howard, Tony Blair and others, has begun.

If properly and consistently supported, this will have an immense and beneficial effect on the region. Iraq the Model? Surprising, but immensely welcome.

William Shawcross is author of *Allies: The United States, Britain, Europe and the War in Iraq*. His other books include *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia*, *The Shah's Last Ride: The Death of an Ally*, *Murdoch: The Making of a Media Empire* and *Deliver Us from Evil: Warlords, Peacekeepers and a World of Endless Conflict*.

Load-Date: February 6, 2009

End of Document

Abbas-backed mobile network gets US aid earmarked for Palestinian farmers

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

April 25, 2009 Saturday

Copyright 2009 The Daily Star - The Daily Star FZ LLC. Provided by Syndigate.info, an Albawaba.com company All Rights Reserved

THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1070 words

Byline: Daily Star Staff

Body

US aid in the form of loan guarantees meant for Palestinian farmers and other small to mid-sized businesses has been given to a mobile-phone firm backed by President Mahmoud Abbas and Gulf investors. The shift in US taxpayer support to Wataniya Palestine, a joint venture between a Kuwaiti and Qatari telecoms group and a holding company for public assets.

Adam Entous

Reuters

RAMALLAH, Occupied West Bank: US aid in the form of loan guarantees meant for Palestinian farmers and other small to mid-sized businesses has been given to a mobile-phone firm backed by President Mahmoud Abbas and Gulf investors. The shift in US taxpayer support to Wataniya Palestine, a joint venture between a Kuwaiti and Qatari telecoms group and a holding company for public assets, the Palestine Investment Fund (PIF), has dismayed sponsors of small private enterprise.

Its supporters counter that help for Wataniya Palestine is good for jobs and free markets at a time when Washington is throwing its weight, and money, behind Abbas as a bulwark against **Hamas** Islamists in Gaza and as a partner in efforts to relaunch peace negotiations with Israel.

Among the firm's advocates is Middle East envoy Tony Blair, who pressed Israel to grant Wataniya Palestine radio frequencies so the company can challenge a monopoly long held by PalTel.

Mohammad Mustafa, Abbas' chief economic adviser and chairman of both the PIF and Wataniya Palestine, said the \$16 million in loan guarantees for Wataniya were justified by the global credit crunch and the company's potential to bolster the Palestinian economy. He said plenty of guarantees remained to boost smaller businesses, as intended by program sponsors.

But former PIF board members and advisers, speaking on condition of anonymity, challenged the justification for granting US loan guarantees when Wataniya Palestine's financial backers were highly profitable.

Abbas-backed mobile network gets US aid earmarked for Palestinian farmers

"They don't need to provide them a guarantee. They are not the targeted beneficiary," said Samir Barghouthi, general manager of the Arab Center for Agricultural Development, which helps small businesses. "This is not acceptable."

Small-business owners and advocates said it sent the wrong message about Washington's growing role in the Palestinian private sector, which is dominated by a small group of wealthy companies and investors linked by a web of cross-holdings.

Support from the loan guarantee program came from the US-based Aspen Institute, whose Middle East Strategy Group brought together prominent Americans, such as former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Senator Dianne Feinstein, with Palestinian business leaders, including PIF directors.

Among these were Samer Khoury, a top executive at Consolidated Contractors Co., and Tarek Aggad, whose Arab Palestinian Investment Company lists Abbas' youngest son, Tarek, as a vice president. Abbas' elder son, Yasser, was also part of the Aspen Institute panel.

Feinstein pushed through legislation to authorize the program, funded by the US government's Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and the PIF, and overseen by the Aspen-linked Middle East Investment Initiative.

Launched in 2007 with much fanfare, the program offered up to \$230 million in loan guarantees, leveraging commitments of \$110 million from OPIC in Washington and \$50 million from the PIF.

They set a lending range of \$10,000 and \$500,000.

In its July 2007 launch announcement, the US State Department said: "The initiative will provide affordable, longer-term loans to small and family-owned Palestinian businesses that would otherwise not have access to them.

"These might include an olive grower who wants to expand operations, a young person with a small information technology company, or someone who wants to hire neighbors to produce and export Palestinian embroidery."

The program began as planned. In the first 11 months of 2008, the portfolio had 46 loans totaling \$7.6 million, 80 percent of which were for between \$10,000 and \$200,000.

Then, in December, program administrators expedited approval of what they termed two "exceptionally" large loans totaling \$16 million to support Wataniya Palestine, according to a monthly progress report.

An official who helps administer the loan program, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the decision to support Wataniya Palestine was made quickly after Palestinian banks warned that they might not be able to provide loans.

OPIC spokesman Timothy Harwood said the agency "concluded that by virtue of its significant job-creation potential - more than 2,000 jobs are expected to be created through the project - it was a worthwhile investment, and consistent with OPIC's mission to support economic development in emerging markets."

The PIF, a 43-percent shareholder in Wataniya Palestine and OPIC's partner in the loan program, did not take part in the decision on the \$16 million in loans, the fund and OPIC said.

Some Palestinian officials and small businessmen questioned why a company co-owned by the PIF and Kuwait's National Mobile Telecommunications Co. (Wataniya), a unit of Qatar Telecommunications Co. (Qtel), needed US help.

The PIF reported a \$260 million profit in 2007. Kuwait's Wataniya posted more than \$280 million in profit in 2008.

"I don't think getting a bank loan was a problem," said one top Palestinian official involved in banking regulation.

Mustafa said the guarantees were needed to provide comfort to local banks, which the PIF wanted involved in the deal. "I guess these guys were scared," Mustafa said, citing the credit crunch, war in the Gaza Strip and the uncertainty over when Israel may release radio frequencies for the new firm.

Abbas-backed mobile network gets US aid earmarked for Palestinian farmers

Mustafa said that the primary focus of the program was to benefit small businesses, but that the rules were flexible enough to let larger firms benefit as long as they met certain criteria, "especially the number of jobs that you can create."

Reem Abboushi, head of the Palestinian Businesswomen's Association, which provides small loans to women, countered: "Small business will create many more jobs and sustainable jobs in the long run than the big-scale investment."

Mohammad Abu Bakr, a 52-year-old Jenin brickmaker, said he had little hope of benefiting from US assistance. Like most of his small businessmen friends, he said, he was convinced it went to better-connected "big businessmen and the rich."

Load-Date: April 25, 2009

End of Document

Features - Let the bombs fall

Morning Star

April 15, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 People's Press Printing Society Ltd All Rights Reserved

Length: 1055 words

Body

US dissident Noam Chomsky's assertion that the invasion of Iraq was "undertaken with the general recognition that it might well lead to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terror" may jar with the dominant Western narrative, but it is undoubtedly true.

Tony Blair, after all, was warned by Britain's top intelligence committee before the invasion: "Al-Qaida and associated groups continue to represent by far the greatest terrorist threat to Western interests and that threat is heightened by military action against Iraq."

Fewer than 100 days into his presidency, all indications suggest Barack Obama is as unconcerned as his predecessor about the effect his foreign policy will have on the threat of terrorism.

For example, Obama's continuation of the Bush-instituted US drone attacks inside Pakistan have led to entirely predictable reactions, not least the recent terrorist attack on the police academy in Lahore, which the Pakistani Taliban said was in revenge for the remotely controlled air strikes.

That the drone attacks, which cause scores of civilian deaths and seem to have no basis within international law, increase the terror threat is well understood by the US military.

"The current approach is having a severely destabilising effect on Pakistan and risks spreading the conflict further, or even prompting the collapse of the Pakistani state," David Kilcullen, former special adviser for counterinsurgency to the US Secretary of State, told the Senate foreign relations committee recently.

The same applies to Obama's much heralded Afghan 'surge,' which major general John McDonald, the recently installed deputy commander of US forces in Afghanistan, argues will lead to more violence this summer. "We're just about to kick a beehive," he candidly explained.

This analysis is supported by the courageous anti-Taliban, anti-NATO occupation organisation the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, who told me "the very first outcome of the 'surge' on Afghan people will be an increase in the number of civilian casualties" which will "push more people towards the Taliban and other terrorist groups."

According to Nir Rosen, an investigative journalist who spent time with the Taliban last year, Obama "needs to prove, as a Democrat, that he too can kill brown people ... that (the Democrats are) not weak; we can kill foreigners, too."

Unwaveringly supporting all of these warmongering, counterproductive policies is, as ever, Gordon Brown, who will, if press reports are to be believed, soon be sending an additional 2,000 British soldiers to Afghanistan.

Features - Let the bombs fall

With a continuous trickle of body bags returning home from Helmand, however, British public opinion has turned against the occupation. A BBC/ICM poll in November saw 68 per cent of respondents favouring a withdrawal of all British forces within a year.

No doubt this figure would be even higher if more people knew British forces are using white phosphorus in Afghanistan "almost daily," according to a former British soldier writing in the Spectator. Colonel Richard Kemp, commander of British forces in Afghanistan in 2003, gave even more away on BBC Radio 4's The World Tonight in February, pointing out that British forces use white phosphorus in Afghanistan and Iraq "even in areas that do have a certain amount of civilian population."

White phosphorus burns at over 800 degrees Celsius and melting down to the bone when it touches human skin. Israel was rightly condemned for committing war crimes when it deployed white phosphorus in built-up areas during its January assault on Gaza. So where is the righteous anger regarding the British army's use of white phosphorus in Afghanistan?

The Israel-Palestine comparisons don't end there. Embedded with British soldiers in Helmand, BBC journalist Ian Pannell recently reported in passing that, after being spotted by the Taliban, British soldiers "waded through a stream before finally taking cover in a small village about 650ft (200m) from Taliban positions."

The lack of moral indignation is telling. When Hamas choose to fight among civilians it merits worldwide condemnation, but when British soldiers take cover in a village this is simply normal war-fighting.

Understandably, the government is extremely concerned about the low level of public support for Britain's open-ended mission in Afghanistan. And so it should be, because as Brigadier Ed Butler, the British commander in Afghanistan in 2006, notes in James Fergusson's book A Million Bullets, "the Taliban know that domestic Western support for this war could well go the same way as Iraq ... That's what will lose us this campaign."

No doubt it is this fear of public opinion that has driven recent public relations campaigns to increase support for the Helmand mission. Take the media coverage of Prince Harry trying to kill "Terry Taliban," the voluntary news blackout - betraying a shocking level of intellectual uniformity and subservience to power among the top executives of our national media.

Similarly, Ross Kemp's technically impressive Sky One documentary series Return to Afghanistan was MoD-endorsed, with Kemp undertaking military-style training on Salisbury Plain and even learning how to use the British army's weapons systems - in case he and his cameraman were "the last men standing."

Kemp told the Times newspaper he didn't want to become "a government propagandist," but the MoD surely knew they got the right man for the job when he actually pointed out Taliban positions to the British soldiers during one firefight he was filming.

With the number of troops in Iraq being slowly reduced and more boots on the ground for the "good war" in Afghanistan, the latter is likely to become the central focus of US and UK foreign policy for years to come. To counter this and the predictable consequences it will have for the civilian population, it is important the global anti-war movement also switches its energy and focus to Afghanistan.

The Stop the War demonstration at G20 and the anti-NATO protests in Strasbourg were a positive start. Look out too for a series of actions organised by the activist group Voices UK, including public meetings, countrywide naming the dead ceremonies and an act of non-violent civil disobedience at Britain's military nerve centre Northwood on May 27.

www.voices.netuxo.co.uk.

Load-Date: April 15, 2009

Features - Let the bombs fall

End of Document

**Tribal battles and robot warfare; U.S. drone strikes may be cementing
Pakistani militancy**

The International Herald Tribune

March 23, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 International Herald Tribune All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 989 words

Byline: Mark Mazzetti - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

In the mountains of northwest Pakistan, the psychological impact of America's drone strikes can be measured by this: Some

residents have given up drinking Lipton tea, out of a growing conviction that the C.I.A. is using the tea bags as homing beacons for its pilotless planes.

But in Pakistan's cities there is a different impact: a sense that the gizmos, created to instill fear in America's enemies, only reveal the fears of Americans to take casualties themselves. There, a song of protest taunts the world's most powerful country for sending robots to do a man's job.

Even as the C.I.A. crosses names off its list of Al Qaeda leaders with each successful strike in Pakistan, Washington is struggling to understand the long-term implications of a push-button conflict. One question is whether the robot wars are only a holding action in a far more complex political and ideological war, against an enemy whose resilience America still does not fully understand.

President Barack Obama and his advisers acknowledge that it will take years, and billions of dollars, before Afghanistan's own army and police force can secure that country's hinterlands from the now-resurgent militants of both the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Meanwhile, the militants are likely to remain part of the fabric of Pashtun culture in the tribal lands on both sides of the mountainous border, where the governments of both Afghanistan and Pakistan have proved unable to exert control.

Given this complexity, the drone strikes are a seductive tool. They have delivered body blows to Al Qaeda's leadership in the tribal areas of northern Pakistan without risking a single American soldier on the ground. And last week, Mr. Obama was reported to be considering widening their use to include killing Taliban leaders who direct insurgents in Afghanistan from other sanctuaries, near Quetta, in southwestern Pakistan.

Leon E. Panetta, the C.I.A. director, recently called the spy agency's campaign in Pakistan the "most effective weapon" available to the Obama administration to take on militants there - a finely tuned bit of praise, given the Pakistani government's past denunciations of forays by American ground troops onto Pakistani soil.

The drone campaign is, at the same time, the antithesis of the grinding, patient and high-risk counterinsurgency doctrine currently in vogue at the Pentagon. Following the pattern of Iraq, that doctrine's proponents want to

Tribal battles and robot warfare U.S. drone strikes may be cementing Pakistani militancy

persuade at least some tribal groups to work with the Americans, as well as with the Afghan and Pakistani governments, rather than the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

But in Pakistan, some C.I.A. veterans of the tribal battles worry that, instead of separating the citizenry from the militants, the drone strikes may be uniting them. These experts say they fear that killing militants from the sky will not undermine, and may promote, the psychology of anti-American militancy that is metastasizing in the country.

"Unless we come up with a coherent Pakistan policy, then nothing works," said Milton Bearden, who as C.I.A. station chief in Islamabad once led the agency's campaign to arm Afghan mujahedeen against the Soviet Union. (It was Mr. Bearden who learned, from an executive at Lipton's parent company, Unilever, that Lipton tea was not selling well in some parts of Pakistan, and why.)

Over the past six months, C.I.A. operatives wielding joysticks have launched more than three dozen strikes by Predator and more heavily-armed Reaper drones. Missiles fired from them have hit militants gathering in mountain redoubts, and they have hit truck convoys ferrying ammunition across the border into Afghanistan.

Some agency veterans draw comparisons to the Israeli policy of "targeted killings" of Hamas leaders - killings that claimed scores of the group's top operatives in the Palestinian territories, but didn't keep new recruits from attacking Israel.

Intelligence officials in Washington and Islamabad said it was nearly impossible to measure the impact of the strikes on the so-called war of ideas. Even when precise, the drone strikes often kill women and children in militant compounds. When that happens, local Pashtun customs of "badal" obligate their survivors to seek revenge.

And then there is the matter of bravery. For his new book about the rise of robot warfare, "Wired for War," P.W. Singer interviewed insurgents in the Muslim world who said that America's reliance on drone weapons is a sign that the United States is afraid to sacrifice troops in combat.

This ought to be a particular concern now, Mr. Singer said, as the United States struggles to build alliances in Pakistan and Afghanistan. There, he said, trust is built by displays of personal bravery.

"If courage is the coin of the realm, then courage is what proves to the local Pashtun tribes that you are their allies," he said. He cited the protest song, which he came across while researching his book.

The United States learned hard lessons in Iraq about the limits of technology. The march to Baghdad made good on the Bush administration's promises of a swift victory over Iraq's army. But after the Iraqi troop columns melted into the landscape, the war turned nasty, brutish and long.

Now, there seems to be no chance that Mr. Obama will order an invasion of western Pakistan, and some experts see the drone strikes as only the best of many bad options.

Seth Jones, an analyst at the RAND Corporation and author of a forthcoming book about Afghanistan, "In the Graveyard of Empires," acknowledges a possibility that expanded missile strikes, aimed at Taliban leaders across the border in western Pakistan, could affect the fight in Afghanistan. They may demoralize Taliban foot soldiers there and weaken them in the eyes of fence-sitting Afghans who are waiting to see which side will win. If those Afghans come to think the Taliban can no longer return to Kabul, the foot soldiers might even be driven to the negotiating table, he said.

Load-Date: March 23, 2009

Drone strikes may work against U.S. in Pakistan; Attacks can bolster Taliban, experts say

The International Herald Tribune

March 23, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 International Herald Tribune All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 953 words

Byline: Mark Mazzetti - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

In the mountains of northwest Pakistan, the psychological impact of America's drone strikes can be measured by this: Some residents have given up drinking Lipton tea, out of a growing conviction that the C.I.A. is using the tea bags as homing beacons for its pilotless planes.

But in Pakistan's cities there is a different impact: a sense that the gizmos, created to instill fear in America's enemies, only reveal the fears of Americans to take casualties themselves. There, a song of protest taunts the world's most powerful country for sending robots to do a man's job.

Even as the C.I.A. crosses names off its list of Qaeda leaders with each successful strike in Pakistan, Washington is struggling to understand the long-term implications of a push-button conflict. One question is whether the robot wars are only a holding action in a far more complex political and ideological war, against an enemy whose resilience America still does not fully understand.

President Barack Obama and his advisers acknowledge that it will take years, and billions of dollars, before Afghanistan's own army and police force can secure that country's hinterlands from the now-resurgent militants of both the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Meanwhile, the militants are likely to remain part of the fabric of Pashtun culture in the tribal lands on both sides of the mountainous border, where the governments of both Afghanistan and Pakistan have proved unable to exert control.

Given this complexity, the drone strikes are a seductive tool. They have delivered body blows to Al Qaeda's leadership in the tribal areas of northern Pakistan without risking a single American soldier on the ground. And last week, Mr. Obama was reported to be considering widening their use to include killing Taliban leaders who direct insurgents in Afghanistan from other sanctuaries, near Quetta, in southwestern Pakistan.

Leon E. Panetta, the C.I.A. director, recently called the spy agency's campaign in Pakistan the "most effective weapon" available to the Obama administration to take on militants there - a finely tuned bit of praise, given the Pakistani government's past denunciations of forays by American ground troops onto Pakistani soil.

The drone campaign is, at the same time, the antithesis of the grinding, patient and high-risk counterinsurgency doctrine currently in vogue at the Pentagon. Following the pattern of Iraq, that doctrine's proponents want to

Drone strikes may work against U.S. in Pakistan Attacks can bolster Taliban, experts say

persuade at least some tribal groups to work with the Americans, as well as with the Afghan and Pakistani governments, rather than the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

But in Pakistan, some C.I.A. veterans of the tribal battles worry that, instead of separating the citizenry from the militants, the drone strikes may be uniting them. These experts say they fear that killing militants from the sky will not undermine, and may promote, the psychology of anti-American militancy that is metastasizing in the country.

"Unless we come up with a coherent Pakistan policy, then nothing works," said Milton Bearden, who as C.I.A. station chief in Islamabad once led the agency's campaign to arm Afghan mujahedeen against the Soviet Union. (It was Mr. Bearden who learned, from an executive at Lipton's parent company, Unilever, that Lipton tea was not selling well in some parts of Pakistan, and why.)

Over the past six months, C.I.A. operatives wielding joysticks have launched more than three dozen strikes by Predator and more heavily armed Reaper drones. Missiles fired from them have hit militants gathering in mountain redoubts, and they have hit truck convoys ferrying ammunition across the border into Afghanistan.

Some agency veterans draw comparisons to the Israeli policy of "targeted killings" of Hamas leaders - killings that claimed scores of the group's top operatives in the Palestinian territories, but did not prevent new recruits from attacking Israel.

Intelligence officials in Washington and Islamabad said it was nearly impossible to measure the impact of the strikes on the so-called war of ideas. Even when precise, the drone strikes often kill women and children in militant compounds. When that happens, local Pashtun customs of "badal" obligate their survivors to seek revenge.

And then there is the matter of bravery. For his new book about the rise of robot warfare, "Wired for War," P.W. Singer interviewed insurgents in the Muslim world who said that America's reliance on drone weapons is a sign that the United States is afraid to sacrifice troops in combat.

This ought to be a particular concern now, Mr. Singer said, as the United States struggles to build alliances in Pakistan and Afghanistan. There, he said, trust is built by displays of personal bravery.

"If courage is the coin of the realm, then courage is what proves to the local Pashtun tribes that you are their allies," he said.

The United States learned hard lessons in Iraq about the limits of technology. The march to Baghdad made good on the Bush administration's promises of a swift victory. But after the Iraqi forces melted into the landscape, the war turned nasty, brutish and long.

Now, there seems to be no chance that Mr. Obama will order an invasion of western Pakistan, and some experts see the drone strikes as only the best of many bad options.

Seth Jones, an analyst at the RAND Corporation, acknowledges that expanded missile strikes, aimed at Taliban leaders in western Pakistan, could affect the fight in Afghanistan. They may demoralize Taliban foot soldiers there and weaken them in the eyes of fence-sitting Afghans who are waiting to see which side will win. If those Afghans come to think the Taliban can no longer return to Kabul, the foot soldiers might even be driven to the negotiating table, he said.

Load-Date: March 23, 2009

Radically new strategy needed for deeply troubled region

The Irish Times

February 14, 2009 Saturday

Copyright 2009 The Irish Times All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Opinion; Pg. 14

Length: 969 words

Body

WORLD VIEW: Afghanistan and Pakistan have long been shaping up as a security disaster zone, writes **PAUL GILLESPIE**

OBAMA S VIETNAM? ask Newsweek s Fareed Zakaria and John Barry. Pakistan in peril, writes William Dalrymple in the New York Review of Books. Bloody bewilderment in Kabul, reports the International Herald Tribune in its account of how an audacious suicide attack on the Afghan justice and education ministries killed 20 people and injured 57 on the eve of this week s visit to the city by Richard Holbrooke, Barack Obama s special representative to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Taliban certainly ensured he saw the crux of the greatest foreign policy challenge facing Obama. In Pakistan, Holbrooke visited the city of Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province just as another bomb killed a popular governor there.

He heard how the Taliban and its Pakistani allies have captured Swat after a long battle with the Pakistani army, confining **women** to houses, blowing up girls schools, silencing music and closing barbers shops.

This is a rich, strategic region far from the Afghan border, within three hours of the capital Islamabad, and with ready access to Kashmir.

Explaining the significance of these facts, the well-known Pakistani journalist and author Ahmed Rashid says he has never been so disheartened or depressed in his life about the state of his country. It has a vital lack of leadership politically and militarily, its political parties squabble about petty disagreements rather than dealing with this major setback in Swat, the disastrous attack on Mumbai which originated in the same area, or the rapidly deteriorating Pakistani economy.

Reviewing Rashid s new book, Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia, Dalrymple, an acclaimed writer on the region s history and current affairs, gives a graphic picture of disintegration and policy failure there.

Agreeing with Rashid s view that after the September 11th 2001 attacks on New York and Washington the US-led war on terrorism has left in its wake a far more unstable world than existed on that momentous day , he writes: The rise of Iran as a major regional power, the advance of **Hamas** and Hizbullah, the wreckage of Iraq, with over two million external refugees and the ethnic cleansing of its Christian population. And now the implosion of Afghanistan and Pakistan, probably the most dangerous development of all .

Radically new strategy needed for deeply troubled region

What a catalogue of failure it is. Writing from Mumbai and New Delhi in the Financial Times this week, the paper's Asia editor David Pilling asks which is the real Pakistan – the seemingly moderate one represented by its president Asif Ali Zardari, Benazir Bhutto's playboy widower, or the one that denies Pakistan had anything to do with the Mumbai attack and last week released Abdul Qadeer Khan, father of its nuclear programme from jail.

This matters because the US pledge to triple its aid to Islamabad means that if the money ends up with the wrong people it could be feeding the beast responsible for so much trouble in the region.

Rashid is well-known to US policy makers and met Holbrooke in Lahore this week, and recently dined with Obama, according to the New York Times. He says of Holbrooke's appointment that this is a complete sea change in what Pakistan is used to.

There is a suspicion in the American establishment that the Pakistani army has found it easier to pull the wool over the eyes of the American military. It will be harder to do that with the civilians.

Holbrooke is to make proposals on Afghanistan to a Nato summit in April. European states are in no mood to boost their military involvement in such an uncertain political venture. At the Munich security conference last weekend observers detected a strong note of practical realism in the new administration's approach, including a readiness to talk to the Taliban. Rashid says Holbrooke must also engage with Iran on Afghanistan, where it has common interests with the US.

Afghan, Pakistani and Iranian journalists at a conference in Dubai this week were similarly concerned. The editor of an Afghan news agency in Kabul spoke of the endemic corruption and weakness of the Karzai regime, the power of regional warlords in the country, their financing of the booming opium trade, their links to neighbouring powers (including Pakistan) and the failure of the huge international aid effort to reach ordinary Afghans.

Access to the country through the Khyber Pass is now controlled by the Taliban and its allies, driving the US to make arrangements with the Russians over longer and more dangerous routes. The Taliban's allies now control over 70 per cent of the country, bringing rough justice but better order than Karzai can. They are winning the war and gradually closing in on Kabul.

That is explained by resentment of foreign armies and regional nationalisms angered by the use of US drones to attack their villages. As Newsweek's Zakaria puts it, many of them are accidental guerrillas, not fundamentalist extremists.

Zakaria argues that a radically changed strategy is required by Obama. It needs to do counter-insurgency right by making local populations feel secure. Talking to the Taliban is essential, based on a clear distinction between them and al-Qaeda, since not one Afghan was involved in 9/11.

And Pakistan must be pressured to yield up al-Qaeda, understanding that it originated in the US and Saudi-financed war against the Russians in Afghanistan in the 1980s, before being turned to advantage by the Pakistani military in the 1990s.

This was rational, since at low cost Pakistan was able to pin down the Indian army in Kashmir as well as chase the Russians out of Afghanistan. The beast then took on a life of its own.

pgillespie@irishtimes.com

Load-Date: February 14, 2009

A Yom Kippur for the Left

The Jerusalem Post

February 12, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 933 words

Byline: GIL TROY

Highlight: The rightward shift resulted from the failure of the Left's ideas at home - and the betrayal by liberals from around the world. Center Field. The writer is professor of history at McGill University. He is the author of *Why I Am a Zionist: Israel, Jewish Identity and the Challenges of Today* and *Leading from the Center: Why Moderates Make the Best Presidents*.

Body

Regardless of who ends up as prime minister after what seems to be emerging as the Israeli equivalent of the George W. Bush-Al Gore deadlock of 2000, Election Day 2009 was "a Yom Kippur for the Left," as one Meretz activist called it. The once-dominant Labor Party and once-rising Meretz Party have both been humiliated. The elections' three winners, Tzipi Livni, Binyamin Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman, all launched their careers from the Right, while Lieberman's aggressive campaign demonizing Israeli Arabs set the election tone.

As Israel's critics around the world and at home mourn this "rightward shift" and the rise of the "ultra-nationalist" Lieberman, as they fret about dimming prospects for a two-state solution, instead of further demonizing the country they should apologize, in the true spirit of Yom Kippur. The rightward shift resulted from the failure of the Left's ideas at home - and the betrayal by liberals from around the world.

Israelis have turned rightward because the failure of territorial concessions has been compounded by a broken covenant with the world. For decades liberal critics pounded two ideas into Israelis' heads. The first was that if the country withdrew from the territories it conquered in 1967, Palestinians - and the rest of the Arab world - would make peace. The second, related, assumption was an implicit compact that whatever security risks Israel took by ceding territory would be compensated for by the world's friendship.

TRAGICALLY, NEITHER the Oslo peace process nor the Gaza disengagement produced the desired results. In fact, many Israelis feel that the more they risked for peace, the more they suffered from those risks, the greater was the world's disapproval. Of course, Israel is not blameless. But whatever missteps it made pale in comparison to the three tragic truisms now dominating the political consciousness: Oslo's concessions resulted in terrorists murdering more than 1,000 people; disengaging from Gaza resulted in thousands of missiles raining on the South; and both times, when the country finally defended itself, the worldwide chorus of denunciation was so intense it fanned the flames of anti-Semitism.

It may be a reflection of living in a small, embattled democracy surrounded by autocrats and terrorists demanding your destruction, but Israelis are particularly sensitive to world opinion. Moreover, the mainstreaming of rhetoric that "Hitler didn't finish the job" and that Jews are "apes and monkeys" is particularly painful for a people still healing from the Holocaust. True, talking about "the world's" attitude vastly oversimplifies. But the shorthand works, considering how monolithic the criticism seems to be and how lethal previous rhetoric proved to be.

A Yom Kippur for the Left

IT IS PARTICULARLY demoralizing to see how anger at Israel's behavior absolves Palestinians of responsibility - and seems to sanitize terrorism. "The world" should denounce Palestinians for harming the possibility of a two-state solution, first in turning away from negotiations and toward terrorism in September 2000, then again for choosing to build Gaza into a base for launching Kassams rather than a model for a future state. "The world" should be furious at Hamas's rise, with the Islamists once again murdering supposed infidels while killing or maiming fellow Muslims who dare to disagree. "The world" should demand Palestinians change their culture of martyrdom, taking some historic responsibility for their failures to compromise.

"The world" should note that Israel's Arabs fueled Lieberman's campaign against them by applauding demagogic leaders like Azmi Bishara who spew hatred against the Jewish state. Instead, Palestinians' crimes or excesses are tolerated and rationalized; "the world" gives Palestinians a free pass.

AGAINST THIS BACKDROP, it is remarkable that so many remain willing to risk for peace, that so many former rightists like Tzipi Livni and Ehud Olmert now champion the two-state solution. Even Lieberman is open to territorial compromise. This willingness reflects how ingrained the culture of peace is. For all the talk we hear about the "rightward shift," Kadima, Livni's centrist party, seems to have won the most votes. The estimated Right-Left breakdown in the Knesset of 64 to 56 remains quite balanced - and Israel remains the only liberal country in the Middle East, judging by its commitment to equality, to democracy, to social justice, of sensitivity to women, to homosexuals, to racial diversity.

Over the next few weeks, as politicians use the votes they earned to bargain like peasant merchants at a Middle Eastern shouk, world opinion should note the subtleties amid the crudity. No matter what the ruling coalition's constellation, no matter who leads, the country will still seek a true peace.

While its critics will always look - almost exclusively - at the cards it holds and scrutinize whatever it does, Palestinians will remain far more in control of their destiny than their enablers admit. If Palestinians want a state - and want peace - they need to build a political culture devoted to nation-building, not martyrdom. And if leftists want to see progress in the Middle East, they must push for Palestinian reforms while rebuilding the world's covenant with Israel.

Yom Kippur is a day of atonement and thus renewal. Perhaps this "Yom Kippur of the Left" will lead to a new Middle East dynamic that replaces the "bad Israel, blameless Palestinians" paradigm with one of mutual responsibility leading to mutual trust, with gradual steps toward stability, not headlong rushes into one-sided blame games.

Graphic

Photo: CARRYING THE BODY of Islamic Jihad militant Khaled Kafarneh. Palestinians remain far more in control of their destiny than their enablers admit: If they want a state, they need to develop a political culture devoted to nation- building, not martyrdom (Credit: Hatem Moussa/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Comment

Sunday Tribune (Ireland)

January 18, 2009

Copyright 2009 The Sunday Tribune plc All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. N20

Length: 974 words

Byline: Diarmuid Doyle

Body

If you key the words "Joseph Goebbels" into the Google search engine, you will be offered a choice of 617,000 entries containing information about Adolf Hitler's propaganda minister. Goebbels still remains a point of reference for many people who should know better. In recent years, Tom Cruise, Michael Moore, Katie Couric, Peter Sutherland, Karl Rove, Condoleezza Rice, Silvio Berlusconi, Al Franken and, er, Richard Bruton have all been compared to Goebbels for one reason or another. And that's just a small selection.

Bruton's accuser was the former justice minister Michael McDowell, who made the comparison in the Dail a few years ago. He made a graceful and genuine apology subsequently, and there the matter rested. Nobody, least of all Richard Bruton, got too outraged, and Dick Roche resisted the temptation to throw himself like a human shield in front of Bruton to protect him from any more verbal attacks, as he did when Alan Shatter was the victim of a Goebbels comparison last week.

The difference, of course, is that there is a war on, and in times of war, words and their meanings become even more important than they normally are. Meanings are twisted, lies are told and outrages are justified by words. Sometimes this is done cleverly, sometimes awkwardly, sometimes obtusely. The murder of innocent people in Gaza has been accompanied by a comparable destruction of the English language, by Israel and her spokesmen and women around the world. In those circumstances, it is important to counter the butchery, of language and civilians, with a precise and accurate defence of the truth.

Throwing Goebbels comparisons around the place, as Aengus o Snodaigh did in relation to Shatter and the Israeli ambassador Zion Evrony, does more harm than good. It plays into the hands of the people who would use language to hide the truth and disguise their intentions. In this particular case, it allowed the aggressor to portray itself as the victim.

The comparison was ridiculous in relation to Shatter, and unfair in relation to Evrony. It would have been much more accurate to state that the ambassador is only obeying orders when he puts the Israeli case before a Dail committee, or on Morning Ireland or in letters to the newspapers. When Israel's war with Hezbollah in 2006 turned out to be such a public relations (and military) disaster, Tel Aviv set up a National Information Directorate to conceive and convey key messages in times of future conflict.

The Directorate makes sure that there is co-operation between all agencies that deal with public relations and diplomacy, so that Israel is sending a consistent message to the world. "In the war of pictures we lose," one foreign ministry official explained near the start of the current conflict, "so you need to correct, explain or balance it in other ways."

Comment

In recent weeks, as we have seen, such corrections have included Israel's insistence that this was a defensive war, even as it was murdering children innocent of any offence. They have included Israel's claim that Hamas was using children as shields, even as it targeted schools; they included Israel's boast that it was humanely telling Palestinians where it would attack even as it bombed the places they ran to as refuge.

Much of the coverage of George W Bush's impending departure from the White House has focused on his regular mangling of the English language during his time in office. These were often hilarious.

My current favourite is: "I heard somebody say, 'where's Mandela?' Well, Mandela's dead. Because Saddam killed all the Mandelas." This awkwardness with words has often been put forward as evidence that Bush is stupid, and therefore never really knows what he is doing, which would be a tempting analysis were it not for the fact that it lets Bush off the hook for the damage he has done over the last eight years. George Orwell, who is always a good person to turn to in times like these, had a theory about the way political leaders use words. He argued that language "becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts." George Bush, in trying to balance an array of crackpot policies about terrorism and the economy, personifies this sentence, and so too, you might argue, does Bertie Ahern. It was all the fashion to laugh indulgently at Ahern when he was butchering the language, but were his regular difficulties in making sense not down to the strain of coming up with ever more bizarre explanations for his dodgy behaviour?

By contrast with Ahern, Bush, the Israelis and so many others, Barack Obama has a concise and clear way with language.

We will just have to hope that, from Tuesday, this translates into the kind of clarity of purpose which his country, and the rest of the world, needs so badly.

ddoyle@tribune.ie

THE MEDIA WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS MINISTERS FOR COHERENT ANSWERS

Last Friday on Morning Ireland, presenter John Murray was accused by finance minister Brian Lenihan of being irresponsible for questioning some aspects of the nationalisation of Anglo Irish Bank.

On the News At One later that day, Irish Independent journalist Brendan Keenan was accused of being irresponsible by transport minister Noel Dempsey (above) for suggesting Ireland's reputation abroad might be damaged by the events of the week.

We seem to be witnessing a new way of governing: ministers will lurch from crisis to crisis, give the impression that they have no clue what they're doing and then question the patriotism of any journalist who dares to ask reasonable questions.

The media has no responsibility for the current crisis; still less is it obliged to be a cheerleader for government. Journalists will continue to ask questions of Lenihan et al. One day, perhaps, we might even get some coherent answers.

Load-Date: January 20, 2009

Why everyone wants to buy British

The Independent (London)

January 19, 2009 Monday

First Edition

Copyright 2009 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

The  **INDEPENDENT**

Section: Pg. 46

Length: 945 words

Byline: Matthew Norman

Body

The best of British to the Daily Mirror's drive to beat the slump by getting us all to Buy British. If the sneerers regard the devotion of several daily pages to defeating this slump as what someone once described (can't remember who or about what, but it will come back to me) as a cocktail of jingoism and intellectual dishonesty, so be it. Myself, I see the good in everything, and seldom more so than in a campaign spearheaded by Alan Sugar in finger-pointing Lord Kitchener mode.

Particularly helpful was Friday's list of products, some manufactured by British firms, that we should feel honour-bound to purchase. It will be a while before the impact on economic growth can be gauged, of course, but if there isn't a surge in sales of Fairy Liquid, Marmite and Maynards Wine Gums, I'll eat my Union flag-adorned titfer. While Colman's Original English Mustard is now expected to see off the challenge from all those fancy foreign English mustards, retail analysts predict that the biggest beneficiaries of the march to spend by the Mirror's impecunious army of readers will be Jaguar, Aston Martin and Rolls-Royce.

Before we get too excited, a tiny caveat. Mature readers may recall something similar from another hideous economic crisis. Back in 1968, a certain Daily Mirror (no relation) launched a campaign called I'm Backing Britain. "After a few months," according to its Wikipedia entry, "without any noticeable effect on individual companies or the economy generally, interest flagged..." In the New Statesman, Philip French summed up the sense that its "jingoism and intellectual dishonesty" (there, told you so) made it laughable.

Still, let's not be discouraged - it might have been different had a Labour MP of the time succeeded in his plan to hijack that campaign and restyle it "Buy British". Robert something, I think... Ah yes, that's it. Robert Maxwell. Don't you just adore perfect symmetry?

Loving the Lebedevs

The only newspaper recommended in Friday's spread was the Daily Mirror, and given the plethora of foreign-owned luxury car-makers gifted (presumably) free advertising elsewhere, this seemed ungracious to the London Evening Standard. Admittedly, the sale to Russian oligarch and all-round saint Alexander Lebedev hadn't been finalised then, and perhaps still hasn't. But assuming it has, or is about to be, the warmest of welcomes to Mr Lebedev and

Why everyone wants to buy British

his son Evgeny, who, from what I read in The Independent, have an impeccable record of proprietorship in Moscow, showing a commitment to freedom of expression and courage in opposing Mr Putin that not every home-grown owner could be relied upon to demonstrate.

Now there are those, my colleague Stephen Glover possibly among them, who'd think this the moment to declare an interest, for example by mentioning a twice-weekly sports column in the Standard. But that would imply an intent to ingratiate themselves with these utterly magnificent men that palpably isn't there, so we needn't bother with any of that.

Weighty issues

Concerns mount that the Daily Mail's commitment to chronicling female weight fluctuations is on the wane. One day last week, the Mail could spare no more than three pages for the subject. In fact, even less as only the top half of page three was devoted to pictures showing that actress Gemma Arterton has gained a few pounds since October. Meanwhile, pages 22-23 covered three other slebs who've shed 18 stone between them. Not long, then, before the next Daily Mail article railing in mystified outrage at the prevalence of various eating disorders among young women.

Joe the Hack in Israel

Last week, I mentioned US-election superhero Joe the Plumber's appointment as war correspondent, for the US website pjtv.com. Pleasingly, Joe wasted little time in Israel before stamping his authority on this journalistic backwater. First, he declared that reporters should never be allowed near warzones, citing a preference for the era when visual dispatches were restricted to five-minute propaganda films from the likes of Pathe News, shown in cinemas. Then he tried to browbeat an Israeli hack, seemingly unaware that broadcasting personal beliefs is his first duty, into agreeing that the global media is batting for Hamas. Early days for Joe as a latter-day Richard Dimbleby, but an encouraging start.

End of an era?

Speaking of the latter, it is with regret and disbelief that another moment of media history must be marked. Richard's firstborn, David Dimbleby, is not among the contingent of BBC figures in Washington, DC, for tomorrow's inauguration. Why this is so, I've no idea. Perhaps he couldn't be doing with the travelling. But with no word that Jonathan is covering it either, this would seem to be the first major political event for many decades to pass without any Dimblebovian input, and even if the brothers have irked over the years, there is something faintly sad about that.

Vote Mel, watch Gaunty

A couple of requests, finally, for those with very refined media tastes. Mad Mel Phillips confides, in her astoundingly prolific Spectator-hosted blog, that she is in the running for some prestigious blogging award; and that you can vote for her once a day. Please do so.

As for Jon Gaunt, he tells Sun readers that he will soon be appearing on Countdown as the resident of Dictionary Corner - you know, the one who, with no recourse to a hidden earpiece connected to backstage geeks with anagram software, swiftly comes up with nine-letter words seldom heard beyond the confines of particle physics. We wish Gaunty every success as the thinking wordsmith's Gyles Brandreth, and rely on him to comport himself with dignity alongside that charming Susie Dent.

Load-Date: January 18, 2009

The BBC is too impartial to suffering

The Independent (London)

January 26, 2009 Monday

First Edition

Copyright 2009 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

The INDEPENDENT

Section: COMMENT; Pg. 34

Length: 970 words

Byline: Philip Hensher

Body

During the 22 days of the Israeli assaults on Gaza, around 1,300 Palestinians, according to both local and international sources, were killed. This included over 400 children under 18 and over 100 women. Israeli shells hit schools, heavily built-up areas and the UN Relief and Works Agency headquarters, killing many and knocking out food and medical supply warehouses. The UN, Red Cross and Israeli human rights agencies have complained that food aid, medics and rescue services have been prevented from reaching those in need.

In these circumstances, when the normal pattern of life has been violently disrupted, people in the West and around the world naturally want to do something about it. I doubt that many do so primarily because they hate Israel, or because they are secretly anti-Semitic. I would guess that for most people, the emotion of pity for innocent victims and for those who have no escape from the open-air prison of Gaza, shelled with phosphorus, is uppermost. Some people, if they thought about it, would blame Israel; some, more ingenious, would blame Hamas. You could wish to do something about it, whichever opinion you held.

Not, however, if you worked for the BBC. The Disasters Emergency Committee, which represents 13 of Britain's aid agencies, asked the BBC to broadcast an appeal for money to help the people of Gaza. The BBC turned them down, saying such an appeal would damage the BBC's reputation for editorial independence. And, they said, there was no guarantee the money raised would reach those in genuine need.

Caroline Thomson, the Chief Operating Officer of the BBC, on the Today Programme on Saturday said: "You have to ask yourself what the most important thing for the people who are suffering ... from the BBC's position, the most important thing is that we keep our reputation." Edward Stourton, quite rightly, could hardly contain his incredulity at Ms Thomson's idea that by giving airtime to a humanitarian appeal the BBC would be seen to be supporting one side or another. As for the idea that the money "wouldn't get through": the aid agencies believe it would, and the Government has some measure of confidence, too. The BBC hasn't a leg to stand on.

The news, no doubt, has a requirement to represent the justification of the attacks as well as their results. Perhaps it would be right to go on reporting frankly green-ink views that most of those killed were terrorists, that the buildings destroyed were weapons factories and not schools, that any children apparently carried dead through the streets were probably murdered by their parents, and other sickening productions of the fantasy factory.

The BBC is too impartial to suffering

If you believed those claims, it would probably be right not to broadcast an appeal for funds. You don't, however, need to believe more than that many people killed were innocent bystanders with nowhere to flee, including children, and that the destruction has made life very difficult, and that the attendance of aid agencies demonstrates only the presence of suffering.

The trouble is that the BBC's requirement for impartiality has enabled it, yet again, to do nothing. Yet that inactivity does not have a neutral result. It means an appeal is not heard; that some money is not raised; an instance of suffering is not alleviated; that another child dies. Just so Ms Thomson can rest in her bed, assured that she has not upset a correspondent who believes a hospital was really a bomb factory, that there was never any white phosphorus fired at civilians, and that dead toddler was really a suicide bomber. Never has impartiality seemed so very far from moral neutrality.

Chelsy, an unlikely victim of these tough times

I suppose we will miss Chelsy Davy. For five years, she has fascinated us with her bored, sulky features, pulling a face next to Prince Harry. She's probably perfectly ladylike, but she always looked, in features, as vulgar and broad as a seaside landlady. She had all the potential to be that generation's Sarah Ferguson next to the tedious graciousness of Kate Middleton's Princess Diana tribute.

Alas, the credit crunch did for that sort of Mahiki Princess, and I think we can all look forward to an end to photographs of royal hangers-on falling out of Kensington clubs. Chelsy got her timing wrong. For a truly vulgar and shameless royal wedding, I think we need a Big Bang, a Barber Boom, a Macmillan announcing that "you never had it so good". As we look forward to a three-day week and an economic slump, a Zimbabwean princess dripping with diamonds and fake tan would never be quite the thing.

An excellent introduction to the real world

David Miliband, it has been reported, caused some offence in India by calling the Indian Foreign Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, "Pranab". Mr Mukherjee, right, called Miliband "your excellency". Seeking to export the Blair revolution, by which the prime minister of the day sought to be called "Tony" by his colleagues, was always going to lead to trouble.

But do any of us in Britain know how to address anyone any more? When I was at university, my tutors called me "Mr Hensher" and I called them "Professor X". Now, my students begin e-mails to me "Hey Phil". That, I don't mind so much, but I have to admit being irritated when the ticket-checker on South West Trains calls me "mate".

The trouble is that the person who you're on first-name terms with might very well still fail your essay, and being the "mate" of the mini-Hitler with the hole-puncher isn't going to count for much when he discovers that you've forgotten to buy a ticket.

As WH Auden said, the problem is that most people have forgotten the difference between their friends and complete strangers. If Mr Miliband hopes to progress in his career, he might like to discover that not everybody in the world has forgotten this important distinction.

Load-Date: January 25, 2009

Israeli refuseniks determined to resist the war

The Irish Times

January 17, 2009 Saturday

Copyright 2009 The Irish Times All Rights Reserved

Section: WORLD; War in Gaza; Pg. 11

Length: 910 words

Body

It is not clear how many soldiers have refused to take part in the offensive in Gaza because the Israeli military has been quietly sending them home, writes **Chris McGreal** Tel Aviv

THE CALL came at 11pm on a Saturday. Yitzchak Ben Mocha's mobile flashed up an unidentified number, but he knew who it was. A recorded voice ordered him to report for duty at eight the next morning. As he packed his uniform he wondered if he was heading to prison. The 25-year-old paratrooper was about to tell his commanders that not only would he refuse to join Israel's war in Gaza, he would not serve in any capacity that helped perpetuate the conflict.

He reported for duty and was ordered to erect tents for combat soldiers. I told my officer, I am not going to do this. The next morning I was sent home. They told me they'd call me again if there was need. They have not called yet. In the past the army used to put refuseniks in jail for weeks. When they were released, sometimes they would be arrested again and this would go on for months.

But now it seems the army doesn't want to admit publicly there are refuseniks. [It] is embarrassed. It would go against the image of the whole army and country united behind this war.

The Israeli military has told the press there is so much support for the assault on Gaza that more soldiers have turned up to fight than have been called up for what the local media is characterising as a righteous war. Ben Mocha says this obscures the increasing number of Israeli men of fighting age, almost all of whom are military reservists, who are refusing to serve the occupation.

One resisters' organisation, Courage to Refuse, published a newspaper advert condemning the killing of hundreds of Palestinian civilians and calling on soldiers to refuse to fight in Gaza. The brutal, unprecedented violence in Gaza is shocking. The false hope that this kind of violence will bring security to Israelis is all the more dangerous. We cannot stand aside while hundreds of civilians are being butchered by the IDF [Israel Defence Force], it said.

But it is not clear how many have refused to go to Gaza, because the army is sending people home, quietly. So far, only one reservist has been jailed for refusing to fight. Noam Levna, a first lieutenant in the Israeli army, was sent to a military prison for 14 days. Killing innocent civilians cannot be justified, he said. Nothing justifies this kind of killing. It is Israeli arrogance based on logic. It's saying, If we hit more, everything will be OK. But the hatred and anger we are planting in Gaza will rebound on us. Ben Mocha is hardly a pacifist or anti-Israeli. He grew up in a Jewish orthodox family, attended a religious school, and served full-time in one of Israel's elite combat parachute units.

Israeli refuseniks determined to resist the war

He says he joined the Israeli army believing he would be fighting terror organisations . He found himself suppressing Palestinian aspirations for freedom and putting down protests of Palestinian farmers against the incontinent theft of their lands . He also saw abuses, such as Israeli troops sending Palestinian women and children into houses to ensure they were not booby-trapped, and using civilians as human shields.

I am not a pacifist. I recognise the necessity of Israel to have a strong defensive army, but I m no longer going to play a part in 40 years of occupation. I told the army I will report for training so that I can always be ready to defend Israel, but attacking Gaza and perpetuating occupation is not defending Israel. That is not a popular view in a country where worship of the military begins in school and many political leaders are former generals. But the war is likely to strengthen the resisters once Israelis can reflect on the scale of the killing.

In 2003, the army sent Yoni Ben Artzi to prison for 18 months for declaring himself a conscientious objector. Ben Artzi, the nephew of Binyamin Netanyahu, the former prime minister favoured to return to power in the next general election, was called before a conscience committee , made up just of military officers. It said he was not a pacifist on the grounds that his persistent resistance to the army was evidence of the qualities of a soldier.

He spent longer in jail than any other refusenik, but recently the military has preferred to pretend that dissenters don t exist as hundreds of soldiers and reservists signed petitions refusing to enforce the occupation.

The government was particularly embarrassed when 27 pilots said they would no longer carry out killings of Palestinian leaders in Gaza, and when a group of elite commandos refused to serve in the occupied territories.

Still, that remains a minority view. Some of my comrades from the army don t like what I m thinking. Some said they don t agree but they support my right to say it. But now, with the war, they say I m giving my unit a bad reputation, said Ben Mocha.

He is disturbed that most of the Israeli public and media is blind to the fact that hundreds of Palestinians have been cut to pieces. We are creating a thousand suicide bombers for the future from the brothers of the dead, the sons of the dead . . . in the long term, we are creating more terror. You can t separate the war in Gaza from the fact that the Palestinian nation is under occupation for more than 40 years. I m not justifying Hamas firing rockets but we Israelis should first look at what we are doing. (Guardian service)

Load-Date: January 20, 2009

Will the Colombians silently move to the victor?

Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka)

January 26, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 Wijeya Newspaper Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 958 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, Jan. 26 -- This was the chatter in the cocktail circuit-the women outdoing the men- until the forces opened the Northern front. Unaccredited pundits given a hearing not because of acquired knowledge but of social positions held in society. They had contacts with diplomats of the west, journalists of doubtful integrity, INGOs seeking audiences, pseudo intellectuals with social graces, professionals of opportunistic nature and academics in search of dollars and an assortment of social climbers of like mind.

They truly believed in what they said, because their minds were small, compartmentalized and closed -partly genetic largely environmental. So distanced were they, knew not the feelings of the masses. They lived virtually on another planet- in a mini world of their own. Latterly with the winds blowing in the other direction, they are quiet, but still wishing their dreams will come true, waiting for some news to come- at least to say, so we said. Wait in vain, they still do.

The damage they did with little knowledge and big talk often with a glass in hand is insurmountable.

They created an opinion for a class in Colombo-the Colombians. Those mindless private sector executives-from bank clerks carrying glorified titles of no prestige; to garment exporters with a fistful of dollars whose world revolves around the GST ; the insipid servile public officials (mostly retired) sitting in every conceivable committee doing sweet nothing seeking upward mobility depending on a diplomatic or NGO connection for a trip abroad; to the breed of academics who have more to learn than teach, making a living on international connections as their hired hands; associates among the NGOs who sing for their breakfast to the tune of their foreign masters- to such, this is a war that cannot be won-where defeat awaits us, their anthem to the nation. They made that opinion infectious on epidemic proportions.

There were a few coming from their own ranks who told them where they were wrong. Such were dismissed as freaks, fanatics and fakirs unfit to be a Colombian. Those who held competing views were socially ostracized. Such yakos in their artificial genteel world were fit to be in the domain of the servants' quarters. Those who opposed were ridiculed.

The war was not fought not in wilds of Wanni alone but on media, at seminars, in publications and talk shows. There was both the known and the unknown enemy. In the streets of Colombo roamed the suicide bombers in search of prey while in plush limousines traveled those who thirsted in desperation for devastation on detonation, hopefully it will down the morale of the forces.

Of course it must not descend on them or on their close ones- little did they care for any other. Logic was elementary-LTTE was on a rampage to destroy many whom the Colombians yearned destroyed. Hatred against a government they voted against made them proximate in mind and body to a terrorist organization.

Will the Colombians silently move to the victor?

There were no Colombians in the battle front. The Colonel Blimps have all faded away. The fodder for the war was provided by sons and daughters of the masses. To the Colombians, loss of life on the battle field did not count, as they are not their children. No heroes or heroics can be raised other than from the wombs of affluent Colombo or outside the shores of the island.

LTTE links with west made it easy to cheer terrorism. They wanted the terrorist to defeat our sons and daughters who were sacrificing their lives to give security and stability to the Colombians to send their children to school, to do their business, to earn from their professions and to have fun. The source of the distorted psychology was inherited genetically or soaked by impersonation -those aping did it in with more flourish than those born to it.

It is their style to be different to mortals whom they consider less. If others were cheering with the forces reaching Killinochchi; instinct made them pick holes in a victory achieved with lives lost to defeat terrorism.

They cheered for Colombo not for Sri Lanka. Without the LTTE they have to search for another effective force to destabilize the government with an opposition stupid. Even the terrorists are better than a government they voted against. To keep the LTTE alive was a live factor to destabilize the government they hate- the psyche and hype of the Colombians. Instead of the four letter initials of the local terrorists if the name was Hamas or Hezebulla or Al Queida detested by the West possibly the equation may have changed.

With the downfall of the LTTE, occult may well say the serial losers have the enduring knack in selecting the fallen, whenever an option is available. Naturally, they are so out of touch with the reality in the country of their birth. In the search for an alternative they may soon turn to the contemporary scriptures originating from the Supreme Court orders at least for a while. They well seek salvation from any saint or scarecrow, if the gospel is according to the elite.

The final victory was delayed primarily due to the voice of the opinion makers of Colombo with the perennial chant the "war cannot be won on the battlefield". We have suffered for 25 years, in getting our priorities in order because of the misguided sounds of a vocal minority in Colombo given a hearing by the ruling elite.

Their mantra has a greater reach because of easy access to media and advertising channels. Their erroneous imprudent flawed wisdom has contaminated society many times; but never as toxic as when they prevailed upon, to seek the path of negotiating instead of eliminating terrorism. So will the Colombians silently stealthily slyly move to the victor?

Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily Mirror Sri Lanka.

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: May 6, 2009

Facebook users stir up political debate online

Cape Times (South Africa)

January 27, 2009 Tuesday

e1 Edition

Copyright 2009 Independent News and Media Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: Pg. 3

Length: 946 words

Byline: NATASHA JOSEPH

Body

"IN 25 days 1 330 Palestinians killed by Israel including 437 children and 108 women, 5 450 injured".

It looks like the sort of statement you'd see displayed on a piece of cardboard or fabric, borne aloft at any number of pro-Palestine rallies and marches held in the wake of renewed fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas in Gaza.

But the sentence which comes after the statistics - "Donate your status", followed by a URL, indicates that this particular protest is not happening in the streets of Cape Town, London or Islamabad.

The URL is a link to a new application which users can upload in order to track the conflict in Gaza and it is Dominique Schafer's most recent Facebook status update.

She's not alone. When fighting erupted in Gaza late last year and the world's attention turned once more to the Middle East, Facebook users were quick to state their allegiances by changing their profile pictures, joining groups which called for peace, for negotiations, for the total obliteration of the state of Israel, or for the world to let Israel defend itself.

"I use Facebook as a place to voice my political views because I think people are more likely to read my status, or see my profile picture than read an e-mail, never mind a newspaper article," Schafer said.

"Last week my status read something like, 'National protest against genocide in Gaza in (London's) Hyde Park, 12:30, come and do your bit for human rights'. I got loads of comments from South Africans, asking things like: 'But what good is doing so going to do, and why use the word genocide?'

"My Palestinian friends all responded with things like, 'Thank you for supporting us at this terrible time' and 'Of course it's a genocide, an ethnic group is being deliberately targeted.'"

"I thought it was really interesting how people responded, and I guess I feel that if it makes people more aware of what is going on, (Facebook) is an effective form of political expression," Schafer said.

"I strongly believe in the idea that nothing is outside the political," said Facebook user Nicole Sobotker.

"Even our most seemingly banal words and statements are indicative of our attitudes towards the world.

Facebook users stir up political debate online

"So to me, not showing solidarity (online) with people and causes I support is no different to being willfully apathetic."

Prominent South African activist Zackie Achmat used his Facebook page to provoke debate about the conflict in Gaza.

On January 16, Achmat posted a note titled "A Facebook chat with an advocate of Israeli aggression".

He posted the transcripts of an online discussion he'd had with one friend, identified only as "R".

The discussion, which ended with R stating that "... as far as I'm concerned, the more damage to Gaza, the broader my smile", evoked a range of responses from a number of Achmat's Facebook friends.

In the midst of furious political debate, one respondent wrote: "I am fascinated at how you are using web-social networking as a tool for activism ..."

Larissa Klazinga said her decision to use the Israeli flag as her profile picture and to rail against "general anti-Israel sentiment" in her status updates came after many of her online friends called on her to "support Gaza" by joining any number of Facebook groups dedicated to this purpose.

She was careful to make her political support for Israel known offline and "in real life", as well.

"I wore an (Israeli Defence Force) t-shirt, I took (my views) off Facebook, out of cyberspace," Klazinga said.

Joining groups which call for the prosecution of ANC president Jacob Zuma to go ahead or updating your status to declare support for new American president Barack Obamas amount to "armchair activism", she said.

"You're not committing to anything (by making political statements online), you're not doing anything. It's not real."

However, she conceded that online 'activism' was a useful supplement to real-world action.

"If you're using (social networking) as one tactic in a much larger strategy ... so if in joining a group, you do something - go to a march, write a letter ... that's fine."

Sobotker agreed.

"(It's) not to say that Facebook is a substitute for taking action in the offline world. It most definitely isn't. But being connected to social networking forms a part of my life, so I feel my political views should be reflected there too."

Local internet guru and director of Cambrient, a digital marketing company, Jarred Cinman, said Facebook was not the only online space in which politics and world news were coming to the fore.

"Access to information from the source is more prevalent than |ever before," Cinman said, citing Twitter as an example.

At the height of the recent |conflict in Gaza, he said, people "on the ground" were able to spread news about the fighting using Twitter.

"Important information has broken via Twitter ... lots of information is coming out via social media and blogs, Twitter ... small, punchy bits of info."

The new White House website uses video clips and discussion |forums to engage with visitors.

President Barack Obama used social networking extensively during his presidential campaign and a flood of Facebook status updates which read, simply, "Yes, we can!" in the wake of his election are tangible proof of this.

"(South African) political parties are very aware of what Obama did, they've looked at the US example and they will attempt to emulate this, but (so far) it's very unsophisticated and rudimentary," Cinman said.

Facebook users stir up political debate online

He said there was an enormous amount of "rich" political discussion occurring on South African blogs and social networks.

"But a lot of it is very destructive and negative - it gives the opportunity to people to make negative noise."

natasha.joseph@inl.co.za

Load-Date: January 26, 2009

End of Document

Time to dispel media untruths about Palestine

New Straits Times (Malaysia)

January 15, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad All Rights Reserved

Section: Pg. 21; LOCAL

Length: 978 words

Byline: Mohamed Ariff

Body

WHAT is taking place in the Middle East is not a "war on Gaza", as it is labelled, but a genocide if not holocaust of innocent Palestinians in Gaza, brutally carried out by Israel, condoned, if not aided, by the United States.

The US provides not only the weapons used by the Israeli regime but also the money to finance such operations. The US blindly supports Israel, apparently coerced by the powerful pro-Israel lobby. What really matters to Israel is US support, not United Nations resolutions. The fact remains that Israel has no qualms committing crimes against humanity with absolute impunity, as long as it has US support.

Seen in these terms, the US is equally guilty of war crimes being committed in Gaza in the name of Israel's self-defence. Nearly 1,000 Palestinians have been killed, 40 per cent of them women and children, and more than 3,000 Palestinians have been injured in Gaza, not to mention the colossal collateral damage inflicted on buildings and infrastructure.

What is even more appalling is the Israeli civilian support for this murderous operation, as shown by a recent poll which found 91 per cent in favour. What is heartening is that there are still some fair-minded people in Israel, at least nine per cent, who denounce Israel's brutality in Gaza.

One may interpret the popular support for the war in Israel simply as a predictable reaction from a people living on borrowed time in a stolen land, or more seriously as an understandable response from a people who are ignorant of the issues behind the hubris. The Israeli media conspiracy through wanton disinformation and misinformation may also have made these people oblivious to the atrocities being committed in Gaza.

To be sure, a cessation of the current carnage in Gaza will only be the beginning of a new phase in the seemingly endless hostilities that have been going on in Palestine for over 60 years. The chances are that there will be no real peace until and unless justice is handed out to the people of Palestine, who are now only asking for what they had in 1967, after having conceded 78 per cent of their homeland to the Israelis when the state of Israel was arbitrarily set up in 1948.

Israel is dead wrong if it thinks that it can numb the Palestinians into submission by imposing its will under the weight of its superior military might.

Not surprisingly, the anger and outrage at what is happening in Gaza cuts across racial and religious lines in many parts of the world. Muslims, in particular, are incensed by the horror inflicted on their fraternity in Palestine for

Time to dispel media untruths about Palestine

generations, which they blame not only on Israel and the US but also on the "spineless" Arab leaders, who are accused of being stooges of the US.

Decisions taken in anger are often wrong, as they are not rationally made based on a careful analysis of the pros and cons. One such decision is to boycott American and Israeli products. No doubt, such boycotts do have symbolic value in sending strong messages, but one must be mindful of the unintended effects, which can be very detrimental.

For starters, consumers who boycott limit their choices, settling for inferior or costlier substitutes, which means they deny themselves value for money. They hurt themselves in trying to hurt the producers of the boycotted products.

Second, it is morally wrong to punish the producers who hardly have anything to do with the policies of the countries they originate from or operate in.

Third, inadvertently, local workers employed by these companies in the host country will eventually bear their brunt of such boycotts.

Fourth, boycotts represent a double-edged sword as they invite retaliation, putting a country's own products at grave risk in export markets.

Fifth, the multinational corporations, which are usually targeted, are often a voice of moderation in their home countries, as they are affected by foreign policies pursued by their home governments.

Sixth, such actions may impede investment inflows by sending the wrong message to potential foreign investors.

The list may go on and on, but the upshot in a nutshell is that a country may end up as net loser without achieving the main objective, namely justice for the Palestinians.

As history has repeatedly shown, violence begets violence. Militancy, therefore, is not the answer, although people are driven by desperation to take up arms, as in the case of Hamas. There can be no military solutions to the Palestinian problem. It is indeed ironic that the entire Arab world, a hundred times larger, is no match for tiny Israel.

War is despicable and should not even be the last resort, for there are no problems that cannot be resolved through talks and negotiations, if the contesting parties are sincere and willing to put their hearts and minds together to arrive at just solutions.

Attempts must be made to dispel untruths that blemish the Palestinian cause, perpetrated through media distortions, especially in Israel and the US. The powerful pro-Israel lobby in the US needs to be countered with logic and reasoning and facts and figures. The Organisation of the Islamic Conference must take up this task, instead of merely convening ceremonious summits.

It is encouraging to note that world opinion is finally beginning to shift towards justice for the Palestinians, if the growing demonstrations around the world are any measure.

Israel's Gaza misadventure is hopefully the breaking point where the world says enough is enough.

Israel runs the risk of stigmatising itself as a pariah state if it continues to disregard world opinion, while the United States may lose the respect and goodwill it has earned on its lofty principles of freedom and democracy if it continues to ignore the injustice inflicted on the Palestinians, who have become refugees in their homeland.

The writer is executive director of the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

Time to dispel media untruths about Palestine

End of Document

Beirutis put little faith in protest as means of ending Israeli war on Gaza

The Daily Star (Lebanon)
January 14, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 The Daily Star - The Daily Star FZ LLC. Provided by Syndigate.info, an Albawaba.com company All Rights Reserved

THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 952 words

Byline: Florence Thireau

Body

Protests continued in Lebanon and around the world this week, calling for an end to Israeli hostilities and global action to stop what the UN Human Rights Council on Monday called "grave" abuses committed over the past 18 days of violence in the Gaza Strip. As Israeli tanks moved closer toward the center of Gaza City Monday.

BEIRUT: Protests continued in Lebanon and around the world this week, calling for an end to Israeli hostilities and global action to stop what the UN Human Rights Council on Monday called "grave" abuses committed over the past 18 days of violence in the Gaza Strip.

As Israeli tanks moved closer toward the center of Gaza City Monday, and the death toll rose beyond 900 lives, many of them women and children, The Daily Star went to the Beirut neighborhoods of Achrafieh and Mazraa for a local perspective on whether protesting against the Israeli war in Gaza would be effective in ending hostilities.

Respondents generally expressed pessimism, believing that protesting against the current war, both locally and abroad, would have little effect on international action to halt the violence that has cost so many Palestinian lives over the past few weeks.

Many said that their political apathy, and their lack of faith in the political parties that are often demonstrating, namely Hizbullah, kept them from participating in protests. This attitude was manifested on the streets of both Achrafieh and Mazraa.

In Achrafieh, Mariet said: "I don't think that protesting will accomplish anything. I'm not political, so no I would not protest."

Nearby, George echoed her sentiments: "No, it's not going to change anything. I'm not political, so I won't protest myself, but even if I was, protesting is not going to change the situation in Gaza."

Colette, 40, said: "I reject Israel's policy and I blame the Lebanese government for its lack of action regarding Gaza. I regret that only Hizbullah and Palestinians are protesting in Lebanon. I don't support Hizbullah so I cannot protest with them."

Beirutis put little faith in protest as means of ending Israeli war on Gaza

Two younger women nearby, Samia and Nour, echoed her sentiments, that they wished to protest, but did not wish to protest or stand with Hizbullah. But they said they were, "shocked by the deaths of children and women."

Down the street, Amir, an Armenian living in Beirut, expressed a similar lack of faith in any progressive action stemming from protesting, but went further in his analysis: "Look, it's a genocide, and I'm Armenian. I know all about that. But it doesn't matter what [protesters] say ... How many times have there been protests? Protests of 1.5 million people even! Is there any change? There has been 25 years of war, at least. The problem is political and when we're talking about politicians, what will protests accomplish?"

Still, Amir believed that "if someone has a view to resist, and he's defending his home, let him resist, and let him protest." Regarding global protests, he said: "Maybe it will have an effect. I don't know."

Claude, 55, said: "I regret that Christian parties are not organizing protests in Achrafieh. For some it might seem like Gaza's situation is a Muslim problem, but all Lebanese people should be concerned. I recognize Israel's right to defend itself as well as the Palestinians.' I think Lebanon's government is the best among Arab governments ... It gave \$1 million to the Gazans and I am expecting good results from it. Giving money is [better] than protesting in the streets."

Nadine took a more radical tone. "I'm very shocked by this systematic targeting of innocents such as children and women in Gaza, but I can't help thinking that it is not Lebanon's problem. Lebanon should try to focus on its own problems. Our best solution is isolation. We welcomed Palestinians in our country 60 years ago and it created a lot of problems. Media are always defending the weakest, but I don't think that the weakest are always innocent. All these protests are useless. We should focus on the next legislative elections. Besides, in a democracy, the only legitimate way of protesting is to vote."

In Mazraa, Osama told The Daily Star that "protesting isn't going to change anything, and ultimately it won't bring anything good for the Palestinians."

However, further down the street, Mohammad was more vocal: "Israel is doing something terrible. They're using phosphorous bombs, committing war crimes, and they should stop it. There is no reason for this war, and if there is a reason, they should give us one. There are poor people in Gaza, women and children. How can they say this war is with Hamas? However, I don't believe that the Palestinians who are here and in [the Occupied West Bank] are doing enough." Asked about protesting specifically, he replied, "I don't know. It gives an opinion, and that's important. I will protest if I feel I have to."

At a jewelry shop in Mazraa, Samer said: "Locally, I don't think protests will accomplish anything. But globally, I do think so. Perhaps it will change the stance of people in Europe or America to see protesters standing with the Palestinians. But in the Arab world, no. It will not change anything. So no, I would not protest myself here in Lebanon. It is meaningless here."

Ahmad, a 21-year-old journalist in Mazraa, was more positive. He told The Daily Star that "Lebanon is the only Middle Eastern country where you can protest without fearing to be arrested, unlike Egypt or Syria. We all know that protesting in Beirut can create a 'domino effect' in the Arab world."

But unfortunately, Amhad's sentiments were not shared by most Beirutis, who felt that no amount of vocal protests would change or solve the Gazans' current predicament as they face violent siege at the hands of the Israeli military.

Load-Date: January 21, 2009

Zuma

Cape Argus (South Africa)
January 14, 2009 Wednesday
e1 Edition

Copyright 2009 Independent News and Media Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 12

Length: 927 words

Body

I After Monday's Zuma trial outcome, the ANC issues a statement that "JZ is still our man". Therein lies the problem, though, in that no one in South Africa wants Zuma except 4 000 delegates in Polokwane.

I The sad part about the Zuma debacle is that it is more a reflection on the inefficiency, incompetence and ingrained racial bias of the judiciary than the allegations made against the ANC president. - DS

I As a senior citizen observing the antics of Zuma doing everything in the book to avoid prosecution, I can't help wondering what has happened to our good old law and order and the constitution. - Rob Gould

I With Jacob Zuma (and the ANC) fighting hard on all fronts to make certain that Zuma becomes the next president of our country in just a few months' time, South Africans deserve to be told the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about his finances. That becomes even more important and urgent considering that his (financial) fairy godfather is in jail for corruption.

I Trying to prosecute Zuma is undermining the constitutional rights of the ANC? Are people so poorly educated that they will believe statements like this?

I The ANC suffers from a massive blind spot when it comes to the Zuma indictment!

I Zuma's case is about stealing from the people of the country period! The communists harping on about it being politically motivated is a ploy to try and turn a lie into truth. Why won't Zuma just let his case go to court if he is not guilty? This will save the taxpayer millions by not having the police there to control his unruly supporters.

I By hook or by crook, it is determined that Jacob Zuma will become president of South Africa. Please, for all our sakes, step forward Robin Hood.

I Vusi Pikoli was fired by Mbeki because he disobeyed him on Jacki Selebi. Kgalema Motlante fired him because he prosecuted Jacob Zuma. The moral of the story, don't arrest or prosecute a president's friend!

I Thanks to Mayor Helen Zille for the Christmas lights and tree in Retreat. Also a big thank you to the neighbourhood watch for a peaceful Christmas.

I I visited Cape Town over the festive season. We were at the Blouberg beachfront. Can someone please explain why the toilets are so utterly disgusting? What would it take to revamp them and put a person there to look after the toilets? You are always complaining about lack of employment, well, here's your chance, local councillors.

Zuma

I I drove on the N2 past the airport this morning, past piles of rubbish, plastic bags and dead dogs on both sides of the road and past the non-progressive road works, in between taxis . What a beautiful sight. What do the tourists think?

I Mayor Zille, when are you going to find a solution to the informal settlement in the bush between Big Bay, Blouberg and West Beach? If I set up a camp in the bush in Camps Bay illegally, would I also be allowed to live there, run shebeens and break into homes?

I Why is the Aroma bottle store in Kromboom Road allowed to operate in a residential area often open till after 7pm? The least they can do is clean up after the people living on their stoep.

I Israel and Israelis, where is your humanity? How can you justify this destruction? Have you no shame to drop bombs on defenceless women and children? Gaza is like a massive cage with 1.5 million oppressed people locked in by Israel. They have no rights. And people ask why they are firing rockets? It's called resistance.

I To all Muslims, go live in Palestine. I am so sick of your whining.

I Why are Muslims complaining and campaigning about Israel attacking Gaza? Why are they not campaigning for their fellow Muslims in the Western Cape to stop killing our youths with any type of drug just to make money? My support will forever be with the Jews.

I If Israel is so productive and not destructive, maybe you want to find a new term for producing refugee camps and killing a thousand innocents!

I Logic tells you that Hamas can't use kids as human shields. They are not parading in the streets. Their homes are being bombed by those Zionists.

I I can't believe that there are people out there that still support Israel. Israeli deaths 13, Palestinian deaths 925!

I How can the massacre of almost 1 000 killed and 3 000 injured in Palestine not be the story like 9/11? The West are hypocrits. - Ishmael

I Mr Bush, your Weapons of Mass Destruction have always been in Israel.

I I support Israel whole-heartedly as a Christian and because God promises blessings for those who do. Islam goes on and on about how peaceful they are but why is it that the vast majority of terrorist groups choose this religion?

I More than 900 Palastinian civilians dead compared to 13 Israelis deaths, of which 10 are soldiers. The Red Cross is prevented from helping the injured, illegal white phosphorus being used by Israel in Gaza. This is not a war, this is genocide.

I The police are doing a good job about the shebeens. It is not good to see a child drunk, doing wrong things.

I Revoke the Halaal certification! Who is fooling who here? Muslims are still buying Coke despite the fact that it contains alcohol.

I I completely support poaching of crayfish as it is the only way to access it at a reasonable price. Why must I pay R300/kg at Checkers?

I With reference to Barbie Sandler's letter of January 13, your position is idealistic! What a big ask to pretend that apartheid never existed? Who do you think you are, ma'am, to ask this of people who have not had the opportunities you have had?

I So an SMSer wants Chaaban back because he is a colourful man! Don't you mean "colour fool"?

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

Zuma

End of Document

Free elections in Iran⁴ Don't make me laugh; LEADER

Sunday Express

June 21, 2009 Sunday

U.K. 1st Edition

Copyright 2009 EXPRESS NEWSPAPERS All Rights Reserved

Section: LEADER; 47

Length: 998 words

Byline: Christopher Hitchens

Body

; OR A flavour of the political atmosphere in Tehran last week, I quote from a young Iranian comrade who furnishes me with regular updates:

"I went to the last major [President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad rally and got the whiff of what I imagine fascism to have been all about. Lots of splotchy boys who can't get a date are given guns and told they're special."

It's hard to better this, either as an evocation of the rancid sexual repression that lies at the nasty core of the "Islamic republic" or as a description of the reserve strength that the Iranian parastate, or state within a state, can bring to bear if it ever feels itself even slightly challenged.

There is a theoretical reason why the events of the past month in Iran (I am sorry but I resolutely decline to refer to them as "elections") were a crudely stage-managed insult to those who took part in them and those who observed them, and then there is a practical reason. The theoretical reason, though less immediately dramatic and exciting, is the much more interesting and important one.

Iran and its citizens are considered by the Shiite theocracy to be the private property of the anointed mullahs. This totalitarian idea was based on a piece of religious quackery promulgated by the late Ayatollah Khomeini and known as "velayat-e faqui". Under this edict, which originally put the clerics in charge of the lives and property of orphans, the indigent and the insane, the entire population is now declared to be a childlike ward of the black-robed state.

Thus any voting exercise is, by definition, over before it has begun because the all-powerful Islamic Guardian Council determines well in advance who may or may not "run". Any newspaper referring to the subsequent proceedings as an "election" (sometimes complete with "rallies", "polls", "counts" and all the rest of it) is the cause of helpless laughter among the ayatollahs ("They fell for it? It's too easy!").

Shame on all those media outlets that have been complicit in this dirty lie. Shame also on the pathetic US Secretary of State who said before the result that she hoped that "the genuine will and desire" of the people of Iran would be reflected in the outcome. Surely she knows that any such contingency was deliberately forestalled to begin with.

In theory, the first-choice candidate of the ayatollahs might not actually "win" and there could even be divisions among the Islamic Guardian Council as to who constitutes the best nominee. Secondary as that is, it can still lead to rancour.

Free elections in Iran 4 Don't make me laugh LEADER

After all, corrupt systems are still subject to fraud. This like hypocrisy is the compliment that vice pays to virtue. Perhaps that explains the claims of vote rigging to keep the current president in office.

With near-incredible brutishness and cruelty, then, before the election the guardians moved to cut off mobile phone and text message networks and announced through their storm-troop "revolutionary guards" that only one form of voting had divine sanction. ("The miraculous hand of God, " announced Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, had been present in the polling places and had announced a result before many people had even finished voting. He says that sort of thing all the time.) Aside from the obvious evidence of fixing, fraud and force, there is another reason to doubt that an erate fundamentalist like Ahmadinejad could have increased even a state-sponsored plebiscitetype majority. Everywhere else in the Muslim world, in every election in the past two years, the tendency has been the other way. In Morocco in 2007, the much-ballyhooed Justice and Development Party wound up with 14 per cent of the vote. In Malaysia and Indonesia, the predictions of increased market share for the pro-Sharia parties were likewise proved wrong.

In Iraq this last January, the local elections penalised the clerical parties that had been making life a misery in cities like Basra. In neighbouring Kuwait last month, the Islamist forces did poorly and four women, including the striking figure of Rola Dashti, who refuses to wear any headgear, were elected to the 50-member parliament.

Most important of all, perhaps, Iranian-sponsored Hezbollah was convincingly and unexpectedly defeated last week in Lebanon after an open and vigorous election, the results of which were not challenged by any party. From all I hear, if the Palestinians were to vote again this year, as they were supposed to do, it would be highly improbable that Hamas would win.

Yet somehow a senile and fanatical religious clique that has failed to condition the vote even in a country like Lebanon, where it has proxy and surrogate parties under arms, is able to reward itself by increasing its "majority" in a festering, bankrupt state where it controls the media and enjoys a monopoly of violence. I think we should deny it any official recognition of this consolation. (new fi m by Cyrus Nowrasteh, The Stoning Of Soraya M, will soon show how those who dare to dissent in other ways are dealt with by Ahmadinejad's "grassroots" fanatics.) Mention of the Lebanese elections impels me to pass on what I saw at a recent Hezbollah rally in south Beirut, Lebanon. In a large hall that featured the official attendance of a delegation from the Iranian Embassy, the most luridly displayed poster of the pro-Iranian party was a nuclear mushroom cloud! Underneath this telling symbol was a caption warning the "Zionists" of what lay in store.

We sometimes forget that Iran still officially denies any intention of acquiring nuclear weapons. Yet Ahmadinejad recently hailed an Iranian missile launch as a counterpart to Iran's success with nuclear centrifuges and Hezbollah has certainly formed the idea that Iranian reactors may have nonpeaceful applications. This means that the vicious manipulation by which the mullahs control Iran can no longer be considered their "internal affair". Fascism at home sooner or later means fascism abroad. Face it now or fight it later.

Meanwhile, give it its right name.

Graphic

OUTRAGE: Iran's disputed election result has lead to bloody protests in Tehran

Load-Date: June 23, 2009

Free elections in Iran⁴ Don't make me laugh; LEADER

Sunday Express

June 21, 2009 Sunday

U.K. 1st Edition

Copyright 2009 EXPRESS NEWSPAPERS All Rights Reserved

Section: LEADER; 47

Length: 998 words

Byline: Christopher Hitchens

Body

; OR A flavour of the political atmosphere in Tehran last week, I quote from a young Iranian comrade who furnishes me with regular updates:

"I went to the last major [President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad rally and got the whiff of what I imagine fascism to have been all about. Lots of splotchy boys who can't get a date are given guns and told they're special."

It's hard to better this, either as an evocation of the rancid sexual repression that lies at the nasty core of the "Islamic republic" or as a description of the reserve strength that the Iranian parastate, or state within a state, can bring to bear if it ever feels itself even slightly challenged.

There is a theoretical reason why the events of the past month in Iran (I am sorry but I resolutely decline to refer to them as "elections") were a crudely stage-managed insult to those who took part in them and those who observed them, and then there is a practical reason. The theoretical reason, though less immediately dramatic and exciting, is the much more interesting and important one.

Iran and its citizens are considered by the Shiite theocracy to be the private property of the anointed mullahs. This totalitarian idea was based on a piece of religious quackery promulgated by the late Ayatollah Khomeini and known as "velayat-e faqui". Under this edict, which originally put the clerics in charge of the lives and property of orphans, the indigent and the insane, the entire population is now declared to be a childlike ward of the black-robed state.

Thus any voting exercise is, by definition, over before it has begun because the all-powerful Islamic Guardian Council determines well in advance who may or may not "run". Any newspaper referring to the subsequent proceedings as an "election" (sometimes complete with "rallies", "polls", "counts" and all the rest of it) is the cause of helpless laughter among the ayatollahs ("They fell for it? It's too easy!").

Shame on all those media outlets that have been complicit in this dirty lie. Shame also on the pathetic US Secretary of State who said before the result that she hoped that "the genuine will and desire" of the people of Iran would be reflected in the outcome. Surely she knows that any such contingency was deliberately forestalled to begin with.

In theory, the first-choice candidate of the ayatollahs might not actually "win" and there could even be divisions among the Islamic Guardian Council as to who constitutes the best nominee. Secondary as that is, it can still lead to rancour.

Free elections in Iran 4 Don't make me laugh LEADER

After all, corrupt systems are still subject to fraud. This like hypocrisy is the compliment that vice pays to virtue. Perhaps that explains the claims of vote rigging to keep the current president in office.

With near-incredible brutishness and cruelty, then, before the election the guardians moved to cut off mobile phone and text message networks and announced through their storm-troop "revolutionary guards" that only one form of voting had divine sanction. ("The miraculous hand of God, " announced Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, had been present in the polling places and had announced a result before many people had even finished voting. He says that sort of thing all the time.) Aside from the obvious evidence of fixing, fraud and force, there is another reason to doubt that an erate fundamentalist like Ahmadinejad could have increased even a state-sponsored plebiscitetype majority. Everywhere else in the Muslim world, in every election in the past two years, the tendency has been the other way. In Morocco in 2007, the much-ballyhooed Justice and Development Party wound up with 14 per cent of the vote. In Malaysia and Indonesia, the predictions of increased market share for the pro-Sharia parties were likewise proved wrong.

In Iraq this last January, the local elections penalised the clerical parties that had been making life a misery in cities like Basra. In neighbouring Kuwait last month, the Islamist forces did poorly and four women, including the striking figure of Rola Dashti, who refuses to wear any headgear, were elected to the 50-member parliament.

Most important of all, perhaps, Iranian-sponsored Hezbollah was convincingly and unexpectedly defeated last week in Lebanon after an open and vigorous election, the results of which were not challenged by any party. From all I hear, if the Palestinians were to vote again this year, as they were supposed to do, it would be highly improbable that Hamas would win.

Yet somehow a senile and fanatical religious clique that has failed to condition the vote even in a country like Lebanon, where it has proxy and surrogate parties under arms, is able to reward itself by increasing its "majority" in a festering, bankrupt state where it controls the media and enjoys a monopoly of violence. I think we should deny it any official recognition of this consolation. (new fi m by Cyrus Nowrasteh, The Stoning Of Soraya M, will soon show how those who dare to dissent in other ways are dealt with by Ahmadinejad's "grassroots" fanatics.) Mention of the Lebanese elections impels me to pass on what I saw at a recent Hezbollah rally in south Beirut, Lebanon. In a large hall that featured the official attendance of a delegation from the Iranian Embassy, the most luridly displayed poster of the pro-Iranian party was a nuclear mushroom cloud! Underneath this telling symbol was a caption warning the "Zionists" of what lay in store.

We sometimes forget that Iran still officially denies any intention of acquiring nuclear weapons. Yet Ahmadinejad recently hailed an Iranian missile launch as a counterpart to Iran's success with nuclear centrifuges and Hezbollah has certainly formed the idea that Iranian reactors may have nonpeaceful applications. This means that the vicious manipulation by which the mullahs control Iran can no longer be considered their "internal affair". Fascism at home sooner or later means fascism abroad. Face it now or fight it later.

Meanwhile, give it its right name.

Graphic

OUTRAGE: Iran's disputed election result has lead to bloody protests in Tehran

Load-Date: June 23, 2009

The coming storm: Obama and American Jewry

The Jerusalem Post

June 16, 2009 Tuesday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 16

Length: 1025 words

Byline: SHMULEY BOTEACH

Highlight: Are we prepared to speak up against the policies of the administration? The writer is the founder of This World: The Values Network. His upcoming book is *The Blessing of Enough: Rejecting Material Greed, Embracing Spiritual Hunger*

Body

There's a storm coming. It will pit a well-organized community of substantial resources but also substantial insecurity - particularly when it comes to charges of dual loyalty - against a popular president of considerable eloquence but misguided policies that identify Israeli settlements as the main obstacle to Middle East peace. The inevitable clash will separate sunshine Jewish patriots who back Israel when convenient against those who stand with Israel even when it means losing their invitation to the White House Hanukka party.

The bogus issue of settlements is already being swallowed whole by many well-meaning Jews. Last week Dan Fleshler, a leader of Americans for Peace Now, wrote in the New Jersey Jewish Standard that Obama has no choice but to pressure Israel because "it is fruitless for a well-armed, occupying power to negotiate the terms of a viable settlement with an almost defenseless occupied people unless a third party mediates and presses both sides."

In reading Fleshler one wonders whether he has been himself occupied with building a settlement on the moon with no knowledge of events on Earth. Is he seriously suggesting that the thousands of Katyusha rockets and nonstop suicide bombers that have killed more than a thousand Israelis (the equivalent of 30,000 dead Americans) have come from a "defenseless" foe? Would Fleshler likewise argue that the US ought to have pressure from, say, Russia or China to make peace with the terrorists in Afghanistan, seeing that America now represents a "well-armed, occupying power" against the comparatively defenseless Taliban? Or is it only Israel that is forbidden from defending itself.

Sorry Mr. Fleshler, but Jewish values do not dictate that the only moral Jew is a dead one who refuses to fight in the face of a 60-year terror onslaught.

Any return to the 1967 borders, which is what Obama's attack on the settlements represents, is simply suicide for Israel. The borders are utterly indefensible. The Arabs know it, which is why they press for it. Had Israel not dismantled its settlements in Gush Katif, Gaza would not have become a terrorist state ruled by *Hamas*, an organization that kills even more Palestinians than it does Israelis.

BUT MISGUIDED Jewish apologists aside, are the rest of us prepared to speak up against the policies of the administration? By this I do not mean the drunken racist rants of the American Jewish hooligans who got attention disgracing themselves on YouTube last week; their bigoted drivel against our democratically elected president

The coming storm: Obama and American Jewry

represents an abomination to Judaism. I have already written several columns lamenting how a small minority of the large and praiseworthy contingent of Jewish youth who go to Israel from the US after high school ostensibly to study in yeshivot end up instead hanging out on Rehov Ben Yehuda making asses of themselves. That they have no proper supervision and that they are allowed to go through their year in a drunken stupor is an outrage that must be finally addressed by the institutions which host them.

Rather, I mean courageous and intelligent criticism that accepts the president's praiseworthy efforts in making peace but decries his soft posture on tyranny when he bows to an Arab potentate who oppresses women and warmly embraces the dictator of Venezuela.

Asher Lopatin was one of the first students I met at Oxford and the university's first Orthodox Rhodes scholar. Today he is the successful rabbi of one of Chicago's most youthful congregations. He is also Rahm Emanuel's rabbi. But that did not stop him from criticizing the White House chief of staff in Newsweek for his unfair pressure on Israel. Lopatin could easily have basked in the aura of being rabbi to one of the most influential men in the world. Instead, he spoke truth to power.

In promoting the new translation of his Hebrew prayer book, British Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks constantly reminds us that he studies Bible with the prime minister of England. That's nice. But a few years ago Sacks spoke out publicly against Israel, telling London's Guardian newspaper, "There are things that happen on a daily basis which make me feel very uncomfortable as a Jew."

Sacks is a brilliant man but with a long history of pandering to whatever audience he happens to be addressing. He would do well to remember the admonishment of Mordechai to Esther on the responsibility of being close to political power: "If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place."

But while Europe and the UK are significant, the main battle lines will be here in the US and now is the time for American Jewry to organize. From schools to universities to synagogues and JCCs, we must make it clear that when 78 percent of Jews voted for Obama and filled his campaign coffers with cash it was not in the expectation of biased policies against Israel. We're upset, disappointed and we won't take it. We'll march in the streets, write op-eds and blogs, and publish ads making it clear that America should be standing with the Middle East's only democracy and America's most reliable ally.

As Charles Krauthammer pointed out, our president undermines his moral authority when he pledges that henceforth America will "forge partnerships as opposed to simply dictating solutions," but then only applies that pledge to Iran, Syria, Cuba and Venezuela, but not to Israel.

Last year, right after Obama captured the democratic nomination, I received a phone call from his campaign asking if I would serve as one of the national chairs of "Rabbis for Obama." It was a tempting offer. I was moved by the candidate's remarkable personal story, his iron discipline, his soaring oratory and, most of all, the fact that his victory would be the culmination of my hero Martin Luther King's dream of a man being judged by the content of his character rather than the color of his skin. In the end I declined because I feared that Obama would draw a moral equivalence between Israel and the Palestinians and pressure the former to appease the latter. But even I never suspected that it would happen so quickly and so lopsidedly.

Graphic

Photo: RABBI ASHER LOPATIN. Speaking truth to power.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

The coming storm: Obama and American Jewry

End of Document

In Iran, a Real Race, and Talk of a Sea Change

The New York Times

June 12, 2009 Friday

Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1; NEWS ANALYSIS

Length: 1130 words

Byline: By ROBERT F. WORTH; Nazila Fathi contributed reporting.

Dateline: TEHRAN

Body

Less than two months ago, it was widely assumed here and in the West that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran's hard-line president, would coast to another victory in the elections on Friday. Many of the reformists who sat out the vote in 2005 seemed dejected and unlikely to raise a strong challenge.

As voters went to the polls Friday, that picture has been transformed. A vast opposition movement has arisen, flooding the streets of Iran's major cities with cheering, green-clad supporters of Mir Hussein Moussavi, the leading challenger. Mr. Ahmadinejad, seemingly on the defensive, has hurled extraordinary accusations at some of the Islamic republic's founding figures, but the tactic has served to unify a diverse and passionate body of opponents of his populist economic policies and confrontational approach to the West.

Some Iranians believe that the unruly democratic energies unleashed over the past few weeks could affect this country's politics no matter who wins. Mr. Ahmadinejad's radical policies and personal attacks, they say, have galvanized powerful adversaries who will use his own accusations of corruption and mismanagement against him. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, who has the final say in affairs of state and prefers to avoid open conflict, may force Mr. Ahmadinejad to steer a more moderate course if he is re-elected.

"The elite will not let go of Ahmadinejad's neck" if he wins, said Muhammad Atrianfar, a journalist and former government official who supports Mr. Moussavi. "The official institutions will be in conflict with him, including the Parliament."

But hope has often outpaced reality in Iran, and similar democratic movements have been stifled in the past by the country's clerical leadership. In 1997, a burst of student demonstrations was followed by mass arrests, and a broader crackdown has taken place since Mr. Ahmadinejad succeeded his reformist predecessor, President Mohammad Khatami, in 2005.

And for all the hopes placed in him, Mr. Moussavi is no liberal. Another candidate, Mehdi Karroubi, is more closely associated with the core causes of the Iranian reformist movement, including the freeing of political prisoners and women's rights.

In Iran , a Real Race, and Talk of a Sea Change

Moreover, there are limits to what any Iranian president can do. Although Mr. Ahmadinejad has tried to augment the powers of the presidency, it is Ayatollah Khamenei, as supreme leader, who controls the direction of foreign policy.

Still, Mr. Moussavi would clearly push for a less confrontational stance toward the West. He implicitly criticized Iran's support for militant groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, saying the government should focus on domestic problems instead.

Perhaps more important to Iranians, Mr. Moussavi would change economic policy; Mr. Ahmadinejad has been criticized for economic stagnation, including rising inflation and unemployment. A former prime minister in the 1980s, Mr. Moussavi is given great credit for managing Iran's economy effectively during the war with Iraq.

Much of Mr. Moussavi's popularity derives from support by Mr. Khatami, the charismatic reformist cleric who was president from 1997 to 2005. But in some ways he could be more effective as president, analysts say. He is more pragmatic than Mr. Khatami, and because he is less distasteful to the hard-line clerical elite, he could have more success than Mr. Khatami did in promoting his agenda.

Moreover, opposition leaders say Mr. Moussavi, if elected, would have the advantage of a powerful popular movement behind him, and not just because the street demonstrations of the past weeks have been bigger than those of earlier elections. Women have become a potent force in this campaign for the first time in the Islamic republic's 30-year history, with all three opposition candidates making major efforts to win their votes.

Mr. Moussavi broke with precedent by campaigning alongside his wife, Zahra Rahnavard, a prominent professor and artist who was famous before he was. Other candidates have promised to extend women's rights as well. Campaign rallies for Mr. Moussavi often seem to include more women -- who make up half the voters in Iran -- than men.

Some say this is another aspect of the campaign that could remain important regardless of who wins. In April, a number of secular and conservative women's groups joined forces and submitted a list of demands for greater rights from Iran's next president.

Political and economic factors could also play a role. Iran's oil revenue has dropped precipitously over the past year. The country is facing political challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan, and its allies in Lebanon lost an important election there on Sunday. All these things could moderate Mr. Ahmadinejad's aggressive, free-spending style if he is re-elected, analysts say.

Mr. Moussavi's supporters say they are confident that change is coming. Mr. Ahmadinejad sounded defensive during his last allotted television spot on Wednesday night, repeating again and again that he was not a liar, as his opponents have claimed. One of his final campaign rallies was canceled Wednesday afternoon after the university where it was to be held unexpectedly refused to delay exams to accommodate the president. A large crowd of students chanting anti-Ahmadinejad slogans forced him to change his plans again, and he ended up speaking to a much smaller group of supporters.

Opposition leaders say they expect a huge turnout on Friday, with many of the reformists who sat out the vote in 2005 saying they will take part this time, to help unseat Mr. Ahmadinejad.

Mr. Moussavi's supporters say they remain concerned about the possibility of fraud, but a determined campaign -- led in part by Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, an influential former president -- has kept that issue in the public eye. Mr. Rafsanjani urged Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, to prevent any fraud in an extraordinary public letter on Tuesday, and on Thursday he met with the ayatollah for three hours.

For all the confidence of the opposition, it would be wrong to count Mr. Ahmadinejad out. He has the strong support of most of Iran's rural voters, and his populist economic policies have won the loyalty of many pensioners and state employees, as well as the pious poor.

In Iran , a Real Race, and Talk of a Sea Change

If he wins a second term, many here are now asking what will become of the "green wave" -- the name given to the vast crowds of people who have filled the streets in recent weeks dressed in the signature color of the Moussavi campaign, demanding change.

"It depends on us," said Mr. Karroubi, the reformist cleric who is running against Mr. Ahmadinejad, in an interview at his campaign offices. "What sort of action shall we take? Shall we continue on our way, or shall we go into a coma?"

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO: Zahra Rahnavard has often accompanied her husband, Mir Hussein Moussavi, as he campaigns against Iran's president.(PHOTOGRAPH BY NEWSHA TAVOKLIAN/POLARIS, FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)(A3)

Load-Date: June 12, 2009

End of Document

Free elections in Iran⁴ Don't make me laugh; LEADER

Sunday Express

June 21, 2009 Sunday

U.K. 1st Edition

Copyright 2009 EXPRESS NEWSPAPERS All Rights Reserved

Section: LEADER; 47

Length: 998 words

Byline: Christopher Hitchens

Body

; OR A flavour of the political atmosphere in Tehran last week, I quote from a young Iranian comrade who furnishes me with regular updates:

"I went to the last major [President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad rally and got the whiff of what I imagine fascism to have been all about. Lots of splotchy boys who can't get a date are given guns and told they're special."

It's hard to better this, either as an evocation of the rancid sexual repression that lies at the nasty core of the "Islamic republic" or as a description of the reserve strength that the Iranian parastate, or state within a state, can bring to bear if it ever feels itself even slightly challenged.

There is a theoretical reason why the events of the past month in Iran (I am sorry but I resolutely decline to refer to them as "elections") were a crudely stage-managed insult to those who took part in them and those who observed them, and then there is a practical reason. The theoretical reason, though less immediately dramatic and exciting, is the much more interesting and important one.

Iran and its citizens are considered by the Shiite theocracy to be the private property of the anointed mullahs. This totalitarian idea was based on a piece of religious quackery promulgated by the late Ayatollah Khomeini and known as "velayat-e faqui". Under this edict, which originally put the clerics in charge of the lives and property of orphans, the indigent and the insane, the entire population is now declared to be a childlike ward of the black-robed state.

Thus any voting exercise is, by definition, over before it has begun because the all-powerful Islamic Guardian Council determines well in advance who may or may not "run". Any newspaper referring to the subsequent proceedings as an "election" (sometimes complete with "rallies", "polls", "counts" and all the rest of it) is the cause of helpless laughter among the ayatollahs ("They fell for it? It's too easy!").

Shame on all those media outlets that have been complicit in this dirty lie. Shame also on the pathetic US Secretary of State who said before the result that she hoped that "the genuine will and desire" of the people of Iran would be reflected in the outcome. Surely she knows that any such contingency was deliberately forestalled to begin with.

In theory, the first-choice candidate of the ayatollahs might not actually "win" and there could even be divisions among the Islamic Guardian Council as to who constitutes the best nominee. Secondary as that is, it can still lead to rancour.

Free elections in Iran 4 Don't make me laugh LEADER

After all, corrupt systems are still subject to fraud. This like hypocrisy is the compliment that vice pays to virtue. Perhaps that explains the claims of vote rigging to keep the current president in office.

With near-incredible brutishness and cruelty, then, before the election the guardians moved to cut off mobile phone and text message networks and announced through their storm-troop "revolutionary guards" that only one form of voting had divine sanction. ("The miraculous hand of God, " announced Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, had been present in the polling places and had announced a result before many people had even finished voting. He says that sort of thing all the time.) Aside from the obvious evidence of fixing, fraud and force, there is another reason to doubt that an erate fundamentalist like Ahmadinejad could have increased even a state-sponsored plebiscitetype majority. Everywhere else in the Muslim world, in every election in the past two years, the tendency has been the other way. In Morocco in 2007, the much-ballyhooed Justice and Development Party wound up with 14 per cent of the vote. In Malaysia and Indonesia, the predictions of increased market share for the pro-Sharia parties were likewise proved wrong.

In Iraq this last January, the local elections penalised the clerical parties that had been making life a misery in cities like Basra. In neighbouring Kuwait last month, the Islamist forces did poorly and four women, including the striking figure of Rola Dashti, who refuses to wear any headgear, were elected to the 50-member parliament.

Most important of all, perhaps, Iranian-sponsored Hezbollah was convincingly and unexpectedly defeated last week in Lebanon after an open and vigorous election, the results of which were not challenged by any party. From all I hear, if the Palestinians were to vote again this year, as they were supposed to do, it would be highly improbable that Hamas would win.

Yet somehow a senile and fanatical religious clique that has failed to condition the vote even in a country like Lebanon, where it has proxy and surrogate parties under arms, is able to reward itself by increasing its "majority" in a festering, bankrupt state where it controls the media and enjoys a monopoly of violence. I think we should deny it any official recognition of this consolation. (new film by Cyrus Nowrasteh, The Stoning Of Soraya M, will soon show how those who dare to dissent in other ways are dealt with by Ahmadinejad's "grassroots" fanatics.) Mention of the Lebanese elections impels me to pass on what I saw at a recent Hezbollah rally in south Beirut, Lebanon. In a large hall that featured the official attendance of a delegation from the Iranian Embassy, the most luridly displayed poster of the pro-Iranian party was a nuclear mushroom cloud! Underneath this telling symbol was a caption warning the "Zionists" of what lay in store.

We sometimes forget that Iran still officially denies any intention of acquiring nuclear weapons. Yet Ahmadinejad recently hailed an Iranian missile launch as a counterpart to Iran's success with nuclear centrifuges and Hezbollah has certainly formed the idea that Iranian reactors may have nonpeaceful applications. This means that the vicious manipulation by which the mullahs control Iran can no longer be considered their "internal affair". Fascism at home sooner or later means fascism abroad. Face it now or fight it later.

Meanwhile, give it its right name.

Graphic

OUTRAGE: Iran's disputed election result has lead to bloody protests in Tehran

Load-Date: June 23, 2009

New female judge transforms Islamic court; Khoulood el-Faqeeh is part Judge Judy, part Sunday School teacher.

The Christian Science Monitor

May 13, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 Christian Science Publishing Society All Rights Reserved

Length: 1030 words

Byline: Ilene R. Prusher Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Body

Khoulood el-Faqeeh has shattered the glass ceiling of Islamic jurisprudence. After years of pushing to break into the all-male ranks of sharia judges in the Palestinian territories, she finally secured a post after scoring among the best - along with another woman - in a recent test for new jurists. They are widely considered to be the first ***female*** sharia judges in the Middle East. Now, Ms. Faqeeh is setting a new tone in her Ramallah courtroom, where defendants are often shocked to see a woman on the bench.

With a style that's part Judge Judy, part Sunday School teacher, she's on a mission to change her society, case by case. But sometimes, even the most progressive intentions won't overcome powerful social forces, such as those driving Miryam Abed-Nabi, a newlywed who came to court recently to finalize a divorce. Her husband - Fahmi Awadullah, a man twice her age - took her as a second wife just a few months ago. But the marriage infuriated his adult sons, who worried about their portion of his inheritance. Because his new bride was rejected by the family, Mr. Awadullah is divorcing her, and must, according to their contract, pay her a lump-sum alimony of 6,500 Jordanian dinars (\$11,050). He has paid her only half of that, but wants her to sign on the dotted line today, absolving him of any further obligations. Ms. Abed-Nabi, who in her mid-30s is well past the age when most Palestinian ***women*** can expect to marry, walks into the courtroom with her eyes trained on the floor. "There are institutions which will assign a free lawyer to you," Faqeeh says. Abed-Nabi nods. "Fight for your rights," the judge adds, sounding more like an advocate than a neutral arbiter. Abed-Nabi shrugs. Her elderly father, here to give his permission for the divorce, explains: "We just want to finish with this." In their last court appearance, Awadullah came in with two of his sons, who tried to intimidate the judge as well as Abed-Nabi and her family. Faqeeh wants to deny Awadullah's right to divorce until he pays the full amount owed Abed-Nabi as part of their contract, so that he and his sons would be "taught a lesson." But, reluctantly, she formalizes the divorce. "If she has her father with her and they say they want to finish with this, I have to comply," says a disappointed Faqeeh. Abed-Nabi leaves in tears. But the judge doesn't let Awadullah go without a sermon. "I advise you to remember that you have to worship God by being kind to other people," she tells him. "Why didn't you give her full rights? Would you like people to treat your daughters the way you treated [her]?... You have breached Islam with this woman.... You can go and pray to God, but I wonder how your worship will be received in light of this." Appealing to his conscience from a religious standpoint is part of her mandate, she feels. While many associate sharia with extremist regimes, it is a complex system of jurisprudence used throughout the Muslim world - though with deeply varying interpretations. Even in the officially secular Palestinian Authority (PA), most issues of a Muslim's personal status - from marriage to inheritance - are decided before a qadi, or judge. Which is why Faqeeh wanted nothing more than to be a qadiya. She pressed the chief sharia judge. "In Islam, it says a sharia judge has to be a Muslim, rational adult" - not necessarily a man, she explains between cases. "Whenever I would discuss this with the chief judge, he would say, 'This is tradition.' " "I didn't buy it," says Faqeeh. "I'm a legal person, and, to me, legal issues are stronger than tradition." Top in her class

New female judge transforms Islamic court Khoulood el-Faqeeh is part Judge Judy , part Sunday School teacher.

at Jerusalem's Al-Quds University, Faqeeh started her own practice and quickly drew the attention of judges. They offered the outspoken advocate a position at the prosecutor's office. She turned it down. The chief sharia judge, Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi, politely suggested she work for the civil courts. She refused. "To me, the challenge was to be a sharia judge," she says. "I wanted to ... break the deadlock." Mr. Tamimi now says he's "proud" of her appointment. But not everyone approves. Sheikh Hamed Bitawi, an elected **Hamas** representative who serves as head of the Association of Islamic Scholars and Scientists, says there are two schools of thought on the issue: that every position but that of a caliph is open to **women**, and that **women** are too emotional to make legal decisions - as judges or as witnesses. "I am of the second view because I consider **women** to be gentle human beings who should not be subjected to difficult situations or difficult decisions," Mr. Bitawi says. "They cry easily, and hence their judgment is tainted with emotions. Moreover, lawyers are difficult to deal with and people who come to courts are angry and violent." In October, Tamimi advertised a qualifying test for sharia judge candidates. Of 45 Palestinians who took the test, nine passed - two of them **women**. Faqeeh was one of the highest scorers. On the bench only since March, she still gets shocked or amused reactions from Palestinians, who are used to seeing a man in her seat. **Women** are at first pleasantly surprised, but some leave disappointed that she didn't bend the rules for them. But in fact, she won't bend the rules for anyone. Some defendants on a recent day didn't take the need for two male witnesses seriously, trying to pull strangers from the hallway. "If you bring two witnesses who don't even know the name of your daughters, how can I rule on something like that?" Faqeeh bellows at one man, who works at the headquarters of PA President Mahmoud Abbas. Often, she says, government employees expect special treatment, which she refuses to give - just as she refused to accept discrimination from the government, a stand Tamimi echoes. "The PA institutions do not discriminate in job opportunities, and the stereotype that Islamic institutions are against the rise of **women** professionally is wrong," says the chief justice. "The presence of a woman sharia judge will enrich the institution of the courts, especially when it involves a woman whose academic as well as personal qualities make her perfect for the job.... I have full faith in her capabilities."

Load-Date: February 19, 2010

End of Document

Bridging the Gulf; International politics The West claims that it wants democracy in the Middle East, but is it ready for the consequences?

The New Review

May 10, 2009

First Edition

Copyright 2009 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved



Section: ARTS; Pg. 26

Length: 1039 words

Byline: Reviewed by Sholto Byrnes

Body

"Always keep a hold of nurse/ for fear of finding something worse." David Gardner does not actually quote Hilaire Belloc but, according to his wide-ranging and provocative new book, the last lines of his "Cautionary Tale" could well be used to describe Western policy towards the Middle East for most of the past century. Europe and America have found it convenient to prop up or do business with an array of autocrats, differing only in the degrees of repression they inflicted, because we fear the alternative that democracy may unleash - the "men in turbans" - even more. "The Arab world," writes Gardner, remains "marooned in tyranny", while those who try to "claw their way out of that pit" find that the West keeps "stamping on their fingers".

These are harsh words, although their truth is evident in the West's long-term alliances with the absolute monarchies of the Gulf; in its shameful inaction during the Shia and Kurdish uprisings in Iraq; in its friendly relations with Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, who, since 1981, has kept his country under emergency laws that allow for indefinite detention without trial; and in its tolerance of the secret police state run by the father-and-son Syrian presidents, Hafez and Bashar al-Assad (the latter of whom enjoys a rather innocuous reputation in Britain, perhaps because it is hard to think of a man who used to be a London ophthalmologist as a callous dictator - Gardner sets the reader straight on that one).

The consequence of our failure to stand by our values, this loss of our "democratic nerve", says Gardner, has been the rise of the Islamic extremism we feared all along. "Damming up [the] political mainstream" has given "violent force to the Islamist tributaries". The last chance of the book's title is for the West to stop indulging in "shallow realism" or ignorant meddling (as in Iraq). Instead, we must pursue a just and clear-headed solution to Israel-Palestine, embrace Iran in a workable bargain, and do everything we can to open paths to democracy throughout the region.

The first two, many would agree with. Gardner, an associate editor and former Middle East editor at the Financial Times, is blunt about Israel's choice: land or peace. He points out that the long, violent stalemate since the creation of that state has suited many Arab leaders, who could justify their despotism by holding up the threat of aggression

Bridging the Gulf International politics The West claims that it wants democracy in the Middle East, but is it ready for the consequences?

from the "Zionist entity". An Iran given status and security, Gardner thinks, could be freed from the "faux nationalist blackmail of the mullahs", and cease to be a hostage of a history that includes both the Anglo-American coup against the nationalist prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953, the Tehran embassy hostage crisis of 1979-81, and the bombing of the American barracks in Beirut that killed 241 US servicemen in 1982.

The third, however, is a somewhat trickier proposition. Gardner himself admits that letting go of despotic nurse could lead to something much, much worse. "Those who argue for democracy," he says, "often do so in the mistaken belief that it will bring stability to the region. It may not." It could also "open a long period of illiberal politics". Democratic elections have already elevated Hamas to government in Gaza and Hezbollah to a coalition in Lebanon, and there can be no doubt that most, if not all, administrations in the Middle East would have a strongly Islamist complexion if democratically elected. Gardner's hope is that such governments would eventually come to resemble Turkey's AKP, the Justice and Development Party of the Prime Minister Recep Erdogan. The AKP is Islamist, but presents itself as moderate, and has won power twice now in a state that is constitutionally secular. This best case scenario would see governments of a socially and religiously conservative, but also dynamic and entrepreneurial stripe, take the reins. It remains a hope, though, not a prediction to which can be ascribed any great accuracy. It is just as likely that theocratic regimes would be elected whose first act was to raise the democratic drawbridge behind them. Gardner quotes former president Khatami of Iran approvingly: "If religion comes into conflict with freedom, then it will be religion that suffers." But what happened when he was in office was quite the opposite; much of his legislation was blocked by the religious Council of Guardians, and 2,000 fellow reformist candidates were banned from standing for election.

Either way, there will be precious little room for the liberal, secular values that are implicit when the West uses that totemic word, "democracy". Gardner correctly identifies this problem: "Liberals tend to be coteries who like whisky and the West but the masses incline towards men in beards." Freedom and liberty are often used as synonyms, but that is a dangerous elision in this context. The freedom Gardner advocates we encourage in the Middle East may bring Islamists into the political mainstream and consign to the margins extremists who prefer the bomb to the ballot box. We should not, however, expect that freedom to bring any advancement of liberty for women, for free thinkers or non-Muslims, for homosexuals, whisky drinkers and all those of "degenerate" tendencies whose freedom of expression is an integral part of the West's concept of liberal democracy.

Gardner is clear-eyed about the damage that "Arab exceptionalist" support for despotism has done in the region, and has managed to cover an impressive swathe of history, with concise overviews of Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Israel-Palestine in particular. He castigates the West for viewing the Middle East and its interminable, seemingly intractable disputes with "a curious mix of bleakness and complacency". But, although anyone who reads his book is certain to have any complacency dispelled, I fear the conclusion to be drawn from his arguments is far bleaker than he allows. The chances of democracy producing Middle Eastern states in which that liberty we so treasure thrives are slim. This particular "last chance" saloon serves a bitter, unpalatable brew that we are going to have to learn to swallow, like it or not. n

The Last Chance: The Middle East in the Balance

By David Gardner IB Tauris £18.99

Load-Date: May 10, 2009

Amos Oz, Approaching 70, Sees Israel With a Bird's-Eye View

The New York Times

April 13, 2009 Monday

Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

Section: Section C; Column 0; The Arts/Cultural Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 999 words

Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER

Dateline: ARAD, Israel

Body

For four decades Amos Oz has been known in Israel and abroad for two things, his fervently liberal politics and his intimately observed fiction. He has always insisted that they are distinct, and so they seem. His novels and stories are not allegories on the Palestinian conflict but deeply human tales of ambiguity and sadness. His political essays, meanwhile, make their point with complete transparency.

One way he marks the separation between the two forms of writing is by using two kinds of pen, one blue, the other black, that sit on his desk in the book-lined study of his home in this quiet desert town.

"I never mix them up," he says of the pens. "One is to tell the government to go to hell. The other is to tell stories."

Now, as Israel prepares to mark his 70th birthday with a three-day festival in Arad and an academic conference at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba, both in May, and with his latest novella coming out in English translation along with a new selection of translated fiction and nonfiction called "The Amos Oz Reader," he offers a way of viewing his two kinds of writing through a single lens. Both usher from the same source, he says -- empathy. Both are about imagining the other.

"That's what I do for a living," he noted in his soft-spoken and precise English as he took a walk late one recent afternoon, the pink-tinged Arava desert and Dead Sea glistening on the horizon. "I get up in the morning, I drink a cup of coffee, I sit down at my desk and I start to ask myself: 'What if I were him? What if I were her? How would I feel? What would I say? How would I react?'"

Mr. Oz, whose humor is as dry as the climate, is one of Israel's most esteemed authors -- along with A. B. Yehoshua, Aharon Appelfeld and David Grossman -- and his new novella, "Rhyming Life and Death," is a somewhat brutal look at the life and sensibility of a literary celebrity.

The main character, known simply as the Author, is full of forced camaraderie for minor cultural figures, insincere flattery for vulnerable women and false modesty to those who admire him. But he has an exceptional eye for narrative detail and an almost uncontrolled penchant for invention. No sooner does a waitress bring him coffee than he creates her history, filled with love and loss. In the end the Author evokes a surprising sympathy; his journey is compulsive and joyless yet somehow vital.

Amos Oz, Approaching 70, Sees Israel With a Bird's-Eye View

Mr. Oz denies that the character is in any way autobiographical, although in a 1990 newspaper interview in Haaretz, he made this point about himself: "There's always a part of me that's uninvolved, that sits on the sidelines and observes. Sometimes it looks on from the distance, almost hostile. Very chilly."

The new book raises, both explicitly and implicitly, the point of writing fiction, suggesting that it is less a noble endeavor than a drive, like sex and dreaming.

"The need to tell a story is something elemental, primeval," Mr. Oz added when the question was raised.

But that doesn't make it simple, especially in a place like Israel. As he noted, "It is not easy to write novels and stories in the heart of a political drama."

It is also not easy to know what to do about the tangled drama itself, although Mr. Oz has had a very firm conviction about it for a very long time. It came, he said, from asking those questions that he does every morning.

In June of 1967, days after what Israelis call the Six-Day War ended, he walked the freshly captured streets of East Jerusalem, still in uniform. Most of his countrymen viewed the moment as a historic culmination of Jewish longing and destiny.

He saw it quite differently. Although he was a native of West Jerusalem, and his parents, who had fled Europe, were right-wing nationalists, he could not rejoice because he kept asking himself how he would feel in the place of the Palestinians living there.

"I tried my hardest to feel in East Jerusalem like a man who has driven out his enemies and recovered his ancestral inheritance," he wrote in a 1968 essay included in the new collection. "But I couldn't."

His idea then was radical: Israel should get out of the areas it won, and the Palestinians should build their own state there. As he recalled the other day, "When my friends and I started advocating a two-state solution in 1967, there were so very few of us that we could conduct our national assembly inside a public telephone box."

The approach today is mainstream; the Obama administration says it is firmly pursuing it, although it is losing favor among Israelis and Palestinians as both have come to view the other as insincere and warlike. Israel's military campaign in Gaza a few months ago, undertaken to stop Hamas rockets from being fired at Israeli towns not far from this one, only added to that mutual mistrust.

Mr. Oz favored the attack as an appropriate response to the rockets but wanted it called off within a few days rather than the three weeks it lasted. Meanwhile, he says, he has been saddened by some of the behavior of Israeli soldiers in Gaza.

"I heard from soldiers who were in Gaza who said that Israel pushed its red lines way away from where they were," he said, noting that this was hardly the first time the army faced guerrilla warfare. "In 1967 Israelis fought in heavily populated urban areas and there were Jordanian snipers hiding behind civilian populations. Nonetheless no streets were bulldozed to the ground."

The new government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is well to the right of Mr. Oz. It has not committed itself to two states and says it will never share Jerusalem with the Palestinians. Mr. Oz holds out only modest hope that the government might surprise him.

Being an Israeli at 70, he noted, is like being an American who is 250 years old. He was there for his country's birth 61 years ago.

"I saw the Boston Tea Party with my own eyes," he said with a twinkle. "I personally knew George Washington and Abraham Lincoln."

Graphic

PHOTO: Amos Oz in the desert town of Arad, near the Dead Sea.(PHOTOGRAPH BY RINA CASTELNUOVO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Load-Date: April 13, 2009

End of Document

Letters

The Daily Gleaner (New Brunswick)

April 16, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications Inc. All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. C6

Length: 1121 words

Body

Don't confuse Galloway with freedom of expression

Re: Letter by Robert H. Young published April 4, called Peace advocates should be allowed to speak

Young and other groups have taken two separate issues and have tried to make one issue out of it.

The first issue was that British MP George Galloway was not allowed into Canada because he supported a terrorist organization, Hamas, by giving them money and materials.

This is the law in Canada and since he wanted to enter Canada, he was subject to it and was rightfully refused entry into Canada.

The second issue is peace activists trying make this an issue of suppressing the "freedom of speech," which doesn't exist in Canada; here it's called freedom of expression.

Since the Canadian government didn't bar him from entering Canada to speak, it has no bearing on the freedom of expression issue, not to mention that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is for Canadians, not foreign nationals.

Why peace activists are keen on listening to a man who ran out of superlatives when kissing Saddam's behind, I have no idea. Funny how peace activists show an endless loop of Donald Rumsfeld meeting Saddam, yet don't mention Galloway and Saddam.

Peace activists are only keen on allowing those they support to speak, yet have no problem preventing people from speaking. A good example of this would be Benjamin Netanyahu being prevented from speaking at Concordia University in 2002. I guess only if it supports your ends do you have to support freedom of expression.

My grandfathers fought in the Second World War as well, but they didn't fight for the ideal of the failed League of Nations or for freedom of speech or religion or any of the reasons Young mentions. They fought because Hitler had invaded and conquered large parts of Europe.

One of the biggest failures of both the League of Nations and the United Nations is that sometimes force is what is required to make peace. "No war no matter what" doesn't always work; waving peace placards and having peace demonstrations doesn't always work.

Beating swords into plowshares is pointless when you really need that sword.

Letters

Robert Francis

Waterville, N.B.

Local economies will suffer

Re: Cuts to river ferries

I'm writing to express my shock and disbelief at the New Brunswick government's proposal to discontinue ferry service at several points along the St. John River.

Aside from the direct impact on local jobs that will result from removal of the ferries, local economies will suffer the domino effect of decreased tourism in the area.

Since agriculture, logging and fishing have been on the decline for decades now, tourism represents one of New Brunswick's best hopes for a thriving economy.

One of New Brunswick's greatest draws for tourism is the magnificent St. John River. The beautiful and serene waterways in and around Gagetown and Jemseg bring tourists from all over the world, and riding the ferries is a unique experience that brings people to this area.

As a New Brunswicker that had to leave the province in search of employment, I sincerely hope the New Brunswick government reconsiders the proposal to remove these ferries.

Susan E. Appt

Winston Salem, N.C.

Bring back women's team

Re: UNB hockey

Congratulations to the University of New Brunswick for again putting together a national championship men's hockey team.

This is indeed a remarkable accomplishment.

As the father of a young daughter, however, I find my excitement greatly diminished because the university continues with its unfair and sexist practice of choosing not to build a competitive, top-notch women's varsity-level team.

The absurd decision to eliminate the varsity women's team needs to be reversed.

Will my baby daughter grow up to love playing hockey? Only time will tell. And only time will tell if one day I will be forced to say to her that boys in Fredericton can grow up dreaming of going to UNB and playing on the best hockey team in the country, but because she is a girl, she cannot have a similar dream.

Why? Simply because she is a girl, and UNB doesn't think girls deserve a chance to play varsity-level hockey.

Bill Patrick

Fredericton

Are Liberals pro-choice?

Re: Access to publicly funded abortions

Letters

Currently, the New Brunswick government enforces a regulation that limits funded abortions to those performed in hospitals by a specialist with the written approval of two doctors.

The regulation is ironic as the Liberal party is currently the political party in power within New Brunswick, and is very much a pro-choice party, as opposed to the Progressive Conservative party, which is pro-life.

This is not very apparent as the current regulations implemented for women to obtain abortions are contradictory to a pro-choice stance.

To be nonpartisan on this topic, one should evaluate the current criteria which have to be fulfilled in order for women to get an abortion in New Brunswick. Right now, a woman must obtain a medical letter from two physicians before the 12th week of pregnancy to permit her to receive the publicly funded abortion.

Once a woman has reached the 12th week of pregnancy, she is no longer eligible to receive a publicly funded abortion.

It is very difficult to obtain medical documentation, and with a late detected pregnancy, it is almost certain one will not meet the required deadline.

The Liberal party maintain they are a pro-choice party, while the current requirements are making it exceedingly difficult to obtain abortion services in the province.

Commencing July 1, 2006, the Dr. Everett Chalmers Regional Hospital ended the service of publicly funded abortions. The termination of this controversial service was due to monetary issues. The DEC was the last publicly funded institution to provide abortion services for all of New Brunswick.

The provincial government has been assuring the public that abortion services will be performed at another publicly funded location within the province. The government has not yet announced where these services will be held, or when they will commence.

The Liberal party needs to take a concrete stance on their position on abortion. Are they going to ease the regulations on the service, or continue flip-flopping on the issue?

Ally Fradella

Fredericton

Ignorant of the process

Re: Editorial called One child published April 9

Thank you for your insightful analysis of Education Minister Kelly Lamrock's peculiar behaviour in trying to overturn the teachers' collective agreement.

It is difficult to realize that a grown man, let alone one in government, could be totally ignorant of the processes, protocols and etiquette, if you will, that should govern the conduct of the two sides of a solemn contract between two rational parties.

Very disappointing.

Stuart Mills

Fredericton

Load-Date: April 16, 2009

Letters

End of Document

Letters

The Jerusalem Post
April 7, 2009 Tuesday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1058 words

Byline: M.M. Van Zuiden, Jacob Gore, Robert Klein, Morris Mann, Leon Charney, Judy Goldin, Myra Zion, Judy Bamberger, Gabie and Danny Sykora

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Missing rabbi

Sir, - Beats me why world-famous columnist and TV host Shmuley Boteach is not on the short list of "America's most influential rabbis" ("Saperstein named 'hottest rabbi' by US magazine," April 6).

Is the author of Kosher Sex, Kosher Adultery and The Kosher Sutra too much of a hot potato?

M.M. VAN ZUIDEN

Jerusalem

Missing message

Sir, - Having read about the Dutch service that allows Internet users to get their messages spray-painted on the Palestinian side of the separation barrier for 30 euros, I decided to submit a message of my own.

It was: "This wall is here because you teach children that killing Israelis is glorious."

But then I read: "All messages will be screened by us (in Amsterdam) AFTER payment. Obscene, extremist, or offensive messages will be refused. This decision is final. Your money will not be refunded."

So if they find my message offensive, they get to keep my money anyway.

So much for the organizers' purported moderation. I didn't send the message ("Another ad on the wall: Dutch firm sells space on West Bank barrier," April 3).

JACOB GORE

Denver

The Israeli response

Sir, - I totally agreed with Amitai Etzioni's "'Seven British Children': An Israeli response" (April 5). However, what's really needed in response is not a play but a powerful hasbara effort that makes sure videos of Palestinian parents

Letters

boasting about their terrorist children, PA TV children's programs inculcating hate and PA imams inciting to murder get on primetime TV worldwide, and frequently.

The foremost source for such videos is www.memritv.org

The only question is why the Israeli government hasn't been doing this all along.

ROBERT KLEIN

Beersheba

Path to peace...

Sir, - While it is quite magnanimous of Menachem Z. Rosensaft to "Give Netanyahu a chance" (April 5) it should be remembered that we do, despite our flawed electoral system, have a democratically elected government. So Netanyahu's predominantly right-wing coalition reflects the wishes of the Israeli people.

It would be difficult to claim that Israelis as a whole don't want to live in peace with their neighbors, more accurate to say they are disillusioned with the approach of the past 16 years and interested in alternatives.

Can't we promote the position that the onus is on the Palestinians to take steps toward building trust and hope in peace? Is it too much to ask them to respect us as Jewish neighbors living in our State of Israel?

MORRIS MANN

Jerusalem

...via meditation

Sir, - Re "Film director David Lynch: I'm not going to back off until they get 'peace-creating group' in the Middle East" (April 6): Mr. Lynch could not have searched very hard for "serious" meditators in Israel.

We have a group called MPH - Meditation for Peace and Harmony - headed by Menorah Charney, whose members have been meditating a few times a week for the last 35 years. We are very serious. He may be surprised to hear that there are very many such groups here, using the transcendental way or other ways, as we do. Our activities toward real inner peace in all beings have taken us all over Israel and we are in contact with dozens of groups worldwide.

We recently published our own workbook called "You and Me" to guide teachers on how to bring meditation methods especially suited for children into schools, and on how meditation reduces violence. We are having great success wherever the program has been accepted by the school.

LEON CHARNEY

Yehud

Missing Ms.'s

Sir, - What I cannot understand is that Netanyahu was able to find only two females worthy of joining his massive government. How far women have come in the 21st century ("Bloated government, vast challenges," April 3).

JUDY GOLDIN

Kiryat Ono

Money to burn?

Letters

Sir, - The front page of your April 5 issue carried a color photo showing the spectacular celebration of the Tel Aviv centenary ("Century city"). Radio news items referred to this as attracting a crowd of possibly 250,000 people.

All this is great and exciting, but what concerns me is that on the English news program, the director of celebrations justified the fact that such celebrations would continue throughout the year, at a cost of about \$10 million.

This in the face of increasing poverty and hunger - as exemplified by your page 3 picture ("All who are hungry...") of people lining up for food handouts at a center in Jerusalem - is disturbing, to say the least.

MYRA ZION

Tel Mond

My 10 drops of wine

Sir, - Our sages write that angels rejoiced as they watched the pursuing Egyptians drowning in the Red Sea. God castigated them, saying, "My creatures are perishing, and you sing praises?"

During the Pessah Seder, we Jews diminish our joyous freedom by removing 10 drops of wine from full cups. I dedicate my 10 drops to:

- * Israeli soldier Gilad Schalit, held by Hamas for more than 1,000 days.
- * Thousands of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, many for decades.
- * Jews, Israelis, Palestinians, Muslims held hostage by their co-dependent hatred of each other.
- * Tzipi, my beloved Jerusalem friend, whose son Ben went "from freedom to slavery" last week, drafted into the army.
- * My new Pakistani colleagues and friends, imprisoned by recent violence, by Western misperceptions of Pakistanis, by their own misperceptions of Westerners.
- * The women of Afghanistan, imprisoned by medieval laws passed by modern governments appeasing backward communities.
- * Iran's President Ahmadinejad and the mullahs, whose personal slavery to ignorance and hatred enslaves millions worldwide in fear, loathing, and mutually-assured- destruction.
- * CEOs and managers everywhere, so imprisoned by their fear of losing their millions of dollars that they've mortgaged their moral compasses.
- * My Australian and American co-citizens, relaxed and comfortable, enslaved by unsustainable life-styles, unwilling to pay a fair price for a day's labor, denying "a fair go" to those less fortunate.
- * Each Jew worldwide, living physically free, enslaved by uncertainty, doubt and loathing of "Others" whom we know not, but fear and hate anyway.

May we become free, and live respectfully, honorably and humbly with each other - whoever we are, from wherever we come; and gently with our gracious hostess, Planet Earth.

JUDY BAMBERGER

Canberra, Australia

Hametz, RIP

Sir, - Here lies our hametz / The cleaning's complete. / Ah, the thrill of victory / Oh, the pain of de feet.

Letters

GABIE AND DANNY SYKORA , Ra'anana

Graphic

Photo (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

The double vision of Amos Oz; Israeli author separates his roles as storyteller and as political essayist

The International Herald Tribune

April 15, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 International Herald Tribune All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURE; Pg. 10

Length: 1028 words

Byline: Ethan Bronner - The New York Times

Dateline: ARAD, Israel

Body

For four decades Amos Oz has been known in Israel and abroad for two things, his fervently liberal politics and his intimately observed fiction.

He has always insisted that they are distinct, and so they seem.

His novels and stories are not allegories on the Palestinian conflict but deeply human tales of ambiguity and sadness. His political essays, meanwhile, make their point with complete transparency.

One way he marks the separation between the two forms of writing is by using two kinds of pen, one blue, the other black, that sit on his desk in the book-lined study of his home in this quiet desert town.

"I never mix them up," he says of the pens. "One is to tell the government to go to hell. The other is to tell stories."

Now, as Israel prepares to mark his 70th birthday with a three-day festival in Arad and an academic conference at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba, both in May, and with his latest novella coming out in English translation along with a new selection of translated fiction and nonfiction called "The Amos Oz Reader," he offers a way of viewing his two kinds of writing through a single lens. Both issue from the same source, he says - empathy. Both are about imagining the other.

"That's what I do for a living," he noted in his soft-spoken and precise English as he took a walk late one recent afternoon, the pink-tinged Arava desert and Dead Sea glistening on the horizon. "I get up in the morning, I drink a cup of coffee, I sit down at my desk, and I start to ask myself: 'What if I were him? What if I were her? How would I feel? What would I say? How would I react?'"

Mr. Oz, whose humor is as dry as the climate, is one of Israel's most esteemed authors - along with A.B. Yehoshua, Aharon Appelfeld and David Grossman - and his new novella, "Rhyming Life and Death," is a somewhat brutal look at the life and sensibility of a literary celebrity.

The main character, known simply as the Author, is full of forced camaraderie for minor cultural figures, insincere flattery for vulnerable women and false modesty to those who admire him. But he has an exceptional eye for narrative detail and an almost uncontrolled penchant for invention. No sooner does a waitress bring him coffee than

The double vision of Amos Oz Israeli author separates his roles as storyteller and as political essayist

he creates her history, filled with love and loss. In the end the Author evokes a surprising sympathy; his journey is compulsive and joyless, yet somehow vital.

Mr. Oz denies that the character is in any way autobiographical, although in a 1990 newspaper interview in Haaretz, he made this point about himself: "There's always a part of me that's uninvolved, that sits on the sidelines and observes. Sometimes it looks on from the distance, almost hostile. Very chilly."

The new book raises, both explicitly and implicitly, the point of writing fiction, suggesting that it is less a noble endeavor than a drive, like sex and dreaming.

"The need to tell a story is something elemental, primeval," Mr. Oz added when the question was raised.

But that doesn't make it simple, especially in a place like Israel.

As he noted, "It is not easy to write novels and stories in the heart of a political drama."

It is also not easy to know what to do about the tangled drama itself, although Mr. Oz has had a very firm conviction about it for a very long time. It came, he said, from asking those questions that he does every morning.

In June of 1967, days after what Israelis call the Six-Day War ended, he walked the freshly captured streets of East Jerusalem, still in uniform. Most of his countrymen viewed the moment as a historic culmination of Jewish longing and destiny.

He saw it quite differently. Although he was a native of West Jerusalem, and his parents, who had fled Europe, were right-wing nationalists, he could not rejoice, because he kept asking himself how he would feel in the place of the Palestinians living there.

"I tried my hardest to feel in East Jerusalem like a man who has driven out his enemies and recovered his ancestral inheritance," he wrote in a 1968 essay included in the new collection. "But I couldn't."

His idea then was radical: Israel should get out of the areas it won, and the Palestinians should build their own state there.

As he recalled the other day, "When my friends and I started advocating a two-state solution in 1967, there were so very few of us that we could conduct our national assembly inside a public telephone box."

The approach today is mainstream: The Obama administration says it is firmly pursuing it, although it is losing favor among Israelis and Palestinians as both have come to view the other as insincere and warlike. Israel's military campaign in the Gaza Strip a few months ago, undertaken to stop Hamas rockets from being fired at Israeli towns not far from this one, only added to that mutual mistrust.

Mr. Oz favored the attack as an appropriate response to the rockets but wanted it called off within a few days rather than the three weeks it lasted. Meanwhile, he says, he has been saddened by some of the behavior of Israeli soldiers in Gaza.

"I heard from soldiers who were in Gaza who said that Israel pushed its red lines way away from where they were," he said, noting that this was not the first time the army faced guerrilla warfare.

"In 1967, Israelis fought in heavily populated urban areas, and there were Jordanian snipers hiding behind civilian populations. Nonetheless no streets were bulldozed to the ground."

The new government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is well to the right of Mr. Oz. It has not committed itself to two states and says it will never share Jerusalem with the Palestinians. Mr. Oz holds out only modest hope that the government might surprise him.

The double vision of Amos Oz Israeli author separates his roles as storyteller and as political essayist

CAPTION

Amos Oz in the Negev Desert. As an Israeli soldier in 1967, Mr. Oz felt that Israel should get out of the areas it had won, and the Palestinians should build their own state there. That approach, now widely shared though not by the Israeli government, was considered radical at the time.

Credit: Rina Castelnovo for The New York Times

*

CAPTION

Mr. Oz in 2002 talking with Palestinians in the West Bank village of Aqraba, near Nablus.

Credit: MENAHEM KAHANA/Agence France-Presse

Load-Date: May 1, 2009

End of Document

Israelis would trust NATO peacekeepers in West Bank, want to join EU, says poll. Survey shows Obama most admired foreign leader, with 74% approval

The Jerusalem Post

April 22, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1058 words

Byline: HAVIV RETTIG GUR

Body

Almost two-thirds of Israeli Jews support sending NATO troops to the West Bank in a peacekeeping capacity, according to a poll conducted by Jerusalem-based KEEVOON Research and set to be released on Wednesday.

Israeli Jews supported the presence of NATO peacekeepers in Palestinian areas by 62 percent to 34%, the study found. But that support was not shared among Israeli Arabs, who opposed the idea by 44% to 24% - though a third said they did not know or refused to answer the question.

"We are seeing a change in the readiness for third- party intervention in the conflict," according to Dr. Lars Hansel, head of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung office in Jerusalem, which commissioned the study.

"Three or four years back, there was no readiness for international involvement, but I think this changed because of the EU monitoring mission in Rafah, which was seen positively, and the German marines deployed on the Lebanese coast, who are seen [by Israelis] as a welcome development. We are clearly sensing a shift in discourse in Israel about this," Hansel said.

Indeed, a majority of respondents (54%) supported outright Israeli membership in NATO (33% did not). Support rose to 60% when only Jewish responses were counted.

This high support was almost identical among Jerusalem and Tel Aviv residents - 65% and 64%, respectively - suggesting that this view cut across social, religious and political divisions. A similar majority was maintained among the voters of all major parties, including Labor (70%), Israel Beiteinu (67%), Kadima (63%) and the Likud (59%).

The study also found that more than two-thirds of Israelis (69%) would like to join the European Union, with just 18% opposing the idea. Support was higher among Jews (75%, with 15% opposing) than among Arabs (40% vs 30% opposing).

To test the strength of this support, the survey presented a hypothetical situation in which "Israelis would be able to live or work anywhere in Europe, the shekel would have to be replaced eventually with the euro, and the Law of Return might be amended."

Even then, support for joining the EU narrowly defeated opposition by 44% to 43%.

Israelis would trust NATO peacekeepers in West Bank, want to join EU, says poll. Survey shows Obama most admired foreign leader, with 74% approval

According to Hansel, "there is a general attraction to the EU, which is interesting because it is based not only on economic issues, but also on values. The study showed that Israelis liked the EU in part because it promotes democracy and pluralism. For Israelis, the EU stands for certain values and a certain kind of prosperity."

Nearly half of Israelis welcomed EU aid to the Palestinians.

After being told that "the European Union is the largest donor to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and is committed to improving their humanitarian and economic situation," 47% of Israelis said this caused their support for the European organization to increase, while 37% said it diminished their support.

Similarly, 54% said the EU's support for a two-state solution encouraged them to support the EU, while 34% said it hurt their support.

Israelis were less forgiving on the question of a potential EU dialogue with Hamas, however, as 59% said it would reduce their support for the EU. And though they generally held a high opinion of the European organization (63% favorable), Israelis were evenly split (36% to 34%) on whether it had advanced or impeded the peace process in recent years.

Unlike with NATO, opinion on the European Union seemed to depend heavily on political and religious belief and age. Large majorities of Kadima, Labor and Meretz voters and most Israelis over 51 said they liked the European umbrella organization, while much of the opposition came from large segments of the young Israeli population, the Orthodox, and voters for Arab parties.

The study asked Israelis to rate their opinions of several well-known foreign leaders. The results showed that Israelis were as susceptible to the charisma of the new American president as people from any European country: Barack Obama was the most popular of the world leaders, with a favorability rating of 74% and just 11% saying they had an "unfavorable" view of him.

The high figures indicate that Obama's popularity is widespread even among Israel's political Right.

After Obama, Middle East negotiator and former British prime minister Tony Blair is the next-most popular foreign leader, with 68% favorable to 14% unfavorable.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy came third with 64%. That marks a doubling of support for the French presidency compared to Sarkozy's predecessor Jacques Chirac. In 2007, Chirac had 29% approval and 63% disapproval among Israelis.

EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana came in last among foreign leaders mentioned in the poll, with 26% approval and 28% disapproval.

The study put a particular focus on Israelis' views of Germany, finding that two-thirds had a favorable opinion of the country. Fully 62% of Israelis believe Chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany's first female chancellor, improves the country's image abroad.

The survey included a battery of other questions.

Asked about their main concern vis-a-vis their government, Israelis said they were overwhelmingly more concerned about the economy than foreign policy by a margin of 61% to 12%.

In the wake of February's election (the study was conducted from April 1 to 5), the poll found a significant swing toward optimism among Israelis compared with the last poll from 2007. Two years ago, fully 77% of respondents said the country was going in the wrong direction. By 2009, that figure had dropped to 50%.

Israelis would trust NATO peacekeepers in West Bank, want to join EU, says poll. Survey shows Obama most admired foreign leader, with 74% approval

However, Israelis' views of Turkey took a sharp turn for the worse, in the wake of the bitter diplomatic dispute between the two countries over Operation Cast Lead in January. Approval for Turkey dropped from 65% in 2007 to just 34% in the current study.

The survey also questioned Hebrew-speaking respondents about the countries from which their grandparents had come, concluding that 40% of Israeli Jews had European origins and were likely eligible for European citizenship. The 2007 poll found a similar figure of 36%.

The KEEVOON poll was directed by Mitchell Barak, funded by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and advised academically by Dr. Sharon Pardo of the Center for the Study of European Politics and Society at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beersheba. It questioned 600 participants - 500 Jews polled in Hebrew and 100 Arabs polled in Arabic.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

LETTERS; VIEWPOINT

The Sun Herald (Sydney, Australia)

March 15, 2009 Sunday

First Edition

Copyright 2009 John Fairfax Publications Pty Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: COMMENT; Letters; Pg. 46

Length: 1056 words

Body

Power play just a grab for dollars

I WAS so angry after reading the article about "smart" meters (The Sun-Herald, March 8). Surely it is grossly unfair to charge nearly three times the existing rate during a time when most people cannot adjust their usage? We come home from work, heat the house, cook tea, use lights and watch TV - right during the peak price time. And what idiot is suggesting using pool pumps during off-peak times? I will be pretty annoyed if my neighbours start running their pool pumps at 2am on quiet summer nights. The spin doctors must be working overtime to put a gloss on this blatant grab for money by electricity suppliers and the NSW Government.

LAURIE McCONAGHEY

Woy Woy

Cheap and nasty

THE article "Power to save if you have time to be smart about it" (The Sun-Herald, March 8) extols the virtues of "smart" metering of electricity in reducing power bills. Typical is the comment "your electric car can be plugged in and charged at a time (10pm-7am) when the price is cheaper". However, the electricity being used still comes from a polluting coal-fired power station, so there's no reduction in emissions. Despite the hip-pocket appeal, it's really pollution on the cheap.

DON FRASER

Vaucluse

Imports threaten jobs

WOOLWORTHS, the fresh food people, are "heroes". They are going to employ 7000 Australians in the future, while at least one large manufacturing company is putting people off. More will follow if Woolies and Coles have their way. One reason companies are no longer manufacturing in Australia is because the large supermarket chains are not stocking their products and are instead stocking "in-house" brands that are made cheaply overseas. I work in the manufacturing industry. It is just plain frightening when a big-name Australian company stops selling Australian-made product to sell cheap imported goods.

BEVERLY McINTOSH

LETTERS VIEWPOINT

The Oaks

The price of spin

IT IS a shame the \$1 million Premier Nathan Rees is spending on his spin-free government is not being allocated to worthwhile community projects ("\$1m extra a year for advice", The Sun-Herald, March 8). Meals on Wheels could provide a lot of hungry pensioners with meals for that amount and the Red Cross would be able to give more kids a hearty breakfast before school too. Some of the money might also help the struggling national Neighbour Day event. After the recent floods in northern NSW, more communities, schools and public housing groups could hold local barbecues and events across the state for Sunday, March 29.

SUE EDWARDS

Marrickville

From bad to worse

ECONOMIC rescue package, my foot! What an incredible misnomer. It is simply a respite package. The reason the world's economy has gone sour is very simple: the system is totally unsustainable. How throwing good money after bad is going to fix a corrupt, greed-driven system will have occupants of UFOs scratching their head in amazement.

Of course, it could work if the measures now being implemented were followed up with laws to sequester 80 per cent of the immoral earnings of executives, and laws were put in place to stop these overpaid monkeys earning more than 30 per cent of the average wage. But that would have to be done on a worldwide scale and the chances of that happening in a system controlled by those who have vested interests is highly unlikely. When the respite packages of countries fail, as they must, things are going to become twice as bad. Countries such as Australia won't have anything left in reserve to do anything much, and from whom are they going to borrow the money?

ALF CAPAS

Bass Hill

Home buyer beware

WITH reference to your editorial ("Buy now if your job is secure", The Sun-Herald, March 8), mortgage payments might now be equivalent to rent in some cases, but prospective home buyers should not forget that a property owner has expenses other than mortgage repayments to take into account.

By the time an owner adds on municipal rates, water charges, insurance premiums, maintenance costs and other outgoings covered by a landlord, the difference between rental and ownership costs can become quite significant. Add to this the employment rigidities consonant on house ownership, and the case for ownership in a volatile employment market looks less than overwhelming. Against this, of course, has to be set the hope for capital gains when the market recovers, but current experience should make anyone wary of this prospect.

BRUCE HYLAND

Daleys Point

Pride in first parade

THE day after our wonderful 32nd Mardi Gras, The Sun-Herald published the oft-repeated but inaccurate cliché that "the 1978 street protest ... preceded the modern parade". The first Mardi Gras was planned as a night-time festival in Oxford Street. Police action turned it into a memorable riot. The recent Oscar-winning film Milk gives clues about the start of Sydney's Mardi Gras. Harvey Milk led the fight in California against an anti-gay referendum in 1978, relying on mass gay visibility and alliances with women, minorities and labour. His comrades wrote to activists in Sydney suggesting events in solidarity with the 300,000-strong Gay Freedom Day parade in San Francisco on June

LETTERS VIEWPOINT

25, 1978. That was the inspiration to do more than the usual day-time protest march, but to initiate a rebellious, satirical, dancing, night celebration.

KEN DAVIS

1978 Mardi Gras organiser, Eastwood

A different league

WHAT is perception? It is the way we interpret messages from our surroundings. Rightly or wrongly, our judgments are often based on perceptions. It is therefore important to remember that not only should our behaviour be proper, it should appear to be proper. It might be too late for some rugby league players to observe this simple lesson.

PAUL HUNT

Engadine

Support for Gaza

THE plight of Palestinians in the Gaza ghetto certainly deserves the support of Australians. David Wykerman (Letters, The Sun-Herald, March 8) disingenuously asks why Australia has pledged aid to this besieged territory, still under blockade by Israel after its December-January assault in which well over 1300 Palestinians were killed. Self-inflicted? **Hamas** kept to the ceasefire last year, which Israel broke on November 4.

ANN ELKHOURY

North Ryde

Game on

WITH no apologies to Mark Twain, it is clear that the reports of the death of Australian cricket were greatly exaggerated.

GEORGE POULOS

Dover Heights

Graphic

CARTOON: by Cathy Wilcox

Load-Date: March 15, 2009

World DIGEST

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

March 8, 2009 Sunday

FOURTH EDITION

Copyright 2009 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Inc. All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. A10

Length: 1078 words

Byline: FROM NEWS SERVICES

Dateline: 0

Body

BAGHDAD

Survey measures Iraq mental health

The first major mental health study of people in Iraq in the last five years found that 30 percent have been exposed to shootings or bombings, others have witnessed killings or mutilated bodies, and 10 percent had a family member kidnapped or had been abducted, captured or imprisoned themselves.

The study, conducted by the World Health Organization and the Iraqi government and released Saturday, found:

- 17 percent of a random sample of 4,332 Iraqis over the age of 18 surveyed had suffered from a mental disorder in their lifetime, ranging from post-traumatic stress disorder to depression.
- **Women** showed a higher rate of severe depression and phobias, such as a fear of leaving the house, than men.
- Less than 10 percent ever sought treatment.
- 70 percent of those who suffered from a mental disorder had considered suicide.

BAGHDAD

Prime minister calls for changes in jobs

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki called Saturday for an end to the practice of distributing top government jobs along religious and ethnic lines, saying the system leads to weakness and mismanagement.

"There is a difference between sectarian distribution of posts in the government and the principle of partnership," al-Maliki told a conference of Iraqi tribal leaders.

- **Soldier killed:** A U.S. soldier was killed in an attack on an American patrol in northern Iraq, the U.S. military announced. It was only the third combat fatality suffered by U.S. forces in Iraq this month.

JERUSALEM

World DIGEST

Palestinian Authority government resigns

Salam Fayyad, the prime minister of the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, submitted his government's resignation, saying he hoped it would help efforts to form a Palestinian unity government with the Islamic group **Hamas**.

The announcement was bound to raise anxiety, coming just days after international donors pledged about \$4.4 billion in economic assistance for the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority and for rebuilding Gaza.

HARARE, ZIMBABWE

Prime minister's party to review crash

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's party, the Movement for Democratic Change, said Saturday that it would conduct its own investigation of the crash that injured him and killed his wife on Friday.

But the evidence gathered so far suggests that the collision on a highway 45 miles south of here was an accident, according to party and U.S. officials.

TIJUANA, MEXICO

American among decapitated victims

Mexican authorities say a U.S. man was among three decapitated victims found last week in the northern border city of Tijuana.

State prosecutors say the body of Jorge Norman Harrison, 38, was found by joggers Tuesday along with two other bodies near Tijuana's bullring.

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

Questions remain about Karzai authority

President Hamid Karzai deflected calls from political rivals to cede authority to an interim government before elections in August, and refused to even say whether he would run for re-election - the latest signs that the country may be headed for a constitutional crisis even as the Taliban insurgency continues to gain strength.

Afghanistan now faces the critical question of who will run the government between May 21, when Karzai's term expires, and presidential elections Aug. 20. The Taliban usually stages their most intense offensives in those months.

MALMO, SWEDEN

Anti-Israeli activists storm Davis Cup arena

Dozens of rock-throwing anti-Israel activists clashed with police in an attempt to storm a closed arena where Sweden and Israel were playing a Davis Cup tennis match.

About 100 people were apprehended and at least six were formally arrested for rioting, Malmo police spokeswoman Ewa Westford said. There were no reports of injuries.

BEIJING

Tiger kills man who jumps into enclosure

A Siberian tiger at a wildlife park near Beijing attacked and killed a man who climbed into its enclosure thinking he found a shortcut down from the Great Wall, a park official said Sunday.

World DIGEST

The 20-year-old man had been hiking with two other people on the wall when the group decided to jump down to save time on the descent - unknowingly landing themselves in Badaling Wildlife World's tiger enclosure.

SYDNEY

Gay pride event draws 300,000 people

Revelers decked out in sequins, feathers, wigs and leather danced through the streets of Sydney to the cheers of more than 300,000 people at the annual Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

More than 130 floats and 9,500 people participated in the procession, which began as a protest march in 1978.

ISLAMABAD

Bombings leave 15 people dead

Three separate bombings killed 15 people in northwestern Pakistan, while authorities investigated reports that a pilotless U.S. drone crashed elsewhere in the militant-plagued region bordering Afghanistan.

The bombings, coming days after gunmen attacked Sri Lanka's visiting cricket team, were a fresh reminder of the militant threat in Pakistan.

GENEVA

U.S. wants to 'reset' that 'peregruzka' button

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton presented Russian Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov with a red plastic button emblazoned with the word "reset" in English and the Russian word "peregruzka."

It was a play on Vice President Joe Biden's call last month for the two countries to "hit the reset button" on their relationship.

But there was a problem: "Peregruzka" is the Russian word for "overcharged," not "reset."

Briefly

- Northern Ireland: Two British soldiers were shot to death and four other people were wounded in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in a drive-by ambush Saturday night that politicians blamed on Irish Republican Army dissidents.

- French return: The French, who never really left, are expected to rejoin NATO as full members at the alliance's 60th anniversary summit meeting next month.

- Gaza visit: Pulitzer-prize winning author Alice Walker is one of 60 members of the U.S. anti-war group Code Pink traveling to Gaza to highlight the devastation of the Israeli offensive on Gaza's residents.

- Turkish crash: Officials placed nine roses in a vase in an aircraft hangar Saturday to commemorate those killed in the crash of a Turkish Airlines jet near Amsterdam last month.

- Tibet protest: Authorities detained a nun and another woman protesting in a Tibetan area of China to demand the return of the Dalai Lama, an overseas advocacy group said.

- Cancun plan: American student Ed Coleman isn't worried about being in Cancun for spring break despite the threat of violence between drug gangs - he wrote down the number of the U.S. Embassy.

Graphic

PHOTO - Zimbabwe's prime minister, Morgan Tsvangirai, leaves a hospital in Harare on Saturday. Tsvangirai was involved Friday in a vehicle accident in which his wife, Susan, died. Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi | The Associated Press

Load-Date: March 9, 2009

End of Document

Jewish blood libels

The Jerusalem Post

March 26, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 1189 words

Byline: Isi Leibler

Highlight: Candidly Speaking

Body

Defaming an individual is a criminal offense. To defame a nation by falsely presenting its soldiers as wanton murderers would be considered treasonable in most countries. For Israelis to defame their own youngsters when their nation is at war and battling false international accusations of war crimes - is simply unconscionable. They are promoting outright blood libels against their own people.

A handful of unnamed soldiers in a discussion at a mechina (pre-military college) made unsubstantiated allegations concerning two isolated acts of indiscriminate killing and vandalism perpetrated against Palestinian civilians. Upon further examination it transpired that one of the two raconteurs was relying on rumors and had not even served in Gaza. Nobody verified the allegations or attempted to consider the acts in the context of threats such as suicide bombers. The IDF was denied the names of the individuals making the claim and was not even granted advance notice to investigate and respond to the allegations. Which begs the question as to why the informants failed to report the alleged malpractices in the first instance.

The accusers did not merely allege that their comrades were indulging in barbaric Cossack-like rampages. They implied that such behavior was the byproduct of the ravings of fanatical rabbis who had goaded them to initiate killing sprees. They said the message was that goyim - gentiles - had invaded our sacred land and had to be expelled for interfering with our conquest of Eretz Yisrael. The anonymous informants depicted an atmosphere of religious hysteria in which IDF rabbis "anointed us with oil and stuck holy books into our hands." They sent us "booklets filled with Psalms....we could have filled the room with the Psalms they sent." They claimed that the war was effectively portrayed as a religious passion.

THESE REPORTS cast aspersions on all religious Zionist soldiers and officers who are represented in IDF combat units in far greater numbers than their proportion of the population. They display patriotism, love of country and are frequently held up as role models of dedication and self-sacrifice.

For three consecutive days these unsubstantiated accusations against religious soldiers and chaplains were headlined and given front page prominence by Haaretz, the Israeli daily newspaper whose editorial policy and columnists like Gidon Levy and Amira Hass have continuously been demonizing their own country. Few would deny that over the past years Haaretz, notably its English Internet edition - has more effectively damaged Israel's image in the West than all the Arab anti-Israeli propaganda combined. Depicting our soldiers as religious fanatics brainwashed by rabbis has chilling parallels to the anti-Semitic incitement of the Middle Ages promoted by converts who turned on their own people. Such libels emanating from Israel during the anti-Semitic tsunami now enveloping the world fall on receptive ears. The entire global media - including even those who occasionally try to be more

Jewish blood libels

evenhanded - carried blazing front page headlines highlighting these unsubstantiated accusations as evidence of war crimes committed during the Gaza conflict.

EVEN IF THESE STORIES contained an element of truth (and there are no grounds to assume that), to depict them as the norm is like using Jack the Ripper to besmirch the British as a nation of cutthroat barbarians.

For Israel this is a no-win situation. All wars incur civilian casualties. Yet every element of objective evidence confirms that, in contrast to every other army, the IDF went far beyond the norm in its efforts to minimize civilian casualties, despite confronting an enemy which deliberately targets Israeli civilians. This was also a conflict in which our adversaries ruthlessly employed their own civilians as human shields, encouraged their militias to masquerade as innocent civilians and transformed hospitals, schools and mosques into bunkers and fortified arsenals. Setting that aside, which other country would not only drop leaflets but actually telephone hundreds of thousands of civilians in war zones providing them with advance notice to evacuate?.

As the final casualty tally emerged we learned that, contrary to the figures presented by Hamas, in fact 800 terrorists and 300 civilians were killed. That relatively so few civilians were killed in such grim urban warfare is truly a tribute to the IDF. To now accuse it of war crimes is to turn the world upside down.

In a campaign involving tens of thousands of soldiers, one inevitably encounters aberrations. But any Israeli soldier found guilty of violating the army's strict ethical standards will, as in the past, be brought to justice.

THERE IS ANOTHER crucial element to all this. The coordinator of these discussions was anything but an innocent bystander. The pre-military academy in which these "exposures" were aired is headed by one Danny Zamir, who upon providing the IDF with the so-called testimony refused to identify the informants by name. Nor did he wait for the authorities to ascertain the veracity of the charges, but rushed to release his "scoop" to his friends in Haaretz.

Mr. Zamir has a record. As a parachute company commander in 1990, he was tried and sentenced for 28 days in prison for refusing to stand guard over people whom he called "right-wingers" at a ceremony bringing Torah scrolls to Joseph's tomb in Nablus, then under IDF supervision.

In 2004 Zamir published a crie de coeur relating to his refusal to obey military orders, in the process of which he attacked the IDF and denied that Israel was a democratic state. This appeared in a book titled Refusenik: Israel's Soldiers of Conscience, which carried an endorsement by the icon of anti-Israeli academics, Noam Chomsky.

This begs the question: How could the IDF endorse a major pre-military academy headed by a post-Zionist radical, convicted to a jail sentence for having refused to obey military orders? It would certainly be inconceivable for a radical religious Zionist who had rejected orders to be appointed head of a religious pre-military academy.

Setting aside the damage done to the reputation of the nation at a time when every anti-Semite is salivating to find opportunities to demonize the Jewish state, the fact that Danny Zamir is permitted to continue retaining his present role surely borders on the insane. Likewise, for a purportedly serious daily newspaper like Haaretz to report such unsubstantiated accusations in order to promote a political agenda is mind boggling.

Who needs enemies when we have Jews in Israel exploiting freedom of expression to disseminate unsubstantiated and false allegations of immorality as a means to defame the nation and provide fodder for anti- Semites, Israel bashers and all who seek to harm if not destroy us? Even worse, promoting such falsehoods may create a climate among our soldiers in which they incur major casualties by hesitating to implement defensive measures to protect themselves against enemies renowned for hiding behind children and sending forth their women as suicide bombers.

ileibler@netvision.net.il

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Jewish blood libels

End of Document

Canada's Mideast conflict; Minister's threat crosses the line into wedge politics - Correction Appended

The Toronto Star
March 1, 2009 Sunday

Correction Appended

Copyright 2009 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd.

Section: OPINION; Pg. A17

Length: 956 words

Byline: Haroon Siddiqui, Toronto Star

Body

Ripples from the Arab-Israeli conflict have always reached Canada. A war there usually meant a war of words here.

It was inevitable that the Israeli attack on Gaza would increase tensions between the Canadian supporters and critics of Israel.

This time, though, the debates seem nastier, and their impact wider on Canadian institutions and policies: universities, immigrant settlement programs, the issue of free speech vs. hate, etc.

As campuses gear up for Israel Apartheid Week starting tomorrow, there are fierce arguments over Israel's "right to defend itself" vs. its "war crimes," and also over what can or cannot be said on posters and T-shirts here. University officials are accused of muzzling speech or tolerating "intimidation."

Who's the greater culprit? That depends entirely on your view of the Middle East conflict.

Similarly, the solidly pro-Israeli stance of Stephen Harper and Michael Ignatieff has been applauded or condemned mostly on the basis of such polarized views. The two are either principled models of moral clarity, or they are "whores."

That appellation was used by Khaled Mouammar, head of the Canadian Arab Federation, at a Jan. 17 rally at the constituency office of Peter Kent, junior minister for foreign affairs, who had defended an Israeli attack on a UN-run school.

Mouammar said the Gaza conflict exposed two types of politicians: "Professional whores who support war, as (American author) Norman Finkelstein said in a speech at the U of T - people like Peter Kent and Jason Kenney and Michael Ignatieff ... who said that Israel has a right to defend itself by killing women and children" and those politicians "who have lost their tongues" and been silent about Gaza.

Among others, the comments were condemned by Kenney, the immigration minister. He was quoted by Elizabeth Thompson of Sun Media as threatening to withdraw \$447,000 from the Arab federation, funding that is used to teach immigrants English and job search skills. He said he had ordered his department officials to weigh the words of Mouammar. And that he had urged other ministers to do the same.

Canada's Mideast conflict Minister's threat crosses the line into wedge politics

The reaction was swift.

The federation said cutting off funding would constitute the collective punishment of innocents who received its services. And it asked: "Is the muting of our voices now a condition for receiving funding?"

But two leading Jewish groups applauded Kenney.

B'nai Brith accused the Arab group of engaging in "inflammatory rhetoric" and promoting "anti-Semitic and pro-terrorist propaganda" for Hamas and Hezbollah.

Bernie Farber of the Canadian Jewish Congress said that while his group used to work with the Arab federation, it couldn't work with Mouammar. The latter had "lobbied Ottawa to remove Hezbollah from the list of terrorist organizations" and had once forwarded someone's email during the 2006 Liberal leadership race, saying Bob Rae's Jewish wife, Arlene, had worked with the Jewish Congress, etc.

Not everyone at the Arab group was happy with Mouammar, either.

There were murmurs that as dedicated as he was, he tended to get carried away and that his words helped those who want to muzzle criticism of Israel and weaken Arab organizations. Still, Kenney's tirades - there have been others - were too much.

Jehad Aliweiwi, former executive director (1996-2002) of the federation, wrote that Mouammar's words, "however irresponsible or objectionable, are neither hateful nor criminal." Thus the threats to cut off funding are "irresponsible and vindictive."

Addressing himself to Jewish groups, he said: "Combating anti-Semitism is an objective we all should be committed to, but it must never be a convenient tool to target Canadian Arabs who have the right to question their government's policy, actions and practices."

The same point was made more sharply by Independent Jewish Voices, a small group that fights for Palestinian human rights. It said Kenney attacked the Arab group because it "stands for justice for Palestinian people and expresses principled criticism of oppressive Israeli policies. (This) is an ethical imperative, which our government should support."

MPs Maurizio Bevilacqua (Liberal), Thomas Mulcair (NDP) and Nicolas Brisson (Bloc Quebecois) said that as inappropriate as Mouammar's words were, penalizing his group was wrong. Brisson added that Kenney was pouring oil on the fire of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He said he felt that Mouammar's comments were "more in the realm of an insult than of a hateful character."

That argument was further advanced by Fo Niemi, head of the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations in Montreal. Not only should the Tories not be playing politics with funding, he said, but they had better define the difference between free speech and hate. "When we don't have a clear set of objectives and transparent criteria, there could be room for subjective or even arbitrary interpretations" in funding decisions.

What's happening is clear:

Mouammar uses intemperate language, a reflection of his personality and his people's anger and helplessness at what's happening to Palestinians and also at Ottawa's marginalization of Arab Canadians. His words are then used to try and further limit their political space.

Arguments and debates are the staple of democracy. Groups have a right to advance their causes, in a civil fashion.

But cabinet ministers, especially ministers of multiculturalism, usually try to stay above the fray.

Canada's Mideast conflict Minister's threat crosses the line into wedge politics

But not Kenney. He is using Republican-style wedge politics to advance Tory fortunes. He is injecting foreign conflicts into domestic politics to do so. And he is employing despicable tactics to malign those who dare question his government's policies.

Haroon Siddiqui's column appears Thursday and Sunday. [hsiddiq @ thestar.ca](mailto:hsiddiq@thestar.ca)

Correction

A March 1 column stated that Peter Kent, Canada's junior minister for foreign affairs, had defended an Israeli attack on a UN-run school. The column should have said that the minister defended an Israeli attack that occurred near a UN-run school.

Correction-Date: March 4, 2009

Graphic

STAR FILE PHOTOS Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, left, answered Khaled Mouammar's taunt by suggesting the Canadian Arab Federation 's funding might be cut. STAR FILE PHOTOS Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, left, answered Khaled Mouammar's taunt by suggesting the Canadian Arab Federation 's funding might be cut.

Load-Date: March 5, 2009

End of Document

Battling mistrust in the growing shadow of Iran; DIPLOMACY

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

March 14, 2009 Saturday

First Edition

Copyright 2009 The Age Company Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: INSIGHT; Pg. 4

Length: 1068 words

Byline: Daniel Flitton - Daniel Flitton is diplomatic editor

Body

Three decades after the revolution, Tehran's rulers still represent a major headache for the world.

MARKING the 30-year anniversary of Iran's religious revolution last month, the regime's hardline daily Jomhuri-i-Eslami mused over what it saw as a historical irony. Just as with Jimmy Carter before him, the newspaper opined, the destiny of Barack Obama as US President will not be shaped by an electoral campaign or in competition with political rivals - but instead far away, in a country such as Iran.

This reflects a national conceit, perhaps, but there is no doubting Iran does pose a major headache for the US Administration. Obama is not confronted by a drawn-out hostage crisis of the kind that sapped faith in the Carter White House, yet there are long-term challenges that will bedevil relations between the two countries and carry the potential to derail the new President.

Questions over nuclear weapons are only the most obvious. Iran sits in the centre of America's two wars, with Iraq to the west and Afghanistan to the east. Iran neighbours Pakistan, and casts a shadow right across the Middle East, all the way to Israel, America's closest ally in the region. Iranian oil reserves are among the world's largest, and it has the very real ability to disrupt the passage of Saudi and Iraqi crude through the Persian Gulf.

Add to this, Iran's crucial part in contests within the Islamic world, between ethnic Arabs and Persians, and over the place of Shi'ite Muslims, for so long a disadvantaged minority compared with the Sunni majority but now finding confidence in the modern era.

How these changing strategic, cultural and religious trends will intersect with the wider economic malaise spreading across the globe is an open question. But it is clear the contest with Iran will have a major impact on America's regional standing. Close observers of the region point to a widespread feeling inside the regime that, as a country of almost 66 million, Iran deserves recognition as a major power. Yet, as is the way of debates inside any country, there are diverging views across Iran's political spectrum over what this might mean.

People who might be termed as nationalists see US hostility as the main problem. Only when Iran is accommodated, and US hegemony curtailed, can Iran take what they see as its rightful place on the international stage. Then there are more fervent ideologues who also champion Iran's rise yet are irreconcilable in their belief a conflict with the US and the West is inevitable.

Battling mistrust in the growing shadow of Iran DIPLOMACY

Fatemeh Alia is an Iranian politician - having spent the past five years as a member of the Majlis, the country's parliament - who sits on the Committee for National Security and Foreign Affairs. A conservative, Alia is also said to be more inclined towards the nationalist strand of thinking.

In Melbourne this week, Alia spoke of the ways she believes Iran is often misunderstood. "It's just 30 years since the Iranian revolution," she says, speaking through a translator. "Much progress has happened during this time."

She points to industrial and scientific advances, along with Iran's rich cultural heritage, and sought to dispel perceptions of the country as a harsh and repressive theocracy.

"Iranian women have had much progress in the case of education," she says. Iran's media is free, she says, and protected by law.

Such claims are hotly disputed. Iran is portrayed as a country that fosters violence abroad - the US lists it as the world's most dangerous state sponsor of terrorism - and limits the freedom of its people at home. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is ridiculed in the West for his mercurial nature and virulent denunciations of Israel.

Alia is politely dismissive of such claims: "Those countries who condemn us (as supporting) terrorists, they supported terrorists like the Taliban and (al-Qaeda chief Osama) bin Laden in Afghanistan in the past," she says. "You have to not pay attention to propaganda and you have to come to Iran to hear and see the facts."

But determining facts is a challenge. The US suspects Iran is aspiring to build a nuclear weapon - an allegation Tehran feverishly denies.

"Although we do not know whether Iran currently intends to develop nuclear weapons," Dennis Blair, the top US intelligence official, last month told a congressional hearing, "we assess Tehran at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop them."

Once more, Alia dismisses the concerns. "We don't need nuclear arms or bombs," she says. "Some people in some countries condemn us, but (world nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency) has visited many times and reported the focus is on scientific and peaceful activity."

According to Dan Gillerman, Israel's former ambassador to the United Nations who this month visited Melbourne, mistrust of the regime is entirely well placed. "Iran, to me, is the most dangerous country in the world today," he says.

Gillerman served at the UN from 2003 until last year, a critical time in which the world grappled with Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Sanctions have progressively strengthened in the face of Iran's lack of co-operation, but Gillerman accuses Tehran of being masters of dragging out time.

"I don't necessarily think that the real danger is that Iran will one day have a leader who will be crazy enough - although the present leader looks crazy enough as it is - that he would push a button and launch a ballistic missile at Israel, or at any other country.

"But at the same time, I think Iran would have absolutely no compunction about making those dirty bombs and weapons of mass destruction available to rogue regimes and terror organisations."

Iran's backing of violent extremists, particularly Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza, but also Shi'ite organisations in neighbouring Iraq, has caused some Sunni Arab leaders to openly express concern over a looming Shi'ite crescent across the Middle East.

Gillerman believes the concern over Iran's influence presents a historic chance to finally settle Israel's place in the region.

Battling mistrust in the growing shadow of Iran DIPLOMACY

"I think it is precisely the fear of Iran that may make the Arab and Muslim world finally act in a much more pragmatic and realistic way, and support and legitimise the peace process" - an alignment where Israel is seen as an ally, not an enemy.

Yet even such a momentous prospect leaves open the question: what to do about Iran?

Daniel Flitton is diplomatic editor.

Graphic

PHOTO: Visiting Iranian MP Fatemeh Alia says much has changed since the revolution. PICTURE: JASON SOUTH

Load-Date: March 13, 2009

End of Document

Siniora: Lebanon benefits from Arab reconciliation

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

March 16, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 The Daily Star - The Daily Star FZ LLC. Provided by Syndigate.info, an Albawaba.com company All Rights Reserved

THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1083 words

Byline: Nafez Qawas

Body

Prime Minister Fouad Siniora welcomed on Sunday recent efforts toward Arab rapprochement, saying that Lebanese-Syrian reconciliation would benefit Lebanon. Speaking during an interview with Al-Jazeera news channel, Siniora said Lebanon would "benefit the most from Arab reconciliation."

BEIRUT: Prime Minister Fouad Siniora welcomed on Sunday recent efforts toward Arab rapprochement, saying that Lebanese-Syrian reconciliation would benefit Lebanon.

Speaking during an interview with Al-Jazeera news channel, Siniora said Lebanon would "benefit the most from Arab reconciliation."

The premier added that Syria's "key role in the region cannot be ignored."

"Syria embraces Arab causes and blocks foreign interventions in Arab affairs and Lebanon in turn should embrace Syria," he said.

Siniora, however, emphasized that Lebanon was not in need of a "chaperon" with regard to peace talks with Israel.

"We can speak for ourselves," he said, adding that Lebanon was committed to UN Resolutions 425 and 1701, and to the Arab Peace Initiative.

Siniora was responding to remarks made by Syrian President Bashar Assad, who last week expressed his wish to engage Hizbullah and **Hamas** in his country's indirect peace talks with Israel.

Siniora said criticisms that the Special Tribunal for Lebanon is politicized were "unfair."

"We are determined to keep the tribunal away from politics," Siniora said.

In a separate development, President Michel Sleiman travels to Paris on Monday on a three-day official visit that will focus on French military and economic assistance to Lebanon, as well diplomatic ties with Damascus.

French sources told Al-Anwar daily in remarks published Sunday that Paris will also stress "its commitment to work in the interest of Lebanon's unity, independence and sovereignty."

Siniora: Lebanon benefits from Arab reconciliation

In other news on Sunday, Minister of State Nassib Lahoud stressed that rapprochement with MP Michel Murr did not mean he has "authorized him to make alliances in the Metn province."

"We will ally with the forces we did not agree with in the past; this rapprochement is now possible because MP Michel Murr's stances recently improved," Lahoud said in a news conference.

He said Murr supported the seat of the Maronite church and its principles. "This development in his stances leads to rapprochement," Lahoud said.

"However," he added, "this possibility does not mean that we authorize MP Murr to form the alliances he wants in Metn," Lahoud stressed. "His vision of the [electoral] battle in the northern Metn is different from ours," he added.

"We will eventually agree through talks and discussions on the division of seats," Lahoud said.

"Metn is full of highly credible women and men ... We do not favor importing candidates from outside the province," the minister added.

Meanwhile, Speaker Nabih Berri said it was crucial to form a national unity cabinet after the upcoming parliamentary elections, regardless of the results, "because Lebanon cannot live except through consensus."

In an interview with Kuwaiti daily Al-Dar published Sunday, Berri said previous experiences proved that unilateralism drove Lebanon to crises.

Berri said he told all the participants in the March 5 session of the national dialogue in Baabda that a national unity cabinet would be established after the elections.

He refused to comment on reports which said that a Syrian-Saudi understanding was set to reconcile Lebanese politicians, but said that any Arab understanding would have positive effects on Lebanon.

Also on Sunday, Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah cautioned that disputes among Lebanese, particularly among Christians, weaken Lebanon. He also expressed willingness to help Lebanon in any way possible. "We are willing to exert every effort to help Lebanon, but we will not interfere in any Lebanese-Lebanese conflict," he said.

His comments, which were carried by the state-run National News Agency, came during talks with visiting Phalange Party leader Amin Gemayel. The report said the two leaders discussed bilateral ties and Kuwait's efforts to achieve Arab reconciliation.

Gemayel, who is on an official visit to Kuwait, lauded Kuwait's position in standing by Lebanon during difficult times.

Separately, Free Patriotic Movement leader MP Michel Aoun said Saturday that the upcoming parliamentary elections were going to be "a head-to-head battle between two plans."

"Upcoming elections are going to be a head-to-head battle between two projects - one that calls for reforms and another which is corrupt," Aoun said in an address during an FPM dinner at Habtour Grand Hotel.

"You have to exercise your rights and choose the reformist group," Aoun said.

He said the "battle now is aimed at putting an end to theft, and, God willing, the political legacy which began in 1992 will end on June 7."

"He who votes for a clean administration is clean, and he who votes for a corrupt administration is corrupt," Aoun said. "You cannot have a corrupt administration and a good community at the same time."

He emphasized that Lebanon is "split" between two political ideologies. "This is why a reformist force will be formed."

Siniora: Lebanon benefits from Arab reconciliation

On the controversial issue of a centrist parliamentary bloc, Aoun said that when he criticizes the bloc "we are not attacking the concept but its application."

Echoing Aoun, Loyalty to the Resistance bloc leader MP Mohammad Raad said the path of reform and state-building had been adopted by Hizbullah "ages ago."

"Social justice and reform has long been our motto," he said during a rally in the southern town of Nabatieh on Sunday. Raad said Hizbullah hoped that their electoral platform would be the "choice of voters."

Raad said his party was not seeking the elimination other political groups and rather wanted to preserve partnership in Lebanon.

He said Hizbullah would not hesitate to offer concessions, "even at our own expense," adding that it had done so during the formation of the current Cabinet. "We will do it again during the electoral battle if we have to," Raad said.

Also tackling election-related issues, Lebanese Forces (LF) MP George Adwan said "the upcoming parliamentary elections will either take Lebanon further along the path of independence or on that of the opposition."

During a rally in the Chouf village of Damour, in which he launched his electoral campaign on Sunday, Adwan stressed "the need to preserve unity and reject any compromise on the principles for which the LF fought." He also lashed out at Hizbullah, saying the party monopolized the "decision of war and peace."

Load-Date: March 15, 2009

LETTERS; EDITORIAL

The Sun Herald (Sydney, Australia)

March 8, 2009 Sunday

First Edition

Copyright 2009 John Fairfax Publications Pty Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: COMMENT; Letters; Pg. 48

Length: 1036 words

Body

Executives control own pay

I FULLY support the suggestion that shareholders should vote on proposed executive salaries but it is important that the vote should be on a one-shareholder, one-vote basis. What should not be forgotten when executives speak of their overriding obligation to look after the interests of shareholders is that those executives are frequently the biggest shareholders in the company. Remember also that when the amount of the golden handshake they are given (as opposed to earned) when they leave the company is reported, their on-top shareholding and options are rarely mentioned. Employees cannot decide how much they should be paid and the same should apply to company executives.

BARRY SMYTHE

Lithgow

Let's lead on carbon

IN RESPONSE to Lisa Carty's piece "Unemployment by the tonne" (The Sun-Herald, March1), it should be noted that a carbon trading scheme is the most effective way for our nation to reduce carbon emissions and subsequently put Australia in a position to influence the major polluting nations such as China, India and the US to do the same. The effects of climate change on our nation are too dire to write off such a scheme as too hard or too expensive. Under the Government's proposed scheme in its current form, eligible big polluters will receive compensation payments of 60 per cent to 90 per cent of the cost of their permits during the transitional period. These payments are intended to assist disadvantaged firms remain cost-competitive and retain jobs in a carbon economy.

FIONA JURY

Balmain

Climate change reality

IT IS of great concern that so many politicians, and columnists like Lisa Carty, cannot face the reality of climate change. To describe reducing carbon emissions as a merely "worthy goal" is akin to suggesting that slowing the Titanic might have been desirable. Hydro may well want to expand its aluminum production, but if other industries, like the solar thermal, solar photovoltaic, vanadium battery or others had enjoyed the same government handouts as Hydro we would have them up and running in Australia and not dying on the vine or relocating to other countries.

LETTERS EDITORIAL

DON OWERS

Dudley

Pretty scaffold screens

RE "SECOND skin for ugly construction zones" (The Sun-Herald, March 1), I have noticed that in Italy the scaffold screening of prominent buildings under renovation is covered with an image of the building behind the screen. There seems to be no advertising material on these screens, so I assume that there is a regulation requiring this aesthetic enhancement of the site. Why cannot such a requirement be introduced here? The improvement in streetscape is so dramatic that I was energised to write a letter to an Italian architect friend commending the Italian authorities for their concern for the urban environment.

BRUCE HYLAND

Daleys Point

Teach 'em to write

HAVING worked in a long day care centre for several years as a teacher co-ordinator, I applaud the efforts of our underpaid child-care workers to teach preschool-aged children (Well stated, Nick Sutton, Letters, The Sun-Herald, March 1). Now, as an infants/primary school teacher trying to undo some very bad habits, I do wish these teachers had taught their charges how to hold their pencils correctly. Teaching children how to read and write before they start school is debatable, but not teaching them where to start on a page, how to cut out properly or even throw a ball is a problem.

DIANE ALFORD

Castle Hill

Who controls ADF pay?

PAUL DALEY'S comment article "A generals' insurrection" (The Sun-Herald, March 1) completely misses the mark that ADF pay and allowances are mainly the responsibility of Defence public servants. While, as would be the case with Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon, the buck stops with the generals, perhaps if Daley did a little more research he would have found that it is the Defence Secretary, a civilian, who should be in the minister's crosshairs. If Mr Fitzgibbon issued the "fix it" instruction in October, he is just as culpable as the generals because he didn't follow up.

MIKE SARGENT

Raymond Terrace

Fronting Defence chiefs

FOR years we've been reading of regular Defence Force cover-ups, the persecution of ***female*** personnel and of whistleblowers, and now it seems of pay problems ("Defence deploys team to fix SAS pay stuff-up", The Sun-Herald, March 1). Somehow the earlier issues seemed to get forgotten - no doubt as a result of the old "ignore them and they'll go away" principle - by the Defence chiefs, but also regrettably by the media, meaning little changed. Angels have definitely feared to tread on those hallowed parade grounds, but let's hope Joel Fitzgibbon will have the fortitude and perseverance to get somewhere in the face of the rigid autonomy senior Defence staff guard so jealously.

JOHN MOIR

Mollymook

LETTERS EDITORIAL

Why help Gaza?

IN JANUARY, Australia gave \$10million to assist in the building reconstruction in Gaza and has now given a further \$20million. Why? Their elected Government, Hamas, was firing rockets into Israel. Predictably, Israel retaliated causing huge damage. What has that got to do with Australia and why do Australian taxpayers have to contribute to pay for this self-inflicted damage? Surely, the \$30million could be better spent here?

DAVID WYKERMEN

Balmain

DOCS cannot cope

EVERY day a new horror story is printed about child abuse, the latest by Rachel Browne ("Last resort: DOCS removes 90 children from home a week", The Sun-Herald, March 1). DOCS cannot cope. We need a new approach. As well as a \$5000 baby bonus, a \$20,000 reward could be offered to women to be sterilised. Women with two children and in a stable relationship would need to be excluded. This would save millions of dollars and a lot of misery in unwanted children.

F. ANNING

Ascot, Qld

Clean up rugby league

SUMMER is just gone, the days are getting shorter, the rugby league season proper is almost upon us and already the first allegations of a sexual assault against a young woman, involving league players, have hit the headlines. Do we really need to be subjected to reports of this type of behaviour season after season? If the clubs cannot control the players' behaviour, perhaps we would be better off without the game at all.

STEWART SMITH

Castle Hill

Graphic

CARTOON: by Cathy Wilcox

Load-Date: March 8, 2009

From Iran's hard-liners, tough talk - but pragmatism as well

Christian Science Monitor

February 18, 2009, Wednesday

Copyright 2009 The Christian Science Publishing Society All Rights Reserved

Section: WORLD; Pg. 4

Length: 1115 words

Byline: Scott Peterson Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: Tehran, Iran

Body

Senior conservatives in Iran are raising the bar for US-Iran engagement, reinforcing positions that leave little room for compromise as the Obama administration searches for ways to talk to the Islamic Republic.

After 30 years of high-octane animosity, such voices appear to rule out change. But analysts say they may reflect a maximalist opening bid, as Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei - the man who will make the final decision on any US ties - weighs the advice.

Among those reaching the ear of the leader is Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor of the hard-line Kayhan newspaper, who is also an official representative of Ayatollah Khamenei. He draws a grim conclusion from past American actions against Iran, beginning with the CIA-orchestrated coup in 1953 to the US Navy downing of an Iranian civilian airliner in 1988, which killed all 290 on board.

"After that, [the US] would create a new problem every day until now, when they put their hands on the nuclear issue," says Mr. Shariatmadari in an interview. "This is an excuse. We say they will find another thing [to accuse us of]. With all this, the US has been an enemy of ours, so there exists no room for friendship."

Shariatmadari's unwavering views prompted one commentator to label him Iran's Rush Limbaugh. But analysts say that Khamenei has often acted pragmatically to preserve his country's Islamic system. He has authorized Iranian assistance to the US in the past, for example, most recently in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

Indeed, Richard Holbrooke, the US envoy to Afghanistan, said this week on a visit to the war-torn nation that it was "absolutely clear that Iran plays an important role in Afghanistan," and that Iran had "a legitimate role to play in this region" - comments certain to be well received in Tehran.

On the Iran side, a more pragmatic voice comes from Ali Larijani, the conservative parliamentary speaker who is close to Khamenei. "In the past, the United States has violated Iranian rights," the former nuclear negotiator said on Saturday in Tehran. "It has to change its attitude regarding the Iranian people. [It] has to play chess, not box."

The worst scenario are these hardline voices to the leader," says a veteran observer. "Some believe Iran has never been more strong, and Iran's enemies have never been more weak, so now is not the time to compromise."

"Delusions are in fashion," adds this person, noting that after launching its own satellite this month - a feat that put Iran into a club of just nine nations - President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared Iran "officially" a superpower.

From Iran 's hard-liners, tough talk - but pragmatism as well

"[Ahmadinejad] is reflecting that sentiment. You are at your [peak], and when you are at your best, you demand, you even intimidate."

Mr. Ahmadinejad has listed several conditions for talks, including US acceptance of Iran's nuclear program, which Tehran vows is solely for peaceful purposes, acceptance of it as a regional power, and an apology for past "imperial" behavior. But the archconservative has also spoken in friendly terms of "dialogue" with the US.

"What have we not done to have relations with the US?" asks Ahmad Tavakoli, the influential conservative head of the Parliamentary Research Center. "Our president sent a letter, invited US scholars. He asked for a debate [with former President George Bush]. We are always trying to have relations, but not with imperialism."

"Mutual respect" is key, says Mr. Tavakoli, though he acknowledges he "would not be happy" if roles were reversed and 10,000 Americans took to the streets in Washington to chant "Death to Iran."

"We didn't do anything against the people of the US. We never launched a coup. We never shot down their plane. We never blocked their wealth. We never supported a war against them," says Tavakoli. "So when we say [Death to America] we almost have a right to say this. But when we speak of the people of America, we honor them."

These conservatives argue that US actions against Iran are facts, while countercharges from Washington - of Iran's role in 1983 attacks on US Marines and the US Embassy in Lebanon, for example, and a hand in the 1996 destruction of a US military barracks in Khobar, Saudi Arabia - are "accusations."

Current events also color the picture. The muted US reaction to Israel's offensive in Gaza and to its high Palestinian death toll was a test that Iran's right wing says President Obama failed, though he was not yet in office. Shariatmadari has two maps of Israel and Palestine on his wall, one covered with arrows showing Israeli military moves.

"Over Gaza, a lot of people were unhappy; in Britain, 100,000 people protested," he says. "Mr. Obama did not take any stance on this or condemn [it]. The people of the world see what is happening, and see Mr. Obama's silence, [so] how can they expect any change?"

The leader's representative linked the fate of the US women's badminton team - which Iran invited to a tournament starting Feb. 6, and which flew to Dubai only to be told its visas weren't ready - to Gaza.

Iranian spokesmen claimed that there was not time to process the team's visas. Iranian sources say Ahmadinejad was keen for the visit, but suggest the US announcement of it was earlier than had been agreed, causing a spike in US media interest that would have been hard to control.

This was the first such occasion under Obama, and was seen on both sides as an initial confidence-building measure.

Still, Shariatmadari says Gaza complicated any shuttlecock diplomacy. "With what happened in Gaza and no US [censure], if the badminton team had come, this would have been a desecration of [Palestinian] blood," he says.

Tehran realizes the US is unlikely to slacken support for Israel, analysts here say. Iran, likewise, does not expect to stop supporting Hezbollah or Hamas. "They accuse us of supporting terrorism and mention ... Hezbollah in Lebanon and the resistance in Gaza," former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani told Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV. "Are these terrorists? These are oppressed people who are resisting."

The US "committed all these crimes in Iraq, spied for the former ... regime, and killed many" Iraqis, said Mr. Rafsanjani, according to a MideastWire.com translation. "Are we or they the terrorists?"

Iran and the US say they are watching for positive signs, but expect the other to change first - or cave in. And Shariatmadari says close ties are no panacea. "Sanctions have caused some damage. But the price they want us to pay to get rid of sanctions is higher than the damage," he says. "Iran cut ties [with the US], and even so reached space and nuclear technology, and more power in the region."

From Iran 's hard-liners, tough talk - but pragmatism as well

(c) Copyright 2009. The Christian Science Monitor

Load-Date: February 17, 2009

End of Document

Job-offer spam gets makeover; Tech talk

The Daily Gleaner (New Brunswick)

March 6, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications Inc. All Rights Reserved

Section: BUSINESS; Pg. D2

Length: 1031 words

Byline: The Associated Press

Body

Gadgets aren't the only things getting smarter

A staple of the spammer's arsenal - those come-ons for job offers - is getting a makeover as online identity thieves concoct clever new ways to sneak onto people's computers.

One tactic the bad guys are trying is a twist on an old standby: e-mails purporting to come from legitimate companies that say they're still hiring.

The messages are loaded with links to the company's official website to throw off suspicious recipients. However, they are also packed with a dangerous surprise - a computer virus - hidden in an attachment that is supposed to be a job application.

One message, supposedly from Coca-Cola Co., trumpets that "We are hiring!" All the recipient has to do is fill out the attached application to get started.

There are some tip-offs, though, that the message is fraudulent: the English is choppy, the company promises 12 weeks of paid vacation and that "None of the positions require any kind of education or work experience!"

Another tactic represents the flip side of that deception. Spammers are sending emails pretending to reject people for jobs, instead of trying to recruit them. Those messages say the recipients weren't selected for a particular job, so the company has sent back their application - disguising the malicious program.

"What they're trying to tap into is human curiosity," said Dermot Harnett, principal analyst of anti-spam engineering with Symantec Corp. "Maybe people have lost their jobs, or they're looking for another job, and they're looking at their email constantly to see if they have responses from potential employers."

The Federal Trade Commission is also warning about a spate of economic- stimulus scams - spam messages promising stimulus money simply by revealing bank account or credit card numbers.

One way to protect yourself is by never clicking on links or opening email attachments from people you don't know. If you're a job seeker who gets one of these messages, contact the company's human resources department yourself to follow up on an application or to make sure a job opening exists.

And don't rely on the sender's email address either as proof that the message is coming from a legitimate source. Hackers can easily spoof those.

Job-offer spam gets makeover; Tech talk

Japan cellphone goes 3D with special display

The Japanese already use their cellphones to shop, exchange e-mail and watch digital TV.

Now comes another dimension to the ever-growing list of eye-catching mobile features: the 3D display.

The Hitachi Ltd.'s Wooco H001 cellphone, which went on sale last month in Japan for 50,000 yen (about C\$656), has a tiny button that says "3D" below the keyboard. Push it, and the screen's image will appear three-dimensional, seeming to protrude slightly from the eight-centimetre liquid crystal display.

Similar to how 3D movies and TVs work, the technology takes advantage of how the human mind understands depth and spacing. By sending a slightly different image to each eye, the 3D cellphone creates the illusion of 3D, almost like a miniature hologram.

Some 3D theatre and the 3D Hyundai TV require special glasses to shut out the image meant for the other eye. But the Wooco phone comes with its own invisible barriers packed inside the display to ensure the same effect.

Watching a tiny 3D image or animation video on a cellphone is fun - for a few seconds. It gets a bit tiring on the eyes, once the novelty wears off.

The 3D feature works for any image, but it would be more enjoyable if there were more mobile content especially designed for 3D. Reading email in 3D is simply nerve-racking.

There are no plans to sell the 3D cell in the United States and other overseas markets, according to mobile carrier KDDI Corp., which offers the phone. KDDI doesn't disclose the number of 3D handsets sold so far.

Legislator targets Internet mapping

A California legislator wants to force Internet mapping services to blur detailed images of schools, hospitals, churches and all government buildings, reviving a debate over whether such images can assist terrorists.

Assemblyman Joel Anderson, a San Diego-area Republican, said he decided to introduce his bill after reading that terrorists who plotted attacks in Israel and India used popular services such as Google Earth and Microsoft's Virtual Earth.

But even if his bill becomes law, it might be difficult to prohibit Google Inc., Microsoft Corp. and other mapping companies from posting such photographs. That's because those images already are public and often are posted on the institution's own website.

"Just taking a picture of a building is not a threat because these images have been available for decades," said Simon Davies, president of London-based Privacy International, which has been critical of Google for taking photographs without consent.

Pam Greenberg, who tracks Internet and technology issues for the National Conference of State Legislatures, said California appears to be the first state to consider restrictions on Internet photos of potential terrorist targets.

Google spokeswoman Elaine Filadelfo said the company was studying Anderson's bill but noted that the company listens to complaints from the public. A Microsoft representative declined to comment.

Google and Microsoft do voluntarily limit online images to some extent.

The White House, the U.S. Capitol and military bases are found on Internet maps but cannot be viewed as clearly as the buildings on the streets that surround them. In most cases, Google and other mapping websites have removed those sensitive sites by request.

Google also removed shelters for battered women before it unveiled panoramic street-level photographs that show buildings in much closer detail, including possibly who's coming and leaving.

Job-offer spam gets makeover; Tech talk

In addition, the company removed detailed Israeli street images from its Google Earth software after the government there raised concerns that **Hamas** used online satellite photos to aim rockets.

Anderson's bill would set restrictions only on images of government buildings, schools, hospitals and places of worship in California. It does not target images of homes posted online, an aspect of Internet mapping that has led to privacy concerns, including a Pennsylvania lawsuit.

Load-Date: March 6, 2009

End of Document

A fair point: everyone is equal in their suffering during wartime; Robert Fisk's World

The Independent (London)

February 14, 2009 Saturday

First Edition

Copyright 2009 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

The  INDEPENDENT

Section: COMMENT; Pg. 46

Length: 940 words

Byline: Robert Fisk

Body

The third and very final part of the "normality" of war. I have just finished reading Lyn Smith's *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust*. I admit to a personal interest. Lyn is a friend of mine for whom I have been recording my memories of Middle East wars for the Imperial War Museum. Nothing I have ever seen can equal this, however, and I can give only one example from the terrifying, outrageously brave and moving book this is.

It is the testimony of Leon Greenman, a British Jewish inmate of Auschwitz-Birkenau who arrived at the extermination camp with his wife and child. It speaks for itself. All other passages pale beside it:

"We were bullied out of the train and stood about waiting. It must have been about half past two in the morning. It was dark, a blue light was shining on the platform. We saw a few SS men walking up and down. They separated the men from the women. So I stood right in front of the men and I could see my wife there with the child in her arms. She threw me a kiss and she showed the baby ... Then one of the prisoners in a striped uniform commanded us to follow him. Well, we turned to the left and walked a little way for two or three minutes. A truck arrived, stopped near us and on the truck were all the women, children, babies and in the centre my wife and child standing up. They stood up to the light as if it was meant to be like that - so that I could recognise them. A picture I'll never forget. All these were supposed to have gone to the bathroom to have a bath, to eat and to live. Instead they had to undress and go into the gas chambers, and two hours later those people were ashes, including my wife and child."

I recalled this searing passage this week when I received a letter from a reader, taking me to task for my "constant downplaying of the suffering of the Palestinians on the grounds that their deaths and suffering are minimal when compared with that of the Second World War". Now, I should say at once that this is a bit unfair. I was especially taking exception to a Palestinian blog now going the rounds which shows a queue of Palestinian women at one of Israel's outrageous roadblocks and a (slightly) cropped picture of the Auschwitz selection ramp, the same platform upon which Leon Greenman was separated from his young wife and child more than 60 years ago. The picture of the Palestinian women is based on a lie; they are not queuing to be exterminated. Racist, inhumane and, sometimes deadly - Palestinian women have died at these infernal checkpoints - but they are not queuing to be murdered.

A fair point: everyone is equal in their suffering during wartime Robert Fisk's World

Yet our reader does have a point. The Second World War, she says, "does put it in a category apart ... but surely if one is caught up in any war and sees one's loved ones killed or maimed, one's home destroyed ... then that must be the greatest cataclysm in one's life. The fact that a hundred others, a thousand, a hundred thousand, a million are suffering likewise is immaterial to the individual's suffering. The Second World War lasted six years. The Palestinian suffering has lasted over sixty..."

And yes, I'll go along with this. If it's an individual being deliberately killed, then this is no less terrible than any other individual, albeit that this second person may be one of six million others. The point, of course, is the centrality of the Holocaust and - Israel's constant refrain - its exclusivity. Actually, the Armenian Holocaust - as I've said on umpteen occasions - is also central to all genocide studies. The same system of death marches, of camps, of primitive asphyxiation, even a few young German officers in Turkey watching the genocide in 1915 and then using the same methods on Jews in the occupied Soviet Union. Numbers matter.

But our reader has another point. "After all," she says, "in the Second World War, after the entry of the US and USSR on our side, people could feel pretty positive about the outcome. But where is such hope for the Palestinians? And now to cap the horror the BBC is refusing to even show an appeal to help Gaza..." I'm not at all sure that W Churchill Esq would have entirely placed such confidence in the outcome of the Second World War - he was initially worried that the Americans would use up their firepower on the Japanese rather than against Hitler's Germany.

I think, however, there is yet one more point. The rules of war - the Geneva Conventions and all the other post-Second World War laws - were meant to prevent another Holocaust. They were specifically designed to ensure that no one should ever again face the destruction of Mrs Greenman and her child. They were surely not made only for one race of people. And it is these rules which Israel so disgracefully flouted in Gaza. It's a bit like the refrain from Lord Blair of Kut al-Amara and a whole host of other apparatchiks when the torture at Abu Ghraib was revealed. Well, yes, they told us, it was bad - but not as bad as Saddam Hussein's regime.

And of course, this argument leads to perdition. True, we were bad - but not as bad as the Baath party. Or the Khmer Rouge. Or Hitler's Germany and the SS. Or the Ottoman Turks - though I noticed movingly that one of Lyn's Jewish Holocaust survivors mentions the Armenians. No, the numbers game works both ways. A thousand Palestinians die in Gaza. But what if the figure were 10,000? Or 100,000? No, no, of course that wouldn't happen. But the rules of war are made for all to obey. Yes, I know that the Jews of Europe had no Hamas to provide the Nazis with an excuse for their deaths. But a Palestinian woman and her child are as worthy of life as a Jewish woman and her child on the back of a lorry in Auschwitz.

Load-Date: February 13, 2009

Tough-talking Lieberman offers southern comfort on successful road trip.
From Nirim to Ofakim, Israel Beiteinu leader draws crowds

The Jerusalem Post

February 5, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 995 words

Byline: ABE SELIG

Body

Taking a moment to regroup before setting out on a whirlwind tour of the South on Wednesday, Israel Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman sat with his staff at a road stop near Yad Mordechai, casually sipping a cup of tea.

Lieberman's campaign workers were busy preparing their cars and minibuses - all covered in Israeli flags and party stickers - before the day's journey, when a middle-aged woman approached and launched into an impassioned speech.

"He's the kind of leader we've been waiting for," the woman said, pointing at Lieberman.

A news crew on hand, waiting to accompany Lieberman, began filming her.

"He knows how to talk to them in their own language," she said. "They'll understand him."

Given the proximity of Yad Mordechai to the Gaza Strip - just a few kilometers away - the recent rocket barrage that rained down on the region both before and during Operation Cast Lead, and Lieberman's tough rhetoric towards **Hamas** and the Israeli Arabs who support them, there was no need for her to explain who "they" were, or what Lieberman would need to tell them.

Indeed, the recent Gaza battle lingered in the atmosphere in the South on Wednesday. While the rocket fire has continued, albeit much less than before or during the war, residents said they were encouraged by the army's "great effort" but discouraged by the politicians' "cold feet," and Lieberman arrived to address just that.

As the caravan of campaign workers and journalists traveled through the now quiet junctions of the Gaza envelope area, graffiti on an electric box read: "Soldier, give 'em hell!"

The caravan pulled into its first stop, Kibbutz Nirim, and Lieberman immediately went to work.

Sitting inside a lounge, he listened to local farmers complain about fields and houses damaged during the fighting, and the bureaucratic snafus preventing them from receiving government compensation. One told Lieberman that there was still daily sniper fire.

"They fire at us every day," the man said. "It's extremely dangerous for my workers to go out the fields, but what are we supposed to do, this is our livelihood."

Tough-talking Lieberman offers southern comfort on successful road trip. From Nirim to Ofakim , Israel Beiteinu leader draws crowds

Lieberman agreed, saying that "they shoot at us even during this period of calm."

"There's a serious problem here and someone needs to take care of it," another farmer said. "I've been here for many years, and I don't plan on going anywhere. I tell my workers, 'We're going to continue growing our crops up to the border fence.' This is our land and I won't give up on a centimeter of it."

"That's right," Lieberman responded. "We won't give up on it."

"I've been down here many times over the last few years," Lieberman continued, "and I know the reality here very well. I'll say it clearly - this is where our national strength is - with the residents of the South."

But not all of the kibbutz members who had come to hear Lieberman speak were convinced.

"I don't think his overall message is going to catch on here," said Tal, who said that Nirim was traditionally affiliated with Meretz. "We're left-wing here, even with all the rockets."

"That's not true," another kibbutz member said. "We're tired of living like this. It's correct to say that this kibbutz has voted Meretz over the years, but just wait and see, there are going to be some big surprises here on election day."

The next stop was the Kerem Shalom crossing with Gaza - a highly politicized location both because of the humanitarian aid that goes through the crossing to Gaza, and the nearby Philadelphi Corridor, which many politicians, including Lieberman, had insisted on retaking before ending Operation Cast Lead.

But Lieberman used the opportunity to express his dismay with the Likud's attacks against him.

"I speak with [Likud Chairman Binyamin] Netanyahu almost every day," Lieberman said. "But everyone from his [Knesset] list attacks us. Still, I don't see it as an attack against me, it's an attack against Bibi. Even he says that he doesn't agree with the attacks against us."

Therefore, Lieberman explained, he viewed the attacks against his party from Likud members as an "internal intifada" - a struggle within the party for positioning before the elections results come in.

The Israel Beiteinu leader also used the impromptu press briefing to deny reports that he had once been a member of the outlawed far-right Kach organization, led by the late Rabbi Meir Kahane.

"The level of lies and slander against us is unlike anything I have ever seen," he said.

From Kerem Shalom, Lieberman and his entourage continued on to Netivot, where he and party member Uzi Landau spoke to supporters and shook hands with curious passersby.

Netivot resident Eli Zagool said he thought Lieberman would have a stronger than expected showing in town, traditionally a Likud stronghold.

"He's got a lot of votes here, votes that used to be Likud," Zagool said. "It's not just the Russians, and it's not connected to the religious. I'm religious, and I see that he's not, but the state is more important than those things right now. It's basically a matter of life or death."

Asked to explain why he thought Lieberman would do better, Zagool cited two reasons.

"First it's the war," he said. "We got hit here with a lot of rockets and people are upset about the way it ended. Look - they're still firing at us every day."

"But the other reason, it's we see how he deals with the Arabs in the Knesset, he's not embarrassed, he tells them to their face. And we have a lot of problems here with the Beduin from Rahat. They steal our cars and harass our women."

Tough-talking Lieberman offers southern comfort on successful road trip. From Nirim to Ofakim , Israel Beiteinu leader draws crowds

"I believe that he's the only one who can deal with those problems, he's strong in that area," Zagool said. "I'm definitively voting for him."

The final stop was the Ofakim market, where dozens of residents joined the campaign workers, cheering and dancing behind the candidate.

As Lieberman made the rounds, a woman approached him with a fresh loaf of bread.

"Here," she said, "eat," and Lieberman obliged.

"He's such a nice man," the woman said, beaming at him. "Who else says it like he does?"

Graphic

Photo: ISRAEL BEITEINU leader Avigdor Lieberman and Danny Ayalon stop outside Kibbutz Nirim during the party's campaign tour of the South yesterday. (Credit: Tsafirir Abayov/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Storm clouds gather over Dubai debacle. Andy Ram's visa concern for lucrative event escalates volatile situation facing ATP, WTA

The Jerusalem Post
February 18, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: SPORTS; Pg. 12

Length: 982 words

Byline: ALLON SINAI and AP

Body

Andy Ram weighed in on the current situation that has embroiled both him and fellow Israeli tennis star Shahar Pe'er on Tuesday, and said enough is enough.

The country's most celebrated doubles specialist feels that tournaments in Arab countries which refuse Israelis, or anyone else for that matter, visas should face stern punishment.

Ram is waiting to hear whether he will be getting a visa for Dubai so he can play in next week's tournament, but the indications are that, like Shahar Pe'er, his request will also be denied.

"Maybe cancel the tournament or sanction them with money or something else. But something should be done to make sure this situation does not develop again next year," Ram told the BBC when asked what should be done.

"It's one of the biggest events on the calendar so they have to find a way to have Israelis play there.

"The governing bodies, the ATP and the WTA, have to take responsibility."

The organizers of the Dubai women's tournament claimed on Tuesday that possible threats against Pe'er led authorities to block her from receiving a visa.

The statement by the Dubai Tennis Championships - citing fan anger of Israeli's recent incursions into the Gaza Strip - was its first detailed defense after the last-minute visa denial.

But it also appeared to push the United Arab Emirates into a corner, with Ram looking to take part in next week's men's doubles tournament with Kevin Ullyett of Zimbabwe.

The overseers of the world tennis tours - still outraged by the snub of Pe'er just before the tournament began Sunday - seemed determined not to ease up.

The ATP, which runs the men's tour, said the UAE has an opportunity to "make the right decision."

The women's tour has warned of fallout including possibly dropping Dubai from its calendar.

Storm clouds gather over Dubai debacle. Andy Ram's visa concern for lucrative event escalates volatile situation facing ATP, WTA

"We do not wish to politicize sports, but we have to be sensitive to recent events in the region and not alienate or put at risk the players and the many tennis fans of different nationalities that we have here in the UAE," said the tournament organizer's statement, read to reporters by director Salah Tahlak.

It said the event organizer, Dubai Duty Free, feared Peer's "presence would have antagonized our fans" because of the attacks in Gaza, which left about 1,300 Palestinians dead, at least half of them civilians, according to Gaza health officials.

Thirteen Israelis were killed, including three civilians before a tentative cease-fire halted fighting on January 18.

There were concerns about protests, boycotts and threats to Peer's "well being," the statement continued.

Such demonstrations or security threats are rare in the Emirates, but the statement suggested there were particular worries of unrest from conservative factions or the many imported Muslim laborers from Pakistan and elsewhere.

Ram admitted that recent happenings may cause difficulties, but believes it is no excuse.

"It's a complicated situation with the war. I understand the situation of the UAE government but if they make a big tournament and don't accept all the players by ranking, then that is wrong," Ram said.

"Cancelling the tournament is the last thing Shahar, the WTA or the ATP or anybody else wants. It's sad to see politics getting mixed up with sport. It's something I've never had to confront."

The ATP said it's awaiting "an official decision" on Ram's visa.

Ben Nichols, a marketing official for the men's and women's tennis tournaments in Dubai, said that organizers were not aware of Ram's visa status.

Pe'er, in a written statement, noted the "tremendous outpouring of support and empathy" after the visa denial.

"Going forward, I am confident that the tour will take appropriate actions to ensure that this injustice is not allowed to occur in the future. There should be no place for politics or discrimination in professional tennis or indeed any sport," said her statement.

In related news announced on Tuesday, the Tennis Channel will not televise the Dubai Tennis Championships this week in protest of the refusal to grant Pe'er a visa.

"This is an easy decision to come by, based on what is right and wrong," Ken Solomon, the chairman and chief executive of the network, told The New York Times.

"Sports are about merit, absent of background, class, race, creed, color or religion. They are simply about talent. This is a classic case, not about what country did what to another country. If the Israel were barring a citizen of an Arab nation, we would have made the same decision."

The world No. 1 player Serena Williams of the United States, a member of the Women's Tennis Association players committee, said there was no talk of a boycott in Dubai, but the WTA was taking Pe'er's absence "very seriously."

The WTA tour has one of its last events of the season this fall in Qatar, which has been open to Israeli competitors in the past and has led Gulf outreach to Israeli political and business leaders.

But anger over the Gaza conflict brought an abrupt change in January, when Qatari officials hosted a leader of the Palestinian militant group Hamas and expelled an Israeli trade office in the capital Doha.

On Monday, the president of the International Tennis Federation, the sport's governing body, said he plans to remind UAE authorities that the organization "does not permit discrimination on any grounds".

Storm clouds gather over Dubai debacle. Andy Ram's visa concern for lucrative event escalates volatile situation facing ATP, WTA

"The ITF believes that sport should not be used as a political tool but rather as a unifying element between athletes and nations," said Francesco Ricci Bitti.

On the court Tuesday, Ram and Julien Knowle advanced to the quarterfinals of the Open 13 in Marseilles, defeating Rik De Voest and Rogier Wassen 7-6 (7), 7-6 (2).

Dudi Sela beat Bobby Reynolds of the United States 7-6 (4), 6-2 in the first round of the RMK Championships in Memphis.

Afterward, Sela addressed the decision by the UAE to deny Pe'er a visa.

"I think it's a pity," Sela said. "I think all players who are eligible should have the same opportunity."

Graphic

2 photos: ANDY RAM and Shahar Pe'er have been thrust into the spotlight this week over a move by the United Arab Emirates to deny Pe'er a visa to play in the WTA tournament in Dubai, a decision it seems likely to repeat with Ram for next week's ATP men's event. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Deceived bride struggles for justice

The Leader-Post (Regina, Saskatchewan)

February 2, 2009 Monday

Final Edition

Copyright 2009 The Leader-Post, a division of Canwest MediaWorks Publication Inc. All Rights Reserved

Section: ARTS & LIFE; Pg. B2

Length: 1009 words

Byline: Rama Lakshmi, Washington Post

Dateline: NEW DELHI, India

Body

Twenty-year-old Sabra Ahmadzai finished her final high school test in Afghanistan, took out a bank loan and then flew to India on the last day of November. She came to look for an Indian army doctor who she said had deceived, married and then abandoned her in Kabul, making her an object of shame and ridicule.

In India, Ahmadzai's journey has become a rallying point for young women across college campuses who find in her a source of inspiration to question powerful hierarchies of traditional societies. The students in three universities in the capital are trying to set up a "Justice Committee for Sabra" by enlisting eminent lawyers, retired judges, professors and independent activists.

The first thing Ahmadzai did in India was confront her husband in front of his first wife and children. But Ahmadzai did not stop there. She also filed a police complaint and challenged the Indian army, meeting with government officials, women's groups, human rights organizers and student activists. She says her mission is to see her husband, Maj. Chandrashekar Pant, punished under Indian law prohibiting bigamy.

Pant was stationed at the Indian medical hospital in Kabul and married Ahmadzai two years ago. The ceremony was held 20 days before he returned to India, she said.

He later called Ahmadzai to inform her that he was already married and had two children.

"I had nothing else but anger when I left Kabul. I did not know a single person in India," said Ahmadzai, her close-set eyes darkening as she recalled her troubles while sitting in the office of the students' union of New Delhi's prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University.

"But now so many Indians see my fight as theirs," she added. "I want him behind the bars of a jail so that no man ever attempts this again with any other woman in the world. My family trusted him. He not only cheated me, but broke their heart, as well. My family has been ostracized in Kabul because of this shame."

Pant did not respond to multiple text and telephone messages requesting comment and does not have a lawyer representing him publicly.

Ahmadzai carries her nikaah nama, or marriage certificate, and a compact disc of photographs and video clips of her elaborate Kabul wedding, attended by about 700 people. "She is battling the power structures in both

Deceived bride struggles for justice

Afghanistan and India. She is an inspiration for all of us here," said Sucheta De, 25, a geography student who is a counsellor at the students' union. "What we women regard as our personal struggle is often a political struggle against dominant social structures."

Ahmadzai worked at the Indian hospital in Kabul as a part-time interpreter for the equivalent of \$150 a month, while attending school in the afternoon. She said she had learned Hindi from the popular Bollywood movies in her middle-class home.

Pant, who was her boss, approached her family three times with his marriage proposal, Ahmadzai said. When her mother sent him away because he was not a Muslim, he returned with a priest pledging to convert from Hinduism to Islam, she added.

"I did not love him. He was my boss and twice my age. But the elders and the priest said, 'We have given our word and cannot take it back,' " she recalled. "He had won their hearts by treating sick children of my relatives, too. They liked him. I followed their wishes obediently."

Pant changed his name to Himmat Khan, and called her "Cat" in Hindi, she said. But after less than three weeks of married life, she said, Pant told her that the army was sending him back to India and that he would return for her. Ahmadzai said she received three calls in six months and the last one, in the middle of 2007, was an "unimaginable blow."

"He said: 'Sabra, you are young, beautiful; you should remarry. I have a wife and two sons here in India,' " she recalled.

Then the taunts began. People in Kabul jeered at her. "If I spoke ill about him, it was like slapping my own face. So I kept quiet," she said. "Women said that I was a stigma on earth and should take poison and die. The local boys harassed me and shouted that they are ready to marry me for 20 days, too. I decided to come to India to confront him."

She pledged her uncle's ancestral land for a bank loan, collected her savings and went to India with her mother. From New Delhi, she took a bus to meet Pant in the Himalayan town of Pithoragarh, where he is stationed.

"I told him to come to Kabul and divorce me in front of everybody," Ahmadzai said. "It is better to be divorced than abandoned in my society."

Pant refused to accept her or divorce her, offering her money instead, she said. Enraged, Ahmadzai filed a police complaint. Overnight, her cause was adopted by local activist groups. A signature campaign began. Women and students waved placards and protested in support of her, and blocked traffic for five hours demanding that Pant be punished. Ahmadzai addressed the crowds. The city's newspapers splashed her story on their front pages. Ahmadzai's mother fell sick and returned to Kabul, but Ahmadzai came to New Delhi and met the home affairs minister and the National Commission for Women.

Earlier this month, Gen. Deepak Kapoor, the Indian army's chief of staff, told reporters that army officials are looking into Ahmadzai's allegations.

Pant could face charges of bigamy and changing his religion without the army's permission, transgressions that could result in expulsion from military service. Under Indian civil law, Pant could face seven to 10 years in prison for bigamy, if convicted, according to Ravinder Singh Garia, Ahmadzai's attorney in New Delhi.

Ahmadzai's appointments in New Delhi are now managed by the university students in the sprawling campus that is the font of India's liberal politics. She communicates with her family daily on Google Talk, sits in on films and debates the Israeli war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Ahmadzai now says that if her case drags on, she may try to enrol in an undergraduate course. "I do not know how long my struggle will go on," she said. "At least I will have a degree while I wait for justice."

Graphic

Colour Photo: Rama Lakshmi, Washington Post; Sabra Ahmadzai ;

Load-Date: February 2, 2009

End of Document

Sense of defeat

Daily News Egypt

January 15, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2013 Daily News Egypt - Egyptian Media Services Ltd. Provided by Syndigate.info, an Albawaba.com company All Rights Reserved



Length: 984 words

Body

CAIRO: In Tahani Rashed's award-winning "El Banat Dol" (Those Girls), a documentary about street children, a teenage girl describes how she doesn't fight back when men gang up and rape her, one after the other. By giving in to their assault, she explains, she avoids being locked up in a room to be raped repeatedly for weeks or even months and also avoids 'getting marked' with a mutilating scar on her face.

On the street, it's all about 'survival of the fittest'. The girl's attitude helped get her through numerous rapes unmarked, and may seem to be the most reasonable decision she could have taken. She chose the lesser of two evils.

But this "reason" is, in itself, an admission of her weakness, and an admission of her assailants' rightful superiority over her. Such girls' continuous sense of defeat has inadvertently strengthened their rapists, giving their beastly and criminal assault a sort of de facto legitimacy.

This haunting scene shocked me at first, but upon deeper pondering, I realized that this 'rhetoric of reason' is manifest in all our lives, whether we're rich or poor, educated or illiterate.

Many of us leave our homes every day trying to be as invisible as possible, as 'reasonable' as possible. If we don't get the service we paid for we rarely complain, be it at a restaurant or at a bakery queue. If a woman gets harassed on the street, we try to convince ourselves not to put an end to this because she probably provoked it. If a political activist is detained for protesting against crippling inflation, we look the other way and say they should have known better than meddling in the risky business of politics in the first place.

For years and years, we've found "reasonable" excuses to justify our apathy, our sense of defeat.

Nothing made this clearer than the Gaza discussions I witnessed or took part in over the past two weeks. I was surprised to hear this sentence over and over again: "Hamas brought it upon itself by breaching the truce through firing these ineffective rockets."

Not only is it laden with misinformation " even Western commentators and negotiators have repeatedly pointed out the fact that Israel had breached the ceasefire in November, twice; not to mention that the blockade (a type of collective punishment outlawed by the Geneva Conventions) is an act of war, a war crime; and that Israel was going

Sense of defeat

to attack Gaza regardless of the nature of the "provocation" so its current top ministers could win the February elections " but this view is an unfortunate reminder of "El Banat Dol's" teenager, carrying the sense of eternal defeat and a sorry attempt to justify inaction.

Many seem to have forgotten that Israel is still an occupying power and Palestinians, like many nations throughout history, are entitled to their right to resist this occupation. Many seem to deny Palestinians their right to fight back, hang on to their land and history, or even make any sort of public statements that could remotely challenge Israel's power; basically cease to exist.

What we need to realize now is that this rhetoric of defeat (or reason) can only lead to the same results the women featured in "El Banat Dol" are all too familiar with: the de facto legitimization of unlawful assault, and a loss of dignity.

Since those who have advocated "reason" throughout these debates aren't exactly an authority on wisdom and the ability to make informed decisions, the only explanation I found for these sudden bouts of "reason," is that they are a manifestation of our generation's total loss of resilience. Sometimes it feels like the gene of dignity, of resilience, has skipped a generation or was forced to remain recessive by forces of political and social decay.

Our local history and human history in general is filled with stories of people who refused to remain content with the status quo and defied powers that surpass their own, acting against the wise advice of their "reasonable" critics. Without them " their resolve to do the right thing and act on their intuitive sense of dignity " the world would have been a very different place.

Young Egyptians need to be reminded that had our leaders in the 60s and 70s not decided to fight back to reclaim our occupied land, challenging one of the most powerful armies in the world, Sinai's famous tourist attractions wouldn't have been the same havens they are now; not for us anyway.

What if Sadat had decided to be "reasonable," taking the safe way out before imposing the terms of a lasting peace he was only able to gain through asserting Egypt's power? What if he opted for the lesser of two evils to go through life "unmarked" just to avoid being shunned by the rest of the Arab countries for having the moral strength to seek peace with Israel?

What if Ghandi never challenged the British occupiers? What if Oskar Schindler had no list to save the lives of so many Jews from the brutal persecution of the Nazis? What if Rosa Parks had stayed at the back of bus? What would have been the fate of the American civil rights movement?

I hate to even try to find answers to such questions.

The number of Egyptian, Arab and foreign doctors trying to cross the border to help their counterparts in Gaza and the activists continuously trying to reach the border with their truckloads of supplies, despite the numerous checkpoints, security intimidation and safety considerations are all refreshing reminders that I don't have to find answers to such questions. Those people's resolve to do the right thing is a consolation. It's proof that the dignity gene hasn't skipped a generation, that the sense of defeat isn't the norm.

And just to clarify, I'm not asking anyone to go to war; just don't deny other people's right to exist, resist occupation, and hold on to their land.

Don't blame a rape victim for scratching her assailant's face.

Sarah El Sirgany is the deputy editor of Daily News Egypt.

© Daily NewsEgypt 2007

Load-Date: January 21, 2009

Sense of defeat

End of Document

Letters

South China Morning Post

January 15, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 South China Morning Post Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Letters; Pg. 10

Length: 1128 words

Body

Emphasis on exams can be bad for students

Earlier this month there was news of two more tragic deaths linked to our flawed education system ("Cheerful student, 14, leaps from balcony", January 7, and "Girl who just turned 15 jumps to her death", January 9).

Some adults have argued that children nowadays have difficulty coping with the education system.

Some youngsters, they say, opt for suicide as it seems to be an easy way out and a solution to their problems.

I think this issue requires a more sensible and in-depth analysis. In some cases, teenage suicides are associated with performance at school.

Hong Kong's poor education system focuses too much on students' academic results. Exams are the sole method by which a school measures how much pupils have learned.

This forces students to work hard to get high marks in their exams. If they fail to achieve good grades they often become depressed about their academic performance.

With this narrow focus, schools are not offering young people the opportunity to discover abilities in other areas, such as sport, art and music, and other aspects of culture.

Over the past 10 years our education system has undergone a number of reforms.

However the problems with the system that I have described have not been addressed.

Perhaps it is important now to have a rethink about shifting our focus, so we do not concentrate solely on students' academic results.

Fiona Wong Hei-man, Tseung Kwan O

Syllabus is far too narrow

I refer to Philip Yeung's article ("Subprime learning", January 6) in which he expressed concern about the teaching of English in Hong Kong.

What he described reminded me of my experience when I studied for my AS-level Use of English exam.

Letters

The current curriculum features a heavily skill-oriented teaching and learning approach. It is aimed at "developing" different language skills which employers expect.

The principal reason Hong Kong students "avoid English like the plague" is because of the syllabus and the belief behind that syllabus that the acquisition of skills is equal to learning a language well.

Students are instructed to learn a language by repeatedly doing mock papers or seeking help from tutorial centres to memorise occasionally-used phrases to impress markers in written exams.

Hardly anyone is questioning this syllabus.

However, you really learn a language when you look at all its aspects. Teachers should be looking beyond the syllabus and focusing on, for example, western culture as they relate to such things as cuisine, etiquette and celebrities.

In this way they can maintain the interest of students so that they want to keep learning the language.

Students are left to acquire an appreciation of English-language movies and novels on their own.

Teachers should be actively demonstrating the use of daily English and showing how it is not detached from society.

It is not difficult to see why every year an increasing number of students avoid such a wider learning process as they do not see it as being part of the syllabus and feel it will not be marked in their exams.

Regarding the latest fine-tuning of the education system, perhaps education chiefs should be trying to develop in students an attitude of sustained learning of the language.

Alex Yeung, Tai Wai

Counselling not the answer

Many people argue nowadays that more counselling should be available for youngsters in order to help them deal with the pressure that they are under and enable them to cope with problems.

No counselling in schools was made available to previous generations of students in Hong Kong.

However, young people still seemed to be able to cope with the pressures.

The problems they faced were little different from today - the need to do well academically and parents' high expectations.

It seemed to be easier for the youngsters from that era to treasure everything that they had, even though they had less than the young people today.

A bowl of rice would cheer them up. They would talk about their plans for a better life.

Our young people are now living in a more affluent society and perhaps do not realise how lucky they are.

I urge them to look at the world with a fresh perspective and be satisfied with what they have.

Michael Leung Chung-hong, Sham Shui Po

Squandering opportunities

I refer to the letter from Simon Appleby ("HK will benefit from visa rule", January 5) about liberalising visa requirements to Hong Kong for Shenzhen residents.

Letters

Hong Kong will also benefit from revising the requirements for nationals from Bangladesh and Nepal as they no longer enjoy freedom of entry.

Trade between Hong Kong and Nepal used to be buoyant, especially exports from Hong Kong of gold, silver and electrical goods. Since the SAR government introduced visa restrictions, Nepal's business people cannot easily enter and trade is near zero.

Business people don't always plan ahead other than for fairs. They might want to make a trip at short notice. But given the visa restrictions, those entrepreneurs from Nepal and Bangladesh find it easier to go directly to the mainland. There are even direct flights now from Guangzhou.

For Bangladesh, a country that acts as a substantial manufacturing base for Hong Kong businesses, the cheapest flight access to China is now via Kunming, then overland to Guangzhou.

In these troubled economic times, this kind of discrimination must end.

Tony Henderson, chairman, Humanist Association of Hong Kong

No justification

I refer to the letter by Michael Cheung ("Citybus entitled to refuse request", January 13).

I don't see how going off on a different angle regarding HIV rates and putting forward the extremist view that people can be "cured" of homosexuality has anything directly to do with why the company refused to allowing the hiring of one of its buses [for a gay parade].

It is purely a case of discrimination on Citybus's part and I very much doubt many would have taken the view that had the bus been used, that it was a direct endorsement of gay life.

Comparing this would be similar to complaining that advertising condoms on the sides of buses encourages risky sexual behaviour and that bus companies would seem to support this too.

Andrew Haviland, Kowloon Tong

Human shields

I do not justify the killing of children or innocent people but to be fair to the Israelis we should think about who started all this.

In the Arab world **women** are treated like second-ranked citizens but the coward "warriors" of **Hamas** take cover behind their skirts and use them as human shields.

They do the same with their children in schools and train young people to become suicide bombers. And they put forward a message of hate with their broadcasts on Palestinian television.

Jeffry Kuperus, Clear Water Bay

Load-Date: January 15, 2009

Saturday: Interview: 'I'm Cameron's warm-up act': Sayeeda Warsi - a working-class Muslim single mother - explains why the government's attitude to minorities makes her proud to be a Tory

The Guardian - Final Edition

March 28, 2009 Saturday

Copyright 2009 Guardian Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

theguardian

Section: GUARDIAN SATURDAY COMMENT PAGES; Pg. 30

Length: 2002 words

Byline: Simon Hattenstone

Body

Baroness Warsi of Dewsbury is in a desperate rush. "If I'm late today they're going to have my guts for garters. I'm supposed to be meeting David in Preston in the afternoon." David? "David Cameron." She laughs. "Leader of the Tory party," she adds, just in case. "We're doing a Cameron Direct, like an old-fashioned hustings. They ask him anything they want, and I'm the warm-up act."

The shadow minister for community cohesion has had a busy week. On Tuesday night Sayeeda Warsi was named Britain's most powerful Muslim woman by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Then there's been Labour's spat with the Muslim Council of Britain to consider. Plus she's moving house. Oh, and it's her 38th birthday today.

In the living room there's an ancient typewriter, an equally ancient running machine, and little else. She takes out a screwdriver, jams it into the running machine's socket as if hot-wiring a car, and off it goes, roaring like a chainsaw - me furiously trying to keep pace. "You'll knacker you ankles," she shouts. "Just pull the red thing out to stop it. There's no occupiers' liability round here."

I jump off the machine and bang my head on a brass lampshade. She apologises. "The house was built for midgets. This used to be a garage."

Warsi is not your typical Lady. She's 30 years younger than the average member of the Lords, Asian, Muslim, **female**, working-class, mouthy, and a single mum. Not so long ago they would have run her out of Tory town. Today, bizarrely, she ticks every box of a party desperate to renew itself - or at least to appear to be doing so.

As Cameron's warm-up, has she got her jokes prepared? "Oh, I always tell jokes. The ones I start off with are along the lines of 'did you know the BBC named me the most influential Asian woman in British politics today? There's only three of us.'" Boom boom. "The latest one is on 14 February, I was named sexiest member of the House of Lords. But then, I say, you know guys, I do still have my own teeth. So I was in a league of my own." Who was she up against? "Melvyn Bragg and Seb Coe. Oh God, is that my phone? One of my many phones." If she were a footballer, Warsi would be called a pocket dynamo.

Saturday: Interview: 'I'm Cameron's warm-up act': Sayeeda Warsi - a working-class Muslim single mother - explains why the government's attitude to minorities ma....

She grew up in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, one of five sisters, and one of her earliest memories is taking lunch to her father, a bus conductor turned driver. "His bus used to come to the top of the road. We'd give him his sandwiches and then he'd put us on the bus and we'd go for a ride and he'd drop us off on the way back." She giggles. "Could you imagine health and safety now?" Her father arrived in the UK with £2.50 and a voracious work ethic, and eventually opened a factory and made a fortune in mattresses.

As a teenager, Warsi says, she was geeky. Happy but geeky. "I had one eyebrow. Make up didn't arrive on my scene till well into my 20s. I wasn't very girly girly . . . That's the hardest part about politics, trying to make yourself presentable."

She loved drama and planned to work backstage in the theatre, writing or directing. She told her mother, who said she could get that daft notion out of her head. Warsi gnashes her teeth in imitation and adopts a Pakistani accent: "You will be an accountant, a lawyer or a doctor and that is it." She wasn't interested in sums and couldn't stand blood, so she opted for law.

In her first year at Leeds University, aged 19, she married. She has always said it was an arranged marriage, but two years ago, soon after they split up, her ex-husband Naeem claimed it wasn't.

Which version is true? For once, she seems lost for words. "I feel I shouldn't really comment on it . . ." But in true Warsi fashion she does. "It is a fact that it was an arranged marriage. He was from the extended family, brought up in Pakistan, He was my cousin." So he's talking rubbish? "Well yeah - you can say that, I can't. He's still my daughter's father so I have to be very careful."

Was she too young to marry? "I think I did marry too young. People say to me, did it fail because it was an arranged marriage? And I say well, I could have married anybody at 19 and 14 years on it could have failed. You change, you're not the person you were at 19." Even so, she has no regrets. First, there is her 11-year-old daughter Aamna, and second she says it has made her the person she is today. "Even the bad times shape you."

More than anything, though, it is her parents who shaped her. No sooner had she qualified than her dad told her it was time to set up her own practice. So she did. Much of her work has been representing asylum seekers, and she was part of a commission that concluded asylum seekers should have the right to work. "If you look at it from a purely practical perspective," she says, "We've got loads of people in this country, we don't know where they are because we don't give them any status, they can't go back to their country of origin because it's unsafe or actually we haven't even got flights going there. They're not eligible for benefits, but we won't allow them to work." She says the whole thing is crazy.

There are times when she sounds close to old Labour. God no, she says, appalled. Never, never, never. She explains what exactly makes her a Tory. "The vision that if you work hard then you can be anything you want. Dad always said what this country does is provide you with the opportunity to move on from the situation you started in. He said you will embarrass me the day one of you comes home and decide not to take a job and sit at home and sign on instead."

At 30, Warsi had an early mid-life crisis. Her marriage was going wrong, she was bored with work and she decided to jack in the law. She became more interested in Tory politics, and in 2005 stood for selection in Dewsbury. In that campaign she was accused of homophobia, claiming that Labour's lowering of the age of gay consent from 18 to 16 left children vulnerable to be "propositioned for homosexual relationships" and that homosexuality was being peddled to children as young as seven in schools. She later said she regretted the language she had used. Two years after she lost Cameron offered her a home in the Lords and a place in his shadow cabinet. He has always liked the fact she speaks her mind, she says. Sometimes her approach seems scattergun - she calls herself a libertarian, but campaigned for the banning of the narcotic leaf khat and stoked up Middle Britain paranoia with comments about the rise in polygamy among Muslim men. She has rarely been out of the news since becoming vice-chair of the Tory party in 2005 - arguing that we need dialogue with the BNP and hardline Islamic organisations, that anti-terror legislation is radicalising young Muslims, and flying out to Sudan to rescue English schoolteacher Gillian Gibbons, who had been jailed for naming a classroom teddy bear Mohammad. In 2007,

Saturday: Interview: 'I'm Cameron's warm-up act': Sayeeda Warsi - a working-class Muslim single mother - explains why the government's attitude to minorities ma....

William Hague's former press secretary Amanda Platell bitched that Warsi was ambitious merely "to become a celebrity", concluding that her promotion was "enough to make you want to change parties".

It's often difficult to predict what position she will take on issues. Today, she defends Labour's decision to suspend official links with the Muslim Council of Britain after the revelation that Daud Abdullah, deputy secretary general of the MCB, signed a public declaration in support of Hamas and retribution against the British navy if it tries to stop delivery of weapons to Hamas. "If the Muslim Council of Britain receives taxpayers' money, then I think the government has the right to say if we give you money, then we have an expectation that you sign up to what we think is the right thing."

Perhaps her stance is not so surprising. She has never been a fan of minority pressure groups. In the past she has taken issue with the Muslim Women's Advisory Group, saying she would rather be judged as an individual than as a Muslim or woman.

Maybe the real surprise is that she accepted the most powerful Muslim woman award in the first place. She nods, and says she was in two minds. Yes, she thinks it's a nonsense, but it was nice to be acknowledged and it has given her the chance to extend her network. "We've all swapped numbers, so I thought if nothing else I've got a little list of people I can ring up. What I said when I accepted the award was Trevor (Phillips) is not going to be happy to hear this, but I hope in five years, we don't have this award because actually Trevor we should be taking it for granted that British Muslim woman are powerful."

She says it's Labour's attitude to ethnic minorities that make her more aware than anything why she's a Tory. "I find their views quite uncomfortable. I was with Alan Johnson on Question Time, who's a lovely man, actually, and he was asking what the 'leaders of the Muslim community' felt and I said the Muslim community do not have leaders. What is this? Are we some kind of freak nation that bows down to our leaders? And he said the African-Caribbean community have their leaders and so and so have their leaders and I thought, I couldn't sit in a cabinet of people who still think like that; that somehow there are these alien groups in our nation, each of them represented by a leader who talked to the government on their behalf. It's almost the kind of approach of 'we know what's best for you brown people.' I find that patronising. On Question Time I said where are the leaders of the white people and they all went: 'er, let's move on'.

But haven't Tories patronised, or worse, in the past? I mention the famous Tebbit cricket test. Ah yes that, she says. Did he have a point? "Nooooo. Do you know how good Pakistan were at the time? They used to thrash England. They had Imran Khan, Mohsin Khan, Javed Miandad, Zaheer Abbas, Abdul Qadir - amazing players. Why would you want to support England? Its got nothing to do with loyalty; they're a better team." She takes a rare pause. "I actually have a lot of time for Norman Tebbit. He's a really nice guy. I say to him, I wouldn't have passed your cricket test, Norman."

Was Margaret Thatcher a hero when she was growing up? "I don't think she was a hero, but I admired her for being in a man's world and changing the way this country was seen. And the fact that she was the daughter of a greengrocer - yeah! My mum loved her hair and clothes. I think she'd like me to dress like that all the time."

Baroness Warsi of Dewsbury and I are with her dad in his Merc. Has he ever addressed her by her formal title? He smiles into the rear-view mirror. "No, not yet." Will he ever? "No. She is my daughter, and she will always be my daughter, that's all."

Is he disappointed she has ended up in politics? "I don't know about politicians. I'm not a politics man, I'm a worker. But this is a free country and I'm glad everybody has the choice."

Her life seems so hectic. Is it tough being a single mother? "My parents are brilliant." She tells me that Monday to Thursday, when she is in London, Aamna stays with them.

Does she worry that she doesn't spend enough time with her? "I don't see enough of her. I speak to her every day twice a day. She's a really good kid. Somebody said something quite mean to her recently. She said your mum

Saturday: Interview: 'I'm Cameron's warm-up act': Sayeeda Warsi - a working-class Muslim single mother - explains why the government's attitude to minorities ma....

can't care for you that much because if she did she wouldn't leave you all the time and she said, 'yeah, but your mummy just cares about you, my mummy cares about more than just me, and that's why she leaves me.' So she's quite grown-up."

She looks at the clock, anxious not to miss her date with Cameron. They make for an unlikely team - the tiny, working-class Asian girl educated at Birkdale secondary and the tall, white, upper-class Tory schooled at Eton. Yes, she says, but they do have one important thing in common. "David feels comfortable in his skin, whereas Gordon Brown always looks so uncomfortable. And I've used that phrase about colour and religion - what's important is being comfortable in the skin you wear. If you're comfortable being who you are life's much easier . . . I'm very comfortable being who I am."

Load-Date: March 28, 2009

End of Document

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian

February 10, 2009 Tuesday

1 - All-round Country Edition

Copyright 2009 Nationwide News Pty Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 15

Length: 2513 words

Body

MOST TALKED ABOUT

VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES

Bushland has been turned into impenetrable scrub

AS horrific bushfires tear through Australian homes and lives yet again, it makes me wonder if we will ever concede that maybe we ``got it wrong" about our environment?

Over the past decades, environmentalists have adopted the attitude that they know better than the original inhabitants, and have continually lobbied for the limiting and even the banning of burning off. This was a departure from thousands of years of land management by the indigenous peoples. When early white settlers arrived in Gippsland, for example, they described how it was like a parkland, of open forests with waist-high grasslands, abundant with flowers.

Our environmental policies have turned the bushland into impenetrable scrub filled with dead timber. Furthermore, in the name of biodiversity, the Greens have generated a myth that Australian forests should be pristine, untouched, unburnt -- despite having no evidence that such a policy improves diversity of species. Indeed, scientific evidence is now pointing to the opposite conclusion, that the indigenous people knew better and that biodiversity is maintained by regular burning off. The result of the ignorant treatment of our bushland and forests is the huge fires that are becoming worse -- even reaching into our capital cities -- not as a result of climate change but because of our mishandling of our environment.

John Duley

Nerang, Qld

GIVEN the awful and unprecedented Victorian bushfire tragedy, might it not be appropriate to divert much of the Rudd Government's \$42billion stimulus package towards the massive rehabilitation and reconstruction work now urgently required?

John Kidd

Auchenflower, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IF Kevin Rudd gave all the allocated stimulus package to the bushfire victims, it would do a great deal to help them, and also probably have a fairly similar effect on the economy to his original plan.

Gillian Lord

Sandy Bay, Tas

I'M confident I speak on behalf of all Victorians not directly affected by the bushfires when I say we would rather our \$950 handout go to those who have had such devastation visited upon them.

Kaye Holder

South Melbourne, Vic

MY house was on 12 acres of bush outside Healesville, above Chum Creek. It went up in flames on Saturday. There's nothing left of it but some unusable steel framing and a cracked concrete slab.

Friends, neighbours, family, work colleagues and complete strangers have all been wonderful. Alongside the sadness and the not knowing what's going to happen, their humanity has been truly uplifting.

I wasn't impressed to see the Prime Minister cuddling a crying man on camera. If he'd come across me while I was crying, I would have resisted his embrace, especially if the media had been present. I don't need a public show of empathy from the Prime Minister. I need him to do something meaningful about climate change so that fewer of us will have to lose our houses, our animals and each other.

Patrick Wolfe

Healesville, Vic

CONGRATULATIONS to your reporter Gary Hughes for his superb account of his own experience in the fires ("How we cheated flames of death", 9/2). His report was vivid and informative and lacking in sentimentality -- a true example of how journalists should write. He is particularly to be praised for being able to write his report so clearly and succinctly having just seen his house burn down and having so narrowly escaped the fire with his family.

Sandra Jobson

Bondi Beach, NSW

MY heart goes out to those who have lost loved ones and property in the devastating bushfires in Victoria and to hear that some were possibly deliberately lit is beyond comprehension.

When was the last time an arsonist was given a long custodial sentence? Surely these twisted individuals deserve to be locked up for a very, very long time. Lighting a fire is a deliberate, premeditated act and, if people die as a result, it's murder. There needs to be a deterrent, a very real deterrent, perhaps a mandatory sentence, for deliberately lighting a fire, whether lives or property are lost or not.

Derek Wells

Orange, NSW

IN Hong Kong they have typhoon shelters. Why not make some sort of bushfire shelter mandatory for every mountain hamlet? Surely it is not beyond the wit of man to devise such a facility.

Terry Jessop

Gordon, NSW

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MY prayers are with all Australians as they face one of the worst catastrophes in their nation's history. Living in a Canadian province that itself has fallen victim to ferocious firestorms, I can truly empathise with all the people who have lost their homes to the inferno, and rejoice that most still have their lives. Please know that you are in the thoughts and prayers of thousands of Canadians. Draw strength from each other and from the prayers that were offered in hundreds of churches around our nation yesterday.

Catherine Ridley

Eagle Creek, British Columbia

Canada

Despite his best intentions,

Rudd can't stop a recession

WITH strong support from Treasury head Ken Henry and apparent backing from the International Monetary Fund and the Reserve Bank of Australia, Kevin Rudd argues his recession-beating measures need to be as large as \$42 billion and legislated quickly.

Malcolm Turnbull, on the other hand, says it is larger than necessary and contains a questionable composition of measures. With a host of expert commentators offering Keynesian and anti-Keynesian views, who is right?

The short answer is nobody really knows: there is evidence both ways. One thing that should be said, however, is that the Treasury, the RBA and the IMF have limited credibility given the continuing downward revisions in their forecasts, their obvious refusal to forecast a recession for political/confidence reasons and the weird comment by Henry implying policy should aim to avoid even one quarter's downturn.

Any analysis of history suggests Australia must be in for a recession that will depress activity for at least 3-4 years. For one thing, despite large "stimulatory" measures already taken, the continuing deterioration in major overseas countries indicates a much sharper reduction in overseas activity and employment than suggested by official forecasts. Even with the much lower \$A, this will produce a very sharp fall in exports, with obvious adverse consequences. Overseas the financial system is still in very bad shape.

Accordingly, even assuming Rudd's measures do add 0.5-1 per cent to Gross Domestic Product in the next two years and "support" 90,000 jobs, that addition will almost certainly be from a negative starting point. The reality is that, even with the best of intentions, Australia cannot prevent a recession.

What the Rudd Government can do is to make it easier for businesses and individuals to handle. Most important would not be highly expensive job creation (seemingly over \$400,000 a job) on projects that add little to productivity. Rather, temporarily suspend all legislation governing employer/employee relations so as to give businesses maximum flexibility to negotiate changes in conditions that would minimise unemployment. At the same time, adopt Bob Brown's suggestion for an easing in the testing for the dole.

Des Moore

South Yarra, Vic

NICK Xenophon seems to have an opinion on everything except poker machines, the cause he apparently championed to get himself elected to the Senate. Whatever factors were on the minds of the South Australians who voted for him, I would guess that his expertise as an economist, or lack thereof, was not one of them. He is a prime example of why people should not vote for independents. I object to the fact that he can become a powerbroker and be in a position to dictate the terms of policies which affect the whole country, even though no one outside South Australia had the opportunity to vote for or against him.

Ian Semmel

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Maleny, Qld

Two faces of the church

HAS the world gone mad or is it just the Catholic Church? A South Brisbane priest, Peter Kennedy, is sacked for contravening Catholic liturgy ("Archbishop sacks rebel Catholic priest", 9/2), whilst an English-born Catholic bishop, Richard Williamson, a Holocaust-denier, is welcomed back into the Catholic fold by the Pope provided he recants his view that there were no gas chambers and fewer than 300,000 Jews died in Nazi death camps. So, it's OK to be a Jew-hating bishop, just so long as you follow the correct procedures. What hypocrisy.

Harry Vickers

Safety Bay, SA

Wasting money and lives

I WRITE in response to Patrick Walters' front-page article on our military role in Afghanistan ("Diggers urged to double offensive", 7-8/2). Are we winning the war in Afghanistan? No. Can we win the war in Afghanistan? Maybe, but not if we continue to fight it the way we are fighting it now.

Australia entered the war not to win it but to say to the US that we support you but we will do it with the minimum number of troops. This is not the way to go to war. When you go to the war of your choice, it must be with the intention of winning it in the shortest possible time and with as few casualties as is possible but with the force that is needed.

There is no doubt that there are not enough troops in Afghanistan and Australia and others are not pulling their weight. This war will not be won by the US alone, and will require an increased effort by NATO, but we cannot wait for others to act. Australia must immediately deploy a combined arms battle group of 3000-plus with its own infantry, cavalry, armour, artillery and army aviation, and with RAAF air support.

We have the capability -- do it now or get out. All we are achieving at the present time is wasting money and lives.

Brigadier Brian Cooper (Retired)

Redcliffe, Qld

Clear misrepresentation

ROGER Raven (Letters, 9/2) seems to take the tentative hopeful signs coming out of Iraq as a personal affront. That is perfectly understandable as the Left has invested an awful lot of moral authority in barracking for the failure of democracy in Iraq. But understanding of the difficulties possible success may pose for the doomsayers does not extend to tolerance of deliberate misrepresentation. The sanctions imposed on Iraq did not extend to food. Remember the AWB scandal? And the oil for food program? If there was mass starvation, as asserted by Raven, it was inflicted not by our ruling class but by the unspeakable cruelty of Saddam Hussein. Remember him?

Frank Pulsford

Aspley, Qld

I'M sure Roger Raven would have seen pictures of starving African children. Next time he sees footage of Palestinians in Gaza calling for "Death to the Jews", he will notice satellite dishes in the background and no distended bellies or emaciated children. Not one. Despite propaganda suggesting otherwise, nobody in Gaza is starving.

Instead of blaming "the West", Raven may care to wonder why Hamas is hijacking UN food shipments. Or for that matter, why after billions of dollars in aid money, the Palestinians still rely on handouts while Palestinian leaders have millions in their bank accounts.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Daniel Lewis

Rushcutters Bay, NSW

Simple and undisputed facts

SUZANNE Gulikers (Letters, 7-8/2) would have us believe that a single if fairly notable error in the reporting of the recent Gaza war somehow invalidates all the criticism levelled at Israel. This would be an incredible injustice to the massive death toll of innocent civilians, and must be rejected out of hand.

Nonetheless, it is important that those with clear anti-Israeli sentiments stand back and understand that not everything bad that is said about Israel is necessarily true, and not everything excusing Hamas atrocities is based on fact. The same, of course, must be said of the pro-Israeli crowd; a single mistake does not change simple and undisputed facts -- such as 300 dead Palestinian children. That alone stands as a stark condemnation, and people identifying with the Israeli position would do as well to exhibit similar cynicism towards the Israeli media campaign as they have to this single UN error.

Stephen Morgan

Runcorn, Qld

Who does Hilali speak for?

WHY give rabble rouser Taj Din al-Hilali space, let alone refer to him by his self-bestowed title ("Jewish leaders slam sheik's comments", 7-8/2)? I read some time ago, after Hilali blamed women for encouraging their own rape, that, according to a highly respected member of the Muslim community, this odd person was no longer entitled to style himself "sheik", so why encourage him?

Joan Tremelling

Mount Gambier, SA

The other side of Tasmania

NO mistake, Tasmania is a spectacular rat hole ("State's claim as eco isle rubbished", 7-8/2). In addition to the wilderness walks leading to multi-starred private resorts, Tassie has been damming rivers to feed planned pulp mills, and building transport corridors leading to woodchip export depots.

If the long-planned Hobart hospital is ever built, look for it to have either a wood-fired generator or a casino at its heart.

Lynn Good

Deloraine, Tas

FIRST BYTE

letters@theaustralian.com.au

Compared with the real crisis and tragedy in Victoria, the so-called financial crisis really should be put into perspective.

Bruce Mullinger

Kurnell, NSW

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I note that Queensland Premier Anna Bligh has asked for assistance to deal with the floods in the north of her state. As a South Australian, I think I can speak on behalf of all Croweaters in offering to take all that water off her hands.

Gerard McEwen

Glandore, SA

Do the climate change sceptics still need convincing that something is changing our weather and that we need to take immediate and drastic action to prevent more disasters?

Doug Steley

Maroochydore, Qld

Trust the Brits not to include

snow ploughs in their must-do list for climate change.

Gordon Thurlow

Sandy Bay, Tas

If the Australian cricketers spent less time making TV ads and more time in the nets, maybe their results would improve.

John Grayson

Rockhampton, Qld

``Son of Gough" -- now playing in a treasury near you.

Ed Turner

St Lucia, Qld

Was Peter Costello Australia greatest treasurer or the luckiest?

John Murphy

Buderim, Qld

Re your article ``Telstra's search for Sol Sequel heats up" (9/2), would it be a good idea if we changed the Telstra chairman and let his successor select the new CEO?

Alastair Reed

Lower Templestowe, Vic

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GPO Box 4162, Sydney, NSW, 2001 Fax: 02 9288 3077

Email: letters@theaustralian.com.au (no attachments)

Emails and letters should bear a full postal address and day and night telephone numbers.

Letters to the Editor of The Australian are submitted on the condition that Nationwide News Pty Ltd as publisher of The Australian may edit and has the right to, and license third parties to, reproduce in electronic form and communicate these letters.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters online

Letters from this page are published on The Australian's website -- and online readers have the opportunity to add their own comments. To join the debate go to:

www.theaustralian.com.au/letters

Prints of Leak cartoons

For information on buying prints of any

Bill Leak cartoon go to

leakcartoons@theaustralian.com.au

Prints of Nicholson cartoons

To buy a print of a Nicholson cartoon go to <http://www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au/print>

Load-Date: February 9, 2009

Turning rockets into roses

The Jerusalem Post

January 22, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 18

Length: 2413 words

Byline: GREER FAY CASHMAN

Highlight: GRAPEVINE

Body

IT WASN'T exactly beating swords into ploughshares. But the flowers sculpted from the shells of Kassam rockets that Sderot mayor David Bouskila brought as gifts to his working meeting in Jerusalem with President Shimon Peres and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon last Thursday night, conveyed a clear message.

Peres greeted Ki-Moon as "a man of peace on a mission of peace" and declared that it was urgent to achieve peace as soon as possible "to save lives and the shedding of blood."

He also expressed appreciation for what the UN has done in the region via UNWRA, and said that were it not for **Hamas**, Gaza could have become another Singapore.

When Israel disengaged from Gaza, he continued, it was with the idea of allowing Gaza to develop in peace, freedom and independence without any Israeli intervention. "This remains our wish," he said. Unfortunately, he added, **Hamas** had introduced a system of terror that went against all norms. Peres cited the planting of bombs in kindergartens and the use of children as human shields.

Ki-Moon reiterated his condemnation of rocket fire at Israeli civilians, which he recognized as terror and for which he said there was no justification. "No nation should have to live like this," he said. "Israel has the right to live in peace and security. Israel has the right to defend its citizens and should be treated by the same standards as all member states of the UN." But Israel also has the responsibility to act wisely, he noted. "The rockets must stop and the Israeli offensive must end. All bloodshed must cease and violence must be halted." He also said that Gaza must be reunited with the West Bank under one Palestinian Authority.

Ki-Moon was back in Israel this week and on Tuesday went to Sderot to see the rockets instead of the roses.

* ACCORDING TO Jewish tradition, Tuesday is the luckiest day of the week because on the third day of creation, earth and sea were created and God saw that it was good; and then He created grass, herbs and fruit trees and again saw that it was good. Seeing good twice in the one day supposedly makes the day good.

But it didn't quite work out that way for the Jaffa Institute, which runs a number of community-based enrichment programs that include the advancement of education, crisis intervention, after school programs, telemarketing training programs for unemployed **women**, food distribution to the needy, residential education centers and hostels for young people at risk. On Tuesday night of last week, while the Jaffa Institute was holding its annual gala fund-raising dinner at The Avenue in Airport City, thieves broke into its food distribution center and stole NIS80,000 worth

Turning rockets into roses

of computer equipment, which may cause one of its essential programs to be suspended, if not closed down altogether.

On top of that, the dinner did not go quite as well as expected. Although the Institute produced a thick dinner brochure indicating that it had sold a lot of space, attendance was far below the anticipated 700. An auction conducted by radio personality Amnon Pe'er was less successful than had been hoped. Pe'er had difficulty in selling a private lesson in Judaism in the purchaser's home by Tel Aviv Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, who attended the function and was one of the speakers. Fortunately, businessman Mori Arkin, who together with his wife Doris was one of the dinner honorees, purchased the lesson for \$5,400. It was also difficult to sell Saba Tuvia aka Tuvia Tsafir telling a children's story for \$4,000. Many of the items went to Arkin and businessman Gad Zeevi who was a member of the dinner committee.

The benefit was heavy with speeches from Jaffa Institute founder and director general Rabbi Dr. David Portowicz, dinner chairman Prof. Yossi Gross, Rabbi Lau, honorees Mori Arkin, David Lewis and Josette Honigsberg, a visiting French media personality, beneficiaries of the Jaffa Institute and then some. Many of those present began to vote with their feet even though David Broza, the star turn of the evening had not yet made an appearance. When he did, the devoted fans of Broza, who like everyone else on the program donated his services, enjoyed a wonderful performance.

The food, prepared by Chef Avi Steinitz, was excellent and received many favorable comments. To prepare a good steak for so many people is truly a culinary feat. Steinitz also donated his services to the auction, offering to cook a meal in someone's house and offering to provide all the ingredients himself.

* ONE OF the distinctions of Shlomo Buhbut, the newly elected chairman of the Union of Local Authorities, is that he is arguably the longest serving mayor in Israel, breaking the records of the legendary Teddy Kollek, who served for 28 years as mayor of Jerusalem; the outspoken Meir Nitzan, who spent 25 years as mayor of Rishon Lezion, the sagacious story teller Eliahu Nawi, who served for 23 years as mayor of Beersheba; the venerable Khassan Shukri, who spent a total of 19 years as mayor of Haifa but over two different periods, 1914 to 1920, and then again from 1927 to 1940; the gregarious Shlomo Lahat, who was mayor of Tel Aviv for 19 years or the energetic Ron Nachman, one of the founders in 1978 of Ariel, and its first and only mayor since 1985. Adi Eldar, Buhbut's predecessor in office at ULA, has had a good inning both as mayor of Karmiel and as head of the ULA. He served in the latter position for 15 years and has been mayor of Karmiel for 20 years - and still going strong.

Buhbut has been mayor of Maalot-Tarshiha for 33 years. He is also a former MK. His public life did not interfere too much with his private life, given the fact that he has seven children. He is married to Keren.

* JUST AFTER 6.30 am on Tuesday, Yaacov Ahimeir interviewed Martin Indyk, the head of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy in Washington and a former two-time US Ambassador to Israel, on how he perceived the Barack Obama presidency. The conversation was in English but Indyk started it by saying "Erev Tov" (Washington time) and in reply Ahimeir could not resist mimicking Indyk's Anglo accent. He had caught Indyk at one of the many Washington parties being held on the eve of Obama's inauguration. Indyk said that the whole atmosphere was very exciting in a way that he had not witnessed in his 25 years in the US. "There's a real sense of hope. It's tangible. You can touch it." He also spoke of Obama's commitment to bring about peace in the region and stated, "He will help Palestinians and Israel to resolve the conflict from day one," and added that "we're going to have an engaged president."

* ONE OF the greatest compliments after leaving a place of employment is to be called back. Jeremy Ruden, who used to be the spokesperson for IDC Herzliya, but left several months ago, was asked to return to handle the PR for the 9th annual Herzliya Conference taking place on the IDC campus from February 2-4. The umbrella title of the conference is Strategies and Leadership in Times of Crisis. Among the speakers will be Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, as well as six Foreign Ministers including Tzipi Livni, who will actually be speaking in her capacity as head of Kadima. The others include: Celso Amorim (Brazil), Karel Schwarzenberg (Czech Republic), Miguel Angel Moratinos (Spain), Radoslaw Sikorski (Poland) and Micheline Calmy-Rey (Switzerland). This will be Schwarzenberg's third visit in a three month period. According to Robert Rehak, cultural and press attache at the

Turning rockets into roses

Czech Embassy, Israel can expect many visits from high ranking Czech dignitaries during the period in which the Czech Republic holds the rotating presidency of the EU.

* ISRAEL RADIO was a little more professional in covering the joint news conference of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and EU President and Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, and Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, than was Israel Television whose voice over translation into Hebrew completely drowned out the voices of the European dignitaries. Israel Radio broadcast the dignitaries and had a voice under rather than a voice over to provide the translations. Translators Gisele Abazon and Batya Frost generally sounded more dramatic than the actual speakers, putting their own individual spins on interpretation. Things went a little haywire when it came to Gordon Brown's address.

The television continued with its voice-over broadcast but the radio gave way to commercials. After all, when all's said and done, money has the most persuasive voice. The IBA's Ayala Hasson, in addition to her political savvy, her ability to get scoops and the ease with which she switches from being a reporter to being a commentator or an anchor, also had an opportunity to show off her linguistic skills when she started to interview French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner in French, then in English and then translated into Hebrew. Guests at the dinner after the news conference included Likud chairman Binyamin Netanyahu, Knesset Speaker Dalia Itzik and the respective ambassadors of the countries of the visiting European leaders, as well as Russian ambassador Piotr Stegny.

* LEADERSHIP OR the lack of it is an issue bothering a lot of people these days - though not everyone is in the position to do something about it. Mega business man and IDB chairman Nochi Dankner, through his family's IDB Foundation, is in the position to do something, and together with the Rabin Center at Tel Aviv University, launched a course in public and political leadership which will be a study option for MA students who are aiming for a degree in political science. The launch was made in the presence of Dankner, Dalia Rabin, former Supreme Court President Meir Shamgar and TAU President Prof. Zvi Galil.

* FEW THINGS succeed like labors of love - and the restoration project of the house of Israel's first Nobel Prize laureate Shmuel Yosef Agnon was indeed that. The house that became a museum after Agnon's death has become a magnet for writers and for those who appreciate being in the company of writers. Many literary events are held there and visitors gasp at the sight of Agnon's huge, multi-lingual library which had been arranged by him according to subject matter. It seems that there was hardly a subject in which he was not interested. Until he moved to the house in July 1931, Agnon led an extremely nomadic existence, moving not only from country to country and town to town but also to different places in the same city. But once he moved into the house in Talpiot, Jerusalem, he stayed there for almost 40 years. When the house was ready to be occupied, he wrote to his wife Esther, who had remained in Germany with their two children Emunah and Hemdat and told her that now he had a permanent home. How did he know? Because he had gone out and purchased a small mezuzah. That original mezuzah was re-affixed by Talpiot Rabbi Yehoshua Zemer, who is actually the neighborhood rabbi for Arnona and lives on premises that were once occupied by Agnon before he took residence in the house on Klausner Street.

Among the participants in the ceremony was President Shimon Peres, who came with his daughter Zvia Valdman. Peres quoted extensively from Agnon's story 'From Enemy to Lover,' which tells how the wind was his enemy while he was building the house, and how he began to love the wind afterwards. It should be remembered that when Agnon built the house, he had very few neighbors and the wind howled through the open space. Peres used the story as an allegory pointing to the future relations that could develop between Israel and the Palestinians. Hemdat Agnon read the whole story out loud, and one could almost hear the wind in his voice. Actor Yehoyachim Friedlander read out some of the letters that Agnon had sent to his wife, and did so with so much passion and humor, that for those in the audience it was almost like being a voyeur into someone's private life - which in a sense it definitely was.

After hearing what many people had to say about her father, Emunah Yaron was reluctant to share her reminiscences, saying that everything she had intended to say had already been said and that it had been said correctly. But when pressured to speak regardless, the difference between what she remembered and what other

Turning rockets into roses

people knew only second-hand became patently obvious. Most people in charge of projects who have to thank anyone for their contribution prefer not to name names for fear of missing out on someone and offending.

Not so Tsila Hayoun, who went through an incredibly long list of people who had been involved in the decision-making process and in steering the project through its course over a three-year period. Many of those whom she named were not present, and she could have skipped them - but because this was a labor of love by all concerned, she was careful not to omit anyone.

* WHILE ON the subject of Agnon, the Jerusalem landmark, the Tmol Shilshom coffee shop, which is called after Agnon's book of the same name and is famous for attracting writers and poets who participate in literary evenings and poetry readings, is a favorite hangout of Aryeh Green, the director of Media Central - especially on his birthday. Instead of throwing a big party, Green spends something like 12 hours in the coffee shop, hosting friends who drop by with good wishes. He has a notebook in which he lists the names of all those who came in addition to which he has a guest book for anyone who wants to write a greeting. The management of the coffee shop-cum-reading room has a huge period style, gilt-edged armchair which it placed in a corner for Green so that he could hold court this year. Friends dropped in from mid-morning till late at night. Most of the conversations were political, but everyone respected everyone else's opinion. After all, in a cultural clime, it's simply not done to engage in the cruder aspects of politics.

* WITH MONEY getting tighter every day, the gift of a seven digit sum becomes a real windfall. Prof. Gal Richter-Levin of the University of Haifa, a psychologist and an international authority on brain research, has received a windfall of this nature by way of a 1.2 million Euro grant that will enable him to research post-trauma effects on the brain. The grant comes from German-Israel Project Cooperation.

Graphic

3 photos: Leadership lessons. Nochi Dankner, Meir Shamgar, Dalia Rabin and Prof. Zvi Galil. Smelling sweeter. A rose sculpted from a Kassam rocket. Surmounting Tuesday's trouble. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau with jewelry designer Aya Azrielant and Dr. David Portowicz, founder and director-general of the Jaffa Institute.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian

January 22, 2009 Thursday

1 - All-round Country Edition

Copyright 2009 Nationwide News Pty Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 19

Length: 2526 words

Body

He must show that action can match his rhetoric

MOST TALKED ABOUT

PRESIDENT OBAMA

HAVING observed Barack Obama's ascendancy to the White House, it is impossible not to be left with the impression of a man whose character is founded on solid moral, intellectual and spiritual ground and, therefore, capable of resisting the sway of the messianic fervour currently sweeping the globe.

Undoubtedly, the hope that change has finally come to America is heartfelt and sincere, born as much from the travesties of the past administration as the dire circumstances confronting the present. The danger, of course, lies in the magnitude of the political skill and will required to orchestrate changes in domestic and foreign policy of such scope and consequence that never before have been undertaken by the US. Disappointment could so easily be Obama's legacy.

The combination of a charismatic leader and the world's most powerful nation holds great promise at this point in history. "We are ready to lead once more" were his words in his inaugural address, but in taking up the mantle of President of the United States of America, Obama must demonstrate that his great country is now mature enough, perhaps chastened enough, to lay aside grandiose plans for world domination (like the Bush doctrine of the Project for the New American Century) and take a seat at the round table of nations as an equal player and fair dealer. He must demonstrate that his administration can rebuild a debt-ridden, neglected America on the cusp of a depression that could outstrip that faced by his predecessor Franklin D. Roosevelt. He must demonstrate, unequivocally, that his behaviour matches his rhetoric. Hope is not enough, President Obama.

Boris Kelly

Collaroy, NSW

I CAN'T help but feel sorry for Barack Obama. His inauguration was conducted as if it were the second coming. People are expecting the world to change dramatically during his presidency, and he appears to be promising everything from world peace to financial nirvana. Can we really expect so much from a man who borrowed his campaign slogan ("Yes we can") from Bob the Builder?

Malcolm Wells

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Windsor, NSW

LIKE most other people, I wish the incoming US President well and firmly hope that he is up to the task with which he is confronted. It should be interesting.

I will also be watching how the media report what is about to unfold. If ever the world's democracies needed an alert and vigilant press, it is now. Barack Obama has had a dream run from the fourth estate. It brings to mind the love-fest that surrounded John F. Kennedy during his brief tenure. His dubious election result, health/drug dependency problems, romps with gangsters' girlfriends, etc, were all swept under the carpet -- no doubt with the best of intentions. But aiding and abetting the duping of the general public is no way to record the first rough draft of history.

L.J. O'Donoghue

Diamond Creek, Vic

TO all those quoting Martin Luther King as if he were John the Baptist promising the coming of the Messiah, King did not claim that the critical moment in race relations in the US would come when they had a black president. He said it would come when a person was "judged not by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character". If ever there was a case of a person being judged almost solely by the colour of his skin, it's Barack Obama. He's done little so far to give an indication of his character.

Matt Pralija

Neutral Bay, NSW

NOW that Barack Obama is in office, let's drop the term "black American" president when referring to him. If an Asian-American had been elected as US president, would the description be "yellow American"?

Bruce Dudon

Mount Macedon, Vic

AS a university student in my home country of the United States, I remember watching the inauguration of Ronald Reagan in January 1981 with a feeling of renewed hope, pride and optimism in America's and the world's future. Here in my adopted country of Australia, and now as an Australian citizen, I watched the inauguration of Barack Obama with tears in my eyes, and a greater feeling of hope and anticipation than I did 28 years ago. I pray that President Obama and his administration bring about the change that the US and the world needs, wants and expects.

Charles Shavitz

Brisbane, Qld

APART from his eloquence, the main attraction of Barack Obama is his optimism. Perhaps a more positive attitude would benefit us all. Reading several Australian newspapers for the first time after a three-week break overseas revealed to me what a bunch of whingers Australians have become. The name-calling, demands for handouts and the negativism of political commentary have reached epidemic proportions. As a former Pom, I am, of course, an expert on this highly infectious condition. Indeed, this letter might be construed as a whinge, but whinging about whinging is positive, in the same way that two negatives make a positive.

Iain Dawson

Aranda, ACT

I MIGHT remind my fellow monkeys that we experienced the same euphoria when we swung for Kevin Rudd. Since then, we have been given miles of smiles but no bananas.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Paul Drakeford

Kew, Vic

By Backman's logic, Jews are to blame for Holocaust

TO use Michael Backman's logic, the Jews are also responsible for the Holocaust ("Apologists for evil", Editorial, 21/1). Just as they have utterly failed to turn Palestinian enemies into friends, thereby being to blame for **Hamas** wanting to destroy Israel, so they utterly failed with the Nazis, causing the death of six million of their own people. My question to The Age: apart from employing a person who supports racism and genocide, how can you possibly employ someone who is so bloody stupid?

Tony Herbert

Battery Point, Tas

YOUR editorial is totally admirable, save for one vital point. You pose the question: "... if Backman's beliefs are not held by senior staff at (The Age), why did his piece appear?" I'm sure that "senior staff" at The Australian may not approve of all that Janet Albrechtsen or Phillip Adams pen in your pages, but they are allowed, as they should be, to make their points, with or without, one must assume, the "approval of senior staff".

Michael Muschamp

Torquay, Vic

UNFORTUNATELY, the apology from The Age for their publication of Backman's anti-semitic column will be seen as just another instance of Jewish influence.

Stephanie Lyle

East Ryde, NSW

YOUR editorial critical of The Age publishing Michael Backman's opinion on the Israel-Palestine conflict beggars belief. I buy your newspaper (and others) to read all kinds of news and views on events happening in Australia and elsewhere to form my own opinion about the world we live in. If you are afraid to publish views that may offend some influential people of this country, we are doomed as a democracy. And you are wasting my money and time.

Bill Mathew

Parkville, Vic

FOR most Australians sympathy for the sufferings of the Palestinians in Gaza goes alongside acceptance of Israel's right to respond to the rocket attacks by **Hamas** militants, and rejection of a military solution to the problems of Palestine.

The Western powers established the Jewish state of Israel over 50 years ago with the endorsement of the UN. It cannot and will not be undone by Islamic extremists and their backers, but Israelis, for their part, will have to accept a fair, balanced and enforceable peace settlement which addresses legitimate Palestinian demands. It's a massive challenge for the world community as well as the new US administration.

John Piper

Waverton, NSW

Banks help themselves

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I'M not at all sure any government should be helping out the banks. If my recent experience is anything to go by, they're already helping themselves to everything they can get.

On Monday, I transferred, by internet banking, \$A270 to my cousin's bank account in Auckland, New Zealand. I wasn't informed that there would be a fee, although I wasn't naive enough to believe it would be free. And it certainly wasn't: they charged me \$A30. Then, on Tuesday, I received an email from my cousin to say the money was in her bank account, minus another \$NZ25 to pay for the transaction.

This effectively means I have paid the banks \$55 to transfer \$270, or more than 20 per cent of the original amount. It would have been almost cheaper to fly over and give the money to her.

Greg Ross

Burswood, WA

KEVIN Rudd has asked employers to put pay rises on hold. What a pity he and his predecessor neglected to ask this of the banks and the rest of the corporate sector before they got us into the biggest economic mess in a generation. The big kids had their play time and now the rest of us will do the detention.

Glenn Fowler

Holder, ACT

Riddled with errors

BOB Carter's article ("Cold hard facts debunk global warming alarmism", Opinion, 20/1) is riddled with errors of fact that entirely undermine his argument. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration did not report that "October in the US was marked by 63 record snowfalls and 115 lowest-ever temperatures". This "fact" is a cherry-picked sample of weather stations from over 5600 across the US for one day, the 29th, in October. In fact, during October 2008 there were 430 new records set in the US for the highest maximum temperature, and the NOAA reported "the combined global land and ocean surface average temperature for October 2008 was the second warmest since records began in 1880".

And Carter's claim that "temperature reached a peak in 1998, has not warmed since 1995 and has been cooling since 2002" simply doesn't make sense. How can temperature peak in 1998 despite having not warmed since 1995? The fact is that all the major global temperature records show an increase in temperatures over the past 10 years. The UK Hadley Centre said in September last year "anyone who thinks global warming has stopped has their head in the sand". With fact-checking like this, it is no wonder that Carter doesn't publish these arguments in scientific journals.

Professor Michael Ashley

Department of Astrophysics

University of NSW

A particularly Thai solution

THE sentencing of an Australian writer to three years' jail for insulting Thailand's monarchy reflects the immature state of that country's governance and law ("Three years in Thai jail for author", 20/1). The regular interruption of this so-called democracy by military coups and a reliance on the current king to settle matters is not a recipe for long-term stability. As for the comments about the crown prince, when I was stationed in Bangkok in the mid 1970s the reason for his sudden departure from Duntroon was common talk amongst Thais who voiced the wish that when the current king died one of his daughters would succeed him. Banning such talk is a particularly Thai solution. It's their right but perhaps it's not beneficial.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Eric Hodge

Pearce, ACT

Mandatory folic acid

FOOD Standards Australia New Zealand chief scientist Paul Brent (Letters, 20/1) does not assure consumers in relation to mandatory folic acid fortification of flour. My presentation at Deakin University's International Food Law Symposium meanwhile argued for compensation rights to overcome government claims for statutory immunity:

* Voluntary folate fortification campaigns targeting pregnant women have been successful in reducing neural tube defects (NTD) in infants by 10-30 per cent. The issue is the change to mandatory fortification that may deliver excessive levels of folate to children, elderly people and males, none of whom will derive any proven health benefit.

* I do not argue against the science supporting folate fortification; however, prevailing scientific opinion in the health area regularly changes. Scientific consensus can change, such as the recent linking of high-ethanol mouthwashes to oral cancer. Government health interventions can result in injury, such as occurred in the human growth hormone programs of the 1960s. Notwithstanding mandatory fortification in the US, the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition recently cautioned authorities regarding excessive folate consumption.

* Dr Brent states that high NTD rates among indigenous Australians were not the catalyst for mandatory fortification. However, FSANZ's reports repeatedly refer to high rates of NTDs among indigenous Australians while admitting that data on patterns of bread consumption do not demonstrate that mandatory fortification would reach indigenous Australians. Yet, passionate advocates of mandatory fortification maintain that it's the solution to counter NTD prevalence among indigenous Australians.

* In the First Review Report Proposal P295 (page 22) FSANZ stated "it is not the role of FSANZ to determine whether there is a demonstrated public health need warranting mandatory fortification". No government agency took responsibility for this policy. Satisfactory monitoring regimes are yet to be put in place. Here indeed is a case of the government scientific assessors taking no responsibility for any resulting failure.

Joe Lederman

Adjunct Professor in Food Law

Deakin University

FIRST BYTE

letters@theaustralian.com.au

It feels like Barack Obama has been elected president of the world. And it feels great.

Adrian Gerson

Cottesloe, WA

Now for the tricky bit -- locking the soaring oratory away in the bottom drawer and being judged by deeds alone.

John Dorman

Carnegie, Vic

Mission accomplished: GeorgeW. Bush is gone from the White House.

Roman Kaminski

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lurg, Vic

Notwithstanding all the carping

letters about George W. Bush and his presidency, credit where credit's due -- he saw off Al Gore.

Charles Mooney

Tennyson, SA

Given their pressing need to do something drastic to cure the banking industry, perhaps Messrs Rudd and Swan should get out the ouija board and have a chat with Ben Chifley.

David Halliday

Dorrigo, NSW

Judging by the looks of the two

survivors of 25 days at sea in an esky,

the preservative qualities of eskies are even more remarkable than their flotation capacities.

M. Pearce

Richmond, NSW

Unfortunately, Kakadon't is only a reflection of how Australia has become the most regulated country on the planet. Soon it will be impossible to do anything.

Jeremy Browne

Hindmarsh, SA

Notwithstanding his past achievements, it may be time for Leyton Hewitt to further his future in women's magazines.

Ed Turner

St Lucia, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GPO Box 4162, Sydney, NSW, 2001 Fax: 02 9288 3077

Email: letters@theaustralian.com.au (no attachments)

Emails and letters should bear a full postal address and day and night telephone numbers.

Letters to the Editor of The Australian are submitted on the condition that Nationwide News Pty Ltd as publisher of The Australian may edit and has the right to, and license third parties to, reproduce in electronic form and communicate these letters.

Letters online

Letters from this page are published on The Australian's website -- and online readers have the opportunity to add their own comments. To join the debate go to:

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

www.theaustralian.com.au/letters

Prints of Leak cartoons

For information on buying prints of any Bill Leak cartoon go to leakcartoons@theaustralian.com.au

Prints of Nicholson cartoons

To buy a print of a Nicholson cartoon go to <http://www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au/print>

Load-Date: January 21, 2009

End of Document

'I was the resident skeptic'

The Jerusalem Post

February 13, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 15

Length: 5913 words

Byline: RUTHIE BLUM LEIBOWITZ

Highlight: In an exclusive interview with the 'Post' - his first since ending his term as deputy assistant to the president and deputy national security adviser to George W. Bush - Elliott Abrams provides an insider's overview of the US administration that has been viewed as the friendliest Israel has ever had. ONE ON ONE

Body

The one thing Elliott Abrams and I do not discuss during our hour-long interview in Jerusalem this week is his imminent career move. More specifically, how someone who has spent the better part of the last three decades vilified by those who consider "neoconservatism" a four-letter word will fare as a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, a key part of the liberal establishment.

Not that it isn't an interesting question, mind you. Especially not in his particular case. For, whatever else characterizes Abrams and his amazingly illustrious CV, "fig leaf" simply doesn't figure. And I ought to know. Abrams is married to my sister, Rachel. I have thus had many occasions over the decades to witness, firsthand, my brother-in-law's cheerful confidence in his convictions - convictions that sometimes clash with my own. Contrary to popular belief, my family, all of whose members are so-called neocons, is just as capable of raising the roof over politics at the dinner table as the next guy's. The devil, after all, is in the details.

But so is what makes the man. Having devoted much of his adult life to one political pursuit or another, the 60-year-old lawyer by profession (who was born and raised in New York, and educated at Harvard and the London School of Economics), Abrams has served two Republican administrations so far - those of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush.

On Capitol Hill, he served as assistant counsel to the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, special counsel to senator Henry (Scoop) Jackson and then chief of staff to senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan; in the Reagan State Department, he served as assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs, then for human rights and humanitarian affairs and finally for inter-American affairs.

It was the last job on this list that catapulted him into the notoriety that his gleeful opponents in the Democratic Party cherished, cultivated and have held over his head, as though wielding a deadly weapon. Indeed, Abrams was among those prosecuted in the Iran-Contra affair, though he was never actually indicted. Instead, he entered into a plea bargain, according to which he was convicted of withholding information from Congress, placed on probation for two years (though the judge later shortened that period) and fined \$50. In 1992, he was given a presidential pardon by the first president Bush. His 1993 book, *Undue Process: How Political Differences Are Turned into Crimes*, tells this story in all its shocking lack of glory.

'I was the resident skeptic'

In the years that followed, before joining Bush the son's administration, Abrams was a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, and later served as president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center. It was then that he published *Faith or Fear: How Jews Can Survive in a Christian America*.

But for Abrams, returning as a fish to water was just a matter of time - and of the Republicans retaking the White House. Which they did in January 2001. Abrams was offered a job just there a couple of months later.

During the first term of the "Dubya" presidency, Abrams, was special assistant to the president and senior director of the National Security Council for democracy, human rights and international organizations, then senior director of the NSC for Near East and North African affairs.

In the second term, he was appointed deputy assistant to the president and deputy national security adviser for global democracy strategy, in which capacity he supervised both human rights efforts and US policy in the Middle East. This was as significant to me personally as it was to the region, since it brought Abrams here on a regular basis. Due to the rules of the NSC, however, he was not at liberty to talk to the press, other than when officially giving background briefings.

Now that he's liberated from the constraints of officialdom and embarking on a new chapter, he is willing and able to speak his mind. Well, up to a point, that is. "I signed a secrecy agreement that binds for life," he warns. "And I don't gossip."

Three weeks into the new US administration, can you say anything about President Barack Obama's appointments - particularly those relating to the Middle East, including your own replacement?

It's a bit too soon to form an opinion. For instance, in the State Department, nobody has been named as assistant secretary for Near East affairs. From the moment that person is named, and through the process of confirmation, chances are that there won't actually be somebody in that position until April.

In any case, it looks as though this administration is not going to replicate the NSC structure we had, where there was a director for Israeli-Palestinian affairs, a senior director for the Middle East and above them, me, as the deputy national security adviser. Structures come and go. I can't really tell yet how they're going to arrange this. They, for example, are doing something we did not do, which was to appoint a special envoy to the Middle East - George Mitchell.

Why wasn't there a Middle East envoy under the Bush administration?

When we came in, in 2001, the intifada was going on. It seemed to us pretty clear - and we were right - that there could be no negotiations in the middle of a giant, ongoing terrorist attack. Then came 9/11. And we really did not come back to the question of how to move forward on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict until the spring of 2002. Then, on June 24 of that year, the president gave a remarkable speech in which he declared Yasser Arafat a terrorist and completely broke with him. The essence of that speech was that though the president was in favor of a two-state solution, the borders of the Palestinian state didn't matter nearly as much as the character of the state within those borders - and that there had to be new Palestinian leadership.

Once such a statement is made, if there had been a special envoy, what would he be doing? So it was really only when Arafat died that an argument could have been made that it was time to appoint a special envoy. But we took the view that negotiations had to take place between Israelis and Palestinians - that the American role should not be to invent solutions, or to pressure Israel or the Palestinians into a particular compromise, but rather that we should all get behind an Israeli-Palestinian effort. And at that point, there was an Israeli-Palestinian effort. First, there was Ariel Sharon's disengagement from Gaza. Then, once Sharon became incapacitated and Ehud Olmert took his place, there was a prime minister who was trying to negotiate with the Palestinians. So, again, what need could there possibly be for an American envoy? What would he do - encourage the Israelis to do something that their prime minister was himself so anxious to do?

'I was the resident skeptic'

When Bush made that June 24 speech, Israelis cheered, because what it indicated was that he was putting the Palestinian-Israeli conflict into a wider context of a global war between Islamic terrorists and democracy. Has that American view of the world begun to revert to its previous, more narrow one, according to which the Palestinian issue is not only separate, but key to solving the region's problems?

It's too soon to say about Obama, but your characterization of what Bush did is accurate. After 9/11, we did see Palestinian terrorism in the context of all terrorism. And I think that one of the reasons Sharon was able to defeat the intifada was the very strong support that he had from president Bush when he took measures like building the fence, on the one hand, and carrying out targeted assassinations of terrorist leaders - such as [Abdel Aziz] Rantisi and [Sheikh Ahmed] Yassin - on the other. Now, there were many people in Washington who wanted the US to say that such assassinations were somehow illicit. But, the fact that we were engaging in similar activity ourselves strengthened the argument that it was not something we should criticize.

There is a point of contention in this country over the question of which was the chicken, so to speak, and which the egg, regarding the disengagement initiative. Some maintain that Bush, being the friendliest US president Israel ever had, would have gone along with anything Sharon deemed beneficial to Israel's security. Others argue that it was precisely because of Sharon's willingness to withdraw from territory that the administration in Washington was so supportive. Which is it?

Disengagement was not an American initiative. The US did not say to the Israeli government: "You need to get out of Gaza." Discussions of this sort had been going on for years, not only during Bush's tenure, but also during the Clinton administration. For example, there was a question of whether Israel would go back to the September 28, 2000 lines in the West Bank, and whether the Palestinian security forces could cope with terrorism there if Israel withdrew. The answer from the IDF was no. The Israelis told us that it would be very dangerous, both physically - in the sense that more terrorism might ensue - and politically, because if the risk were taken and a significant act of terrorism did ensue, it would blow up any negotiations that were then taking place.

The same question was asked about whether there could be some kind of withdrawal from Gaza. The Israeli government said no - such a withdrawal would be bargained for at some point in the future. Then came disengagement.

Sharon's decision to pull out of Gaza, therefore, was not a surprise to us in the sense that doing so was something that had been talked about for years. But the timing certainly was a surprise.

So, when Sharon came to visit Bush's ranch in Crawford, the president asked him about it. Now, obviously, what politicians and statesmen tell each other is not necessarily exactly what they think. But Sharon's answer, as I recall, was that, after the defeat of the intifada, a vacuum was left in the Israeli-Palestinian front. And it was being filled with many, very energetic diplomatic proposals - mostly emanating from Europe - that were all damaging to Israel, all saying that now was the time for final-status negotiations.

"Let's have a conference," they were saying. "Let's reconvene Madrid."

And some Israelis and Palestinians came up with the Geneva Initiative, which Sharon hated. According to Sharon, these bad ideas were growing in importance, and he needed something to fill the vacuum that would be good, rather than bad, for Israel. Disengagement was it.

I've heard different theories from others, of course, such as that disengagement was purely a security decision. That is, it was crazy to put so many IDF resources into protecting such a small number of Israelis, especially when there were so many other things - including the West Bank and the Syrian border - to worry about. I've also heard the "poison pill" theory, according to which Sharon did not believe that, given this opportunity to rule Gaza, the Palestinians would prove to be able to have a democracy that would show all Israelis that if Israel then pulled out of the West Bank, they'd be getting a peaceful, friendly, democratic neighbor. This theory goes that Sharon thought the Palestinians would blow it, and that this was a way of showing the world that a two-state solution had to be delayed until such time as the Palestinians could govern themselves properly. If that was his theory, it seems to have worked.

'I was the resident skeptic'

What about the theory that disengagement was Sharon's "keep-out-of-jail" ticket via media support?

From the point of view of the US government, all these speculations were largely irrelevant, once he made the decision to do it, and we fully supported that decision.

At the time, it was said that Bush and Sharon had a special - albeit unlikely - rapport. And it is now being said by certain critics that Binyamin Netanyahu, if he indeed becomes prime minister, will not be able to have that with Obama. How much does chemistry between heads of state actually affect international relations?

Well, it matters, but its importance can be exaggerated. One example is Bush and [Russian president Vladimir] Putin. Bush went out of his way to have a good relationship with Putin, and it had no positive effect. To be sure, it makes it a lot easier when people at the top have a good relationship. But it doesn't really affect policy, which is determined on the basis of national interest. We're talking about democracies, for the most part - not Russia, but others - which have processes involving different branches of government or parliaments, as well as a whole slew of career diplomats and so on. So, it's never simply a one-on-one relationship.

Where the relationship does matter is in how work gets done. It makes it very hard if the people at the top mistrust each other. In the case of Sharon and Olmert, president Bush trusted and had a very good relationship with both. That made it possible to conduct diplomacy not only through the State Department and your Foreign Ministry, but also to do it directly - leader-to-leader, or between senior staff just under the leaders in the Prime Minister's Office and the White House.

I was on the phone with [former ambassador to the US] Danny Ayalon and [current Ambassador] Sallai Meridor two, three, sometimes five or six times a day.

As for Netanyahu and Obama, I think they'll get along just fine on a personal level, if Bibi indeed becomes prime minister. Both are smooth, both charmers. As for the rest of it, well, that will depend on Obama's appointments, on Bibi's coalition and on many external factors that could come along and shape the way policy is determined in both countries - such as a repeat of 9/11, for example.

Speaking of factors which determine policy, in his second term, Bush moved his national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, to the State Department. In her new capacity as secretary of state, her policies seemed to move to the left. Was this a function of her change of address? Why is there usually a difference between the way the White House and the State Department view the Middle East?

There is almost always a difference where Israeli-Palestinian issues are concerned. There isn't much new to say on this topic, about which at least 50 books have been written, going back to the 1940s and the foundation of the State of Israel. It is partly because the State Department is less concerned with domestic politics than the White House is, and partly because the cadre of officials who handle Middle East affairs in the State Department are people who are mostly trained in Arabic - and who spend the bulk of their careers in Arab countries - rather than having a knowledge of Hebrew and being posted in Israel. This is not to say that they are anti-Semitic or hostile to Israel, as some people suggest. I think that is actually false. It does mean, however, that they lack an understanding of Israel.

In Bush's first term, the White House's relationship with the State Department changed after 9/11. During the election campaign of 2000, it was generally thought that then-governor Bush didn't know much about foreign policy or national security affairs, and that Colin Powell would lead on that front, while the president's main concern would be domestic. Whether that was true or not - or whether it would have been true under normal circumstances - is irrelevant, because 9/11 happened. And he became a wartime president. But I don't think secretary Powell made that shift in his own mind. In any event, the president took over. He then moved all the really important national-security decision-making to the White House. Take Powell's trips to the Middle East and Israel. The view of the press people accompanying him, and of some State Department officials, was that each trip was less significant than the previous one, and that the State Department was becoming visibly less significant in making policy.

'I was the resident skeptic'

Now, this all changed when Condi - Bush's closest adviser - became secretary of state. The role of the State Department then became much more important, though it depended on the issue. For example, when it came to Iraq, the State Department was far less important, because Iraq policy was really being made by the president, the vice president, the secretary of defense and the joint chiefs. But there were other areas of policy in which the State Department was very directly and deeply involved. Palestinian-Israeli affairs was one of them. The other was North Korea. In both cases, policy was essentially made in the State Department.

In this area, you have a kind of organizational problem. You want the president - any president - to get a variety of opinions and to make choices based on them. And when the secretary of state is by far his closest foreign policy adviser, you sometimes don't get the full panoply of advice. In the Reagan and Bush administrations, there was the view - it will be interesting to see whether it will be so in the Obama administration, as well - that policy disputes should be ironed out at the level of cabinet principals: the national security adviser, the secretary of defense, the secretary of state, the chairman of the joint chiefs, the head of the CIA, etc. The idea was that you don't go to the president with these fights; you go to the president with a solution, with a policy proposal that reflects a consensus.

This has always seemed to me to be a gigantic mistake. When people of that rank and office have policy disagreements, the president should hear them, and be allowed to choose among the options that are being debated. He should not be presented with a homogenized, consensus, compromised position. There's an old story told about the way the State Department works: There are always three options, one of which is so weak, another of which is so over-the-top strong, that it's obvious the middle one is the one you're going to choose. And it's true! Well, it's a mistake, and presidents should not permit that kind of thing. And I think that in the case of Middle East policy, it happened all too often.

So I was the resident skeptic. We were hearing, both from secretary Rice and from prime minister Olmert that there was a very good chance of concluding a final-status agreement. I never believed this, neither before Annapolis nor after. So I was always like a little black cloud in all these meetings, saying, "I don't think this is going to happen."

Why were you skeptical?

Because others said that the solution here, the eventual deal, was pretty well understood on both sides - that there weren't a million possibilities for where the border between Israel and the Palestinian state would be. The same with regard to Jerusalem. Therefore, they said, it won't take all that much negotiating to get there. That was the conventional wisdom. But it seemed to me that the opposite view was right: that if everybody knows what a deal has to look like, and year after year and decade after decade, it is not possible to reach it, isn't it obvious that it's because neither side wants that deal? Now, the reasons for not wanting it can vary, and they can also change over time, but it does seem to me that if everybody knows what the options are, and the most Israel can offer is less than the least the Palestinians can accept, the solution is not close at hand.

Furthermore, no agreement would be implemented immediately. It would be a so-called shelf agreement. This was obvious in the road map, which was a step-by-step plan. From the Israeli point of view, this seemed to me to be problematic, because once a deal were to be signed, there would be a lot of international pressure to implement it, even if the Palestinians weren't really ready - even if, for example, they had not defeated terrorism, as the road map requires, and dismantled all terrorist organizations.

From the Palestinian point of view, it was also problematic. They would need to make a number of compromises. They would not be getting what the Arab plan calls for, which is a return to the pre-June 1967 situation. And what would they get in exchange? Not a Palestinian state. Only an Israeli promise that some years down the road, when they have fulfilled all the conditions of the road map, would they get a state. Well, what Palestinian leader is going to be able to make all those compromises up front, in exchange for an Israeli promise? It did not seem to me then - and it does not seem to me now - that we're on the verge of a final-status agreement.

Did Bush and Rice make a real distinction between Fatah and Hamas? Was their only question about PA President Mahmoud Abbas whether he was strong enough or supported enough internally to do what it takes to implement the road map?

'I was the resident skeptic'

Yes. Theirs was the American view that, after the death of Arafat, the Palestinian leadership no longer viewed terrorism as either legitimate or sensible, and that they now genuinely wanted a peace agreement. One difficulty was that while the Palestinian leadership was finally becoming more sensible, extremism and terrorism were on the rise in the Arab world as a whole. So they were now doing this against a background that was even less propitious for moderation than it would have been 20 years earlier.

You refer to the rise of "extremism" without mentioning Islam. Is this not a religious conflict?

It's partly a religious conflict, but it's not clear to what extent. Take the Hamas election victory. The American line was it was a rejection of Fatah corruption. And certainly it was, in part, that. But how much of it was a rejection of Fatah secularism by a Palestinian people who are more Islamist? Anyone who has been coming to this region for decades - particularly to places like Ramallah and Cairo - will regale you with stories about how much more secular these places were a generation ago. Cairo's a good example. If you think of the Egyptian movies of 20, 30, 40 years ago, they were all trying to ape Europe. That's not true any more. And the number of women who cover themselves in the Arab world and in the West Bank is far higher than it was five, 10, 15 years ago.

Theoretically, there is no reason that a Palestinian state cannot be democratic, peaceful and also Islamist. But practically speaking, this is very unlikely, given all the trends in the Muslim world. In the near future, it is likely that you're going to see a more, rather than less, Islamist Palestinian people. This brings us back to the context in which the Israeli-Palestinian dispute - which has always been tied to what is going on in the Arab world as a whole - is being fought. You now have a battle within that world between the forces of extremism and terrorism on the one hand, and more moderate forces on the other. Those moderate forces do exist in the Arab world; they certainly exist beyond it, in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia.

What about Turkey, then? Purportedly a shining example of a moderate, democratic, Islamic state, it appears to be shifting - as Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's recent statements might indicate.

There's no question that American relations with Turkey were easier in previous decades, when Turkey was more secular. And the turning point in terms of trouble came when Turkey said no to the US on allowing an invasion of Iraq from the north.

There's a question I would pose here. We had this vision of a secular Turkey - protected in the constitution by the military - but was that the real Turkey? In other words: Has Turkey changed enormously under the influence of trends in the Islamic world, or has the real Turkey emerged? I would ask the same question about India, where the religion is Hinduism, not Islam. We had this vision of Gandhi and Nehru and then Mrs. Gandhi - and it was not of Hindu nationalism. When you look at Indian politics in the last, say, 10 years, you have to ask whether India has changed, or whether we simply had a view of it as a much more Westernized country than it actually was.

Does that mean that you are rethinking - or that even Bush began to rethink - his doctrine, according to which all countries are heading toward some form of Western democracy?

Well, the president never said "Western" democracy. He was very careful about that. He would often tell the story about how he was quite friendly with [former] Japanese prime minister [Junichiro] Koizumi, and it was remarkable, because his own father and Koizumi's had fought against each other in World War II, and here their sons were allies. But the president would always make a point to say, "We are democracies, but very different democracies." I mean, Japan has an emperor, after all. And Bush would use that as a basis for saying that Arab democracy doesn't necessarily have to look like European or North Atlantic democracy.

But I do not think he ever did or will change his view of the possibility of democratization, because it is based on his view of the individual. In other words, it is not fundamentally a political judgment; it is fundamentally a religious one: that is that individual rights are God-given, and that no state has the right to take them away. Therefore, individual rights have to be protected in every system. The only way to do that is through democratization, and ultimately all cultures will move toward that. As Bush used to put it: "You don't need to impose democracy; you need to impose dictatorship."

'I was the resident skeptic'

What he meant was that human rights are the natural desire. He has often been misunderstood to have said that this all has to take place within the next five years. In fact, he always said this is the work of generations. One question is whether it's the work of two generations or 10. Another is what do you do about the human rights abuses going on now - and what do you do about the people in those countries who are fighting for democracy now?

It cannot possibly be the position of the US to say, "Well, they're a bit too ambitious, this is premature; to hell with them; they may just have to spend their lives in jail."

That is why I think we have an obligation to keep calling for their liberation, and for the expansion of human and political rights in those countries.

While on that subject, the Washington-based Reform Party of Syria has said repeatedly that it would be terrible for the US and/or Israel to make a deal with President Bashar Assad, claiming that this would serve to jeopardize even further the condition of moderate Syrians. Doesn't this put democracies in a bind? Unable to make peace with the those elements within totalitarian societies who would welcome it, we are left to engage in deals with dictators. Isn't this a way of weakening any chance for peace or democracy?

Israel is in a very different situation from that of the US. Your margin of security is smaller. And you don't live between Canada and Mexico and two big oceans. So, while we can sort of experiment with Syria - and if we get it wrong, so we get it wrong - you, obviously, can't afford to get it wrong with a place like Syria.

It's really hard to envision a government worse than Assad's, for Israel or for the people of Syria. Indeed, if it had played any worse a role than it did with respect to Iraq, the US would have attacked it, I suppose. There is no reason in the world to think that the people of Syria wish to be governed by this tiny - and, in the eyes of many of them, no doubt - heretical minority, which is covered in blood, including Syrian blood.

Egypt is a more difficult example, because it does have what, in international-political terms, is considered a moderate government that is working with the US, with the Europeans and with Israel against the worst forces in the region, such as **Hamas**. And it isn't clear what will follow that government. I took the view that if you believed that a Muslim Brotherhood takeover would be extremely dangerous, then you would have to wonder what alternative will be presented at the end of the Mubarak era.

The situation now is such that the government in Egypt has repressed every alternative to the Mubarak regime other than the Muslim Brotherhood. In fact, it has actually strengthened that possibility, since what Egypt essentially has, oddly enough, is a two-party system, consisting of the ruling party and the Muslim Brotherhood. Whenever someone has come forward with more moderate or liberal alternatives, he's been jailed. There is state repression of free elections, so that new parties cannot be formed, cannot campaign and cannot receive votes. That is my criticism of the Mubarak regime. For the last 20 years, when it might have been possible to build moderate alternatives, it crushed them.

Why, if the regime is threatened by the Muslim Brotherhood, has Mubarak been cooperating with it and **Hamas** on the Gaza border, by enabling smuggling of arms through the tunnels?

That's a good question, because it is not in the interest of the Egyptian regime that the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza or in Egypt be strengthened. It probably is due to some combination of incompetence and corruption on the part of the Egyptian security forces. You know, these are people whose pay is unbelievably low, and there's a lot of profit to be made in smuggling, not just arms, but drugs and cigarettes and other things. Also, there's a very delicate relationship between the government and the Beduin, who handle much of the smuggling. I think the government understood that if it really tried to crush the smuggling, it would have a big problem with the Beduin.

Also, had the government cracked down, presumably there would have been more protests from the Muslim Brotherhood over "becoming Israel's police force."

'I was the resident skeptic'

Then there's the government's fear of Hamas. If faced with, say, 50,000 Palestinians rushing into Egypt from Gaza, what would the government do? Would it actually shoot and kill them, and have that broadcast on Al Jazeera? What would that do to internal stability in Egypt?

So, they took the position, de facto, that there would be very limited policing, and that whatever got through was Israel's problem. The question now is whether - given the war in Gaza that just ended - the Egyptians are going to take a different view. The current context is a bit different from what it was before the war, in the sense that the smuggling is now an internationally recognized issue. Even those in Europe who view Gaza as mainly a humanitarian problem realize it can't be solved unless the arms smuggling is stopped. In addition, there are new commitments from Egypt to crack down on it, and commitments from Europe and the US to do more about the earlier stage of the arms trail. In the course of the next several months, we will see whether there's any progress in actually diminishing arms supplies through those tunnels.

Did you believe that Bush was going to bomb Iran before the end of his presidency?

It's hard to remember what I believed about that in, say, at some date in 2002 or 2003. But I did not really believe it in the second term. There was one telltale sign: his decision not to bomb the air force in Sudan so that it could not be used to kill more people in Darfur. And it wouldn't have been that hard to do. But he decided against it, fearing that - after having attacked Afghanistan and Iraq - attacking yet another Arab country would have been very poorly received in the Arab world - and much of the rest of the world.

But isn't there consensus about the genocide in Darfur?

Yes. So, given the consensus about Darfur, and given the military ease with which an operation could be carried out against Sudan, if Bush didn't do it, that was certainly a hint that he wasn't going to turn around and feel it was fine to bomb Iran. In addition, in much of this period, Iraq was a war that everybody thought was lost. And the last thing the US military or the president wanted was increased Iranian activities in Iraq that would have harmed the US war effort there.

But then the president did the surge - probably the finest hour of his presidency, after the reaction to 9/11. And it seems to have worked. The war in Iraq is being won, and we will be able to leave - though I would have us leave a lot more slowly than the new administration would.

Still, the president very much wanted to hand over a stable situation in Iraq to his successor, so that his successor would not be tempted to cut and run - and attacking Iran, he thought, would destabilize Iraq.

Do you agree with critics who say that Bush invaded the wrong country, and that he should have gone after Iran first?

No. Every intelligence agency, including those in the US and Israel, agreed that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. So, that was something that needed to be attended to.

Doesn't Iran's nuclear program need attending to it, as well?

Well, yeah, sure. Even if [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad - who himself is dangerous - is not reelected, the program will still be dangerous. But probably too little credit is given to the effort the US led to put financial pressure on Iran, which has very much hurt its economy. And the tragic question is: Where would we be if it weren't for \$140 per barrel of oil? The answer lies in what rescued Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Putin in Russia and the Iranian ayatollahs - the massive inpouring of billions of dollars they could use to buy off their problems. When the Bazaaris complained that Western sanctions were killing them, the Iranian government was able to hand them money and buy them off. Because of all the money floating around, the sanctions did not have a sufficient impact. If oil had remained at \$40 a barrel throughout the president's two terms, it's reasonable to believe that the kinds of deals that were being talked about - such as the Russian offer that uranium enrichment would be done in Russia - might actually have worked.

'I was the resident skeptic'

Now, there is an opportunity for the new administration. In the last year of the Bush administration, the attitudes of [British Prime Minister Gordon] Brown, [German Chancellor Angela] Merkel and [French President Nicolas] Sarkozy were pretty tough on the issue of sanctions against Iran. And I think that the US - with all the goodwill President Obama has - could organize more effective sanctions. For this reason, I regret that Secretary Clinton isn't meeting with the British, German and French foreign ministers to discuss getting that done now. I also wish that, in addition to a Middle East envoy, there would be someone in charge of sanctions against Iran. There is still some possibility that if it is made painful enough for the Iranians, they might succumb to a deal that stops them short of building a nuclear weapon.

There were two pardons Bush conspicuously did not make before leaving office, to the great disappointment of many people on both sides of the Atlantic - Scooter Libby [charged with having leaked classified information about former CIA agent Valerie Plame to New York Times reporter Judith Miller and then covering it up] and Jonathan Pollard. To what can either be attributed? Did Olmert's government make any attempt at securing Pollard's release?

As for Scooter, I really don't know. I think it was a serious mistake on the president's part not to have pardoned him. As for Pollard: There are details of his case that have always made his release problematic, and that's all I'm going to say about it. But I can assure you with absolute certainty that Olmert - like all of his predecessors - did attempt to secure his release.

Graphic

2 photos: ELLIOTT ABRAMS. 'If the most Israel can offer is less than the least the Palestinians can accept, the solution is not close at hand.' DEDICATED TO the doctrine. 'As Bush used to put it: "You don't need to impose democracy; you need to impose dictatorships."' (Credit: Ariel Jerozolinski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

In Reversal, Netanyahu Backs Palestinian State, With Caveats

The New York Times

June 15, 2009 Monday

Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1185 words

Byline: By ISABEL KERSHNER

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

The prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, on Sunday endorsed for the first time the principle of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, but on condition that the state was demilitarized and that the Palestinians recognized Israel as the state of the Jewish people.

In a much-anticipated speech meant in part as an answer to President Obama's address in Cairo on June 4, Mr. Netanyahu reversed his longstanding opposition to Palestinian statehood, a move seen as a concession to American pressure.

But he firmly rejected American demands for a complete freeze on Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the subject of a rare public dispute between Israel and its most important ally on an issue seen as critical to peace negotiations.

And even his assent on Palestinian statehood, given the caveats, was immediately rejected as a nonstarter by Palestinians.

In a half-hour speech broadcast live in Israel, Mr. Netanyahu, the leader of the conservative Likud Party, laid out what he called his "vision of peace": "In this small land of ours, two peoples live freely, side-by-side, in amity and mutual respect. Each will have its own flag, its own national anthem, its own government. Neither will threaten the security or survival of the other."

But Mr. Netanyahu insisted on "ironclad" guarantees from the United States and the international community for Palestinian demilitarization and recognition of Israel's Jewish character.

Given those conditions, Mr. Netanyahu said, "We will be ready in a future peace agreement to reach a solution where a demilitarized Palestinian state exists alongside the Jewish state." He also said that no new settlements would be created and no more land would be expropriated for expansion, but that "normal life" must be allowed to continue in the settlements, a term he has used to mean that limited building should be allowed to continue within existing settlements to accommodate "natural growth."

While this position did not diverge from Mr. Netanyahu's previous statements, he delivered it on Sunday in the context of a speech he had billed as a major foreign policy address, one he had personally urged Mr. Obama to

In Reversal, Netanyahu Backs Palestinian State, With Caveats

watch. It came 10 days after Mr. Obama bluntly rejected "the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements" in his address to the Muslim world in Cairo.

The White House reaction was positive, if limited, focusing on what it called "the important step forward" of Mr. Netanyahu's support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In a statement, the White House press secretary, Robert Gibbs, reiterated the president's vow for a two-state solution that "can and must ensure both Israel's security and the fulfillment of the Palestinians' legitimate aspirations for a viable state," and he said that Mr. Obama "welcomes Prime Minister Netanyahu's endorsement of that goal."

Indeed, in moving closer to the American and international consensus for a two-state solution, Mr. Netanyahu risked alienating right-wing ideologues within his party and his governing coalition. Ron Dermer, the prime minister's director of communications and policy planning, said that in accepting the notion of a Palestinian state, Mr. Netanyahu had "crossed a personal Rubicon."

Citing the biblical vision of Isaiah of swords beaten into plowshares, Mr. Netanyahu said of the Palestinians, "We do not want to rule over them, to govern their lives, or to impose our flag or our culture on them."

But beyond the idea of a state, he seemed to offer little room for compromise or negotiation.

He referred repeatedly to the West Bank, the territory presumed to comprise the bulk of a future Palestinian state, by its biblical name of Judea and Samaria, declaring it "the land of our forefathers."

Mr. Netanyahu made no mention of existing frameworks for negotiations, like the American-backed 2003 peace plan known as the road map.

He did not address the geographical area a Palestinian state might cover, and he said that the Palestinian refugee problem must be resolved outside Israel's borders, negating the Palestinian demand for a right of return for refugees of the 1948 war and for their millions of descendants.

He insisted that Jerusalem remain united as the Israeli capital. The Palestinians demand the eastern part of the city as a future capital.

"Benjamin Netanyahu spoke about negotiations, but left us with nothing to negotiate as he systematically took nearly every permanent status issue off the table," Saeb Erekat, the Palestinian negotiator, said in a statement. "Nor did he accept a Palestinian state. Instead, he announced a series of conditions and qualifications that render a viable, independent and sovereign Palestinian state impossible."

Palestinian negotiators have long refused to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, contending that it would prejudice the refugees' demand for a right of return and would be detrimental to the status of Israel's Arab minority.

Mr. Dermer, the communications director for Mr. Netanyahu, said that Palestinians' recognition of Israel as a Jewish state was "not a precondition" for negotiations. But, he said, "there will not be an agreement without that recognition."

Mr. Netanyahu delivered his speech to an invited audience at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University outside Tel Aviv. The university is an academic bastion of Israel's national-religious camp.

Timed to coincide with the Israeli evening television news, the speech was rich in Zionist rhetoric and seemed aimed as much at Israelis as at the Obama administration. Experts said it was unlikely to cause a political earthquake here, since it largely expressed the consensus in Israel.

"It was a balanced speech that the coalition can live with," said Prof. Efraim Inbar, the director of the Begin-Sadat Center.

In Reversal, Netanyahu Backs Palestinian State, With Caveats

Contrary to the expectations of many here, Mr. Netanyahu did not make the threat of a nuclear Iran a focal point, though he described it as one of the greatest challenges facing Israel, along with the global economic crisis and forging of peace.

He called on Arab leaders to meet with him to discuss peace, and for Arab countries and entrepreneurs to help in lifting the Palestinian economy and to engage in regional projects with Israel.

Regarding Gaza, where the militant Islamic movement **Hamas** holds sway, Mr. Netanyahu said it is up to the Western-backed Palestinian Authority to establish the rule of law there and "overcome" the group.

Mr. Netanyahu announced a week ago that he would deliver a major policy speech, leading to feverish speculation up to the last minute of what it would contain. The Israeli leader spent much of the last week in consultation with political partners and potential rivals and met twice with the country's experienced and popular president, Shimon Peres.

Mr. Peres said in a statement that the speech was "true and courageous" and that it constituted an opening toward "direct negotiations for both a regional peace and a bilateral peace between Israel and the Palestinians."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO: Benjamin Netanyahu (pg.A1)

Palestinian **women** in the West Bank city of Ramallah walked past television images of Benjamin Netanyahu speaking on Sunday. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MUHAMMED MUHEISEN/ASSOCIATED PRESS) (pg.A3)

Load-Date: June 15, 2009

End of Document

Haggling over the price

The Jerusalem Post

June 19, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 10

Length: 1190 words

Byline: SARAH HONIG

Highlight: Another Tack. Pragmatism is akin to focusing on potholes in our national path rather than sometimes lifting our eyes from the ground

Body

As anecdote has it, George Bernard Shaw once asked an attractive socialite whether she'd sleep with him for a million pounds. After she answered in the affirmative, he offered her a mere 10 shillings. Outraged, she railed: "What do you take me for? A prostitute?" Shaw reputedly replied: "We've already determined that. We're just haggling over the price."

Now substitute Barack Obama for Shaw and our own Binyamin Netanyahu for Shaw's peeved female interlocutor. We're not saying that Bibi is a prostitute, not even in the loosest polemic sense. Indeed, given our current political setting, he's perhaps the best prime minister we can hope for. He's the lesser of available evils. What we're saying is that he had willy-nilly cast himself in the prostitute's role when agreeing to a Palestinian state, albeit demilitarized (demilitarization being eminently reversible). Netanyahu established the principle that his principles are for sale and all that's left is to fix the conditions.

It's not that Netanyahu blithely sold out his ideological virtue. He's under seemingly inexorable pressure to demonstrate "moderation." However, moderation isn't all it's cracked up to be and in itself is hardly what we should automatically aspire to. It may work in certain circumstances but bomb in others. Moderation, moreover, isn't necessarily synonymous with pragmatism.

And pragmatism isn't always wise and mustn't be confused with levelheadedness. History is replete with examples of calamitous and cowardly choices paraded as pragmatic. All too often the road to disaster is paved with pragmatic considerations. Conversely, sometimes bold and nonconformist responses prove in retrospect to have been actually pragmatic. On the eve of World War II it was hawkish Winston Churchill who was realistic and popular dove Neville Chamberlain who was the dupe.

Pragmatism is akin to focusing on specific potholes in our national path rather than sometimes lifting our eyes from the ground to scan the horizon, survey the sweep of the land and behold the full track ahead. Pragmatism is getting bogged down in details and neglecting the whole. It's quibbling about issues and forgetting the basics.

THAT'S WHAT Ariel Sharon did in 2003, when he wouldn't reject the road map to supposed peace. Instead he composed 14 reservations - like Netanyahu's reservations vis-à-vis a Palestinian state. But who today remembers Sharon's footnotes? America disdainfully ignored his 14 objections. These mattered temporarily only in our internal self-deceptive discourse. Same goes for Netanyahu's Palestinian state footnotes.

Haggling over the price

The blood-soaked map continues to obligate us despite Sharon's provisos. Similarly, the Palestinian state will continue to plague us after the limitations Netanyahu set for it are discarded, as they surely will be. Sharon's stipulations are down history's unforgiving all-devouring sinkhole. It would have been wiser to tear up the disastrous map (post factum deemed holy gospel) than to accept it with conditions (post factum deemed illegitimate).

Some of us benighted sorts said so in real time but were maligned as rabid fiery-eyed nutcases, foaming at the mouth for good measure. We were roundly derided for recalling how in 1967 nobody in the White House could find the 1957 document spelling out US assurances that Egypt wouldn't blockade the Tiran Straits again. American infidelity made the Six Day War unavoidable. Washington could have preempted that showdown and its derivative so-called "occupation."

ANYONE WHO ever counted on clever formulations and American promises wasn't a pragmatist but a fool. Remember US undertakings not to deal with the PLO? Count on Obama to just as cynically overlook more recent declarations against powwowing with Hamas. Obama, we must bear in mind, is less sympathetic to our cause than even his least savory predecessors. Hence his feigned ignorance of George W. Bush's understandings with Sharon regarding settlement blocks. Assurances Obama might offer Netanyahu on a Palestinian state would be just as fleeting.

Obama after all has just redefined terrorism as pesky "extremism." The corollary is that Israel's emphasis on its enemies' terrorist proclivities instead of on Jewish rights is wasted breath. It only serves to magnify the inimical trendy perception that we're in the wrong and that those who would annihilate us are desperate insurgents against injustice.

Instead of being reduced to prostitute status, we're better off going back to basics, proclaiming loud and clear that the Arabs only conjured Palestinian nationality in order to stake rival claims to ours; that a Palestinian state never existed (i.e. we certainly didn't conquer and subjugate it); that we were attacked; that we didn't drive out hapless refugees (who themselves started the war); that they caused their own downfall by plotting genocide and ethnic cleansing against us; that our only sin is surviving. We might as well remind the world of the Nazi legacy of pan-Arab/Palestinian hero Haj Amin el-Husseini.

Arabs launched a war against the two-state solution and brazenly now continue that very war under the two-state banner. If the world misrepresents this bloody dispute as being about a Palestinian state, we must protest that it's really about denying the right of a Jewish state to exist. Otherwise, to please our critics, we concede the Palestinian argument.

Israel's latest misguided position - about natural growth in the settlements - is equally damaging. It's counterproductive to stutter about the right of Jews to reside everywhere in the 22 percent of Eretz Yisrael west of the Jordan. The remaining 78% should satisfy the aspirations of Arabs calling themselves Palestinians (resorting to an epithet invented by the Romans to humiliate defeated Judea). That 78% has been renamed Jordan, primarily to further Arab irredentist designs to wrest from Jews the little left them, slice by slice.

No Obama can imperiously deny us our rights in our homeland - just as Titus Vespasianus couldn't. When we humbly implore to be permitted to make room in select settlements for baby Jews, we seem to confirm that our very presence is offensive, that we're interlopers, that Jews may not move to the Jerusalem suburb of Ma'aleh Adumim. We only beg that supplicant parents already in Ma'aleh Adumim please be allowed to keep their babies there and that Obama let them build nurseries for said newborns, even if Obama doesn't welcome their birth.

We gain as much respect via ignominious compromises as did the woman whose asking price George Bernard Shaw attempted to lower. As soon as we turn our existential struggle into something that resembles negotiations about the prostitute's remuneration, we forfeit everything because promises made to a prostitute are never kept. No one owes her a thing.

The assumption is that everything she does is illicit, that at most she can expect a little condescending pity mixed with disgust, that she resides outside normative society and cannot expect what others perceive as their natural due. Most of all she can be endlessly pushed around and her prices pushed down.

Haggling over the price

Just like Israel.

Graphic

Photo: Palestinian security officers participate in an exercise in Jenin. The Palestinian state will continue to plague us after the limitations Netanyahu set for it are discarded. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Letters

The Jerusalem Post
June 15, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1157 words

Byline: Varda Epstein, Prof. Natan Kopeika, David Rackner, Netta Kohn, M.M. Van Zuiden, Harold Neustadter, Rabbi Jacob Chinitz, Martin D. Stern

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

New York, New York!

Sir, - I'm thrilled that the residents of an important American city like New York will be treated to the high level of journalism offered by The Jerusalem Post ("Bloomberg, other leading New Yorkers welcome 'Jerusalem Post New York Edition,' which launches today," June 14).

As I read The Jerusalem Post I often think, "If only the Americans could read this." Now some of them can.

I wish you much success with this endeavor and hope the venture grows and extends to other American cities, where an honest assessment of the Israeli political scene may sway public opinion away from the ugly campaign of lies and toward a truer picture of Israel.

VARDA EPSTEIN

Efrat

Who's a bigot?

Sir, - Neve Gordon's "Can Obama save Israel from itself?" (July 12) was full of unproven and unprovable statements presented as facts.

Cases in point: "Legally the outposts are just like the 121 settlements" - read: They are all illegal, including Jerusalem. "ÉPalestinian fields that had been set on fire" - in many cases by Arabs and leftists, as found by police.

And "If Obama hesitates, Israel will become a full-blown apartheid regime." Are we now a half-blown apartheid regime?

Prof. Gordon should take an honest look, for example, at the treatment accorded to Arabs in Israeli hospitals; at our universities, of which he is part; at the polls; and on the buses, where women are sometimes relegated to the back, but never Arabs.

The true bigot is the professor himself, with his reference to the "pathetic, racist settler."

Letters

To paraphrase our sages, the hatred of many non-religious Jews for religious Jews is greater than that of the nations of the world for the Jews.

The settlers, despite being discriminated against by much of the media and academia, and sometimes government agencies, are dedicated heart and soul to preserving our right going back thousands of years to the land of Israel, after almost 2,000 years of occupation by others; unlike Prof. Gordon, who actively supported Yasser Arafat.

PROF. NATAN KOPEIKA

Ben-Gurion University

Beersheba

Sir, - Surely Neve Gordon was kidding with that sentence about Israel becoming a full-blown apartheid regime?

Isn't the Hamas-Palestinian (Jew-free) Gaza Strip an apartheid state? Isn't every Arab country around Israel virtually Jew-free - and now almost Christian-free? Wouldn't these countries be defined as apartheid?

Every day I see Arabs here in Israel enjoying the same opportunities and benefits as any other Israeli. I see Arab doctors, nurses, truck drivers, construction workers, cashiers, waiters, shopkeepers and Arab MKs living the same life as your everyday Israeli citizen.

The focus of our negotiations on the "two-state solution" with the Palestinians and President Obama should be on the status of Jewish people living in the "Palestinian state, created to live alongside the Jewish state in peace and security."

DAVID RACKNER

Hod Hasharon

Sir, - Neve Gordon is wrong in his unequivocal assertion that the settlements are all illegal; renowned international law experts have long maintained the contrary.

As for his assertion that government actions and protest demonstrations are simply for "show," this is as malicious as it is offensive, unproven and unwarranted.

He is wrong, too, in his insinuation that the government and the media are somehow working in tandem. When has Israel's left-leaning media aided right-wing policy or promoted right-wing agendas?

The settlers have a right to their opinions no less than Gordon does - including the right to express those opinions, and to promote them. There is nothing "racist" (or pathetic) about not wanting to give up one's home and patrimony to an enemy.

Gordon doesn't miss a trick, even daring to take the "civil war" genie out of the bottle in which wiser, more decent people work hard to keep it.

He also plays the apartheid card; it appears no cliché is beneath him.

I am surprised you saw fit to print this malicious, puerile piece.

NETTA KOHN

Jerusalem

All-round loser

Sir, - James von Brunn deplored that the "empty slander of the Holocaust" had turned the "supreme German race" into the world's pariah. But, ironically, all he did with his abominable attack was prove the Holocaust plausible.

Letters

If one man can, point-blank and in cold blood, out of sheer racial enmity, murder someone who only opened the door for him - having further bullets apparently ready to kill a dozen more innocent people - it becomes clear that a nation of 30 million can kill six million out of pure hatred.

Meanwhile, the Germans have become our best friends in Europe. Von Brunn lost every battle ("A history of anger," June 12).

M.M. VAN ZUIDEN

Jerusalem

Educational tours

Sir, - In "'Outpost tourism' draws hundreds of Israelis on day trips to West Bank" (June 12), Tomer Tzanani mentioned that "no visitors from outside of Israel have been on the tour."

From personal experience, I know that the One Israel Fund has also been conducting one-day educational tours and missions.

Led by outstanding English-speaking licensed tour guides, these educational experiences are directed toward foreign tourists and visit thriving communities as well as new outposts in Judea, Samaria and (until the disengagement) Gaza.

Over the past 14 years, thousands of Anglo tourists have availed themselves of this opportunity.

More information is available at www.oneisraelfund.org

HAROLD NEUSTADTER

Jerusalem

Torah... on condition

Sir, - On the issue of change in Halacha, Michael Hirsch turned the tables very nicely on Rabbi Avi Shafran by citing the many rulings that Jews should live in Eretz Yisrael ("Is Torah malleable?" Letters, June 14).

A prominent Orthodox authority, Eliezer Berkovits, in a book called *Lo bashamayim hi* (It is not in Heaven), has a chapter called *Akirat mitzvot min hatorah* (The uprooting of commandments of the Torah), in which he cites many examples where the Sages not only changed laws of the Torah in terms of addition, but also in total abrogation or, if you will, amendment.

One example: According to Torah law, a man may give a ring to a married woman and betroth her on condition that her husband die. The sages thought this would not make for family peace (*shalom bayit*), and ruled such betrothal illegal.

They also accepted the testimony of a widow to the death of her first husband and permitted her to marry a second husband, even though the Torah demands the testimony of two witnesses in marital matters.

RABBI JACOB CHINITZ

Jerusalem

On second thought

Sir, - Hannah Koenigsberg ("Second time around," Letters, June 7) reminded me of a joke told by one of our dayanim when I suggested that writing a get, or bill of divorce, was a *hechsher mitzva*, making it possible to allow one to remarry one's divorcee.

Letters

He said that on one such occasion, he asked a man why he was remarrying his ex-wife after having complained at the time of the divorce that they were incompatible.

His reply: "For a second marriage, we are compatible!"

MARTIN D. STERN

Salford, UK

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

The world was wrong to oppose a military solution in Sri Lanka

Ottawa Citizen

June 11, 2009 Thursday

Final Edition

Copyright 2009 Ottawa Citizen, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publication Inc. All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. A15

Length: 1220 words

Byline: Ramesh Thakur, Citizen Special

Body

With its bloody end recently, Sri Lanka's quarter century long deadly civil war leaves some troubling questions in its wake. What limitations exist on governments' right to use force to crush terrorist organizations? How can the responsibility to protect norm be extended to nonstate actors? Do westerners have divine dispensation to be the moral arbiters of the conduct of others as well as their own?

The world was gravely concerned over the fate of civilians caught in the crossfire. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon pressed Colombo to grant unrestricted access to aid agencies. The government resisted, saying more time was needed to flush out Tamil Tigers hiding among the displaced people in the camps.

A fortnight earlier, Ban had received a report on Gaza incidents in January from his own inquiry board that indicted Israel for "reckless disregard" for human life, accused it of a direct and intentional strike into UN premises, and recommended an impartial inquiry to investigate incidents that were beyond its own deliberately narrow terms of reference. On May 5, Ban submitted this report to the Security Council with a terse statement that he did not intend to establish any further inquiry.

Yet presumably Ban expects to be taken seriously on his call for greater transparency, access and accountability by Sri Lanka.

The double standards and selectivity of western governments who have aggressively promoted the rhetoric of the war on terror, waged an illegal war of aggression in Iraq where civilian lives are so devalued they are not even counted, and support the war on terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan with its high toll on civilian casualties, has been breath-taking.

Sri Lanka was waging a military offensive against a guerrilla army that had fought a brutal war against the legitimate state for 26 years, killed up to 80,000 people, and brought the assassination of an Indian prime minister as well as a Sri Lankan president. The Tigers were among the most ruthless terrorist organizations and designated as such by more than 30 countries. They pioneered the use of women suicide bombers, invented the explosive suicide belt, killed many civilians including Tamils, recruited child soldiers and often raised funds from the Tamil diaspora through extortion. Post-conflict recovery and progress was not possible until they had been decisively defeated on the battlefield.

The world was wrong to oppose a military solution in Sri Lanka

Civilians were held against their will by the Tigers, not the army. Many who tried to flee were shot by the Tigers -- an act of depravity against their own to which even Hamas and Hezbollah, other practitioners of the art of using civilians as human shields, have not stooped.

Tellingly, there were no reports of civilians trying to flee from the Sri Lankan forces to the Tigers. A movement that began as the protector of the nation's oppressed Tamil minority had mutated into their killers. Along the road it is the Tigers who fought for a solely military solution to the three-decade conflict, spurning the few opportunities that were presented for a political settlement through dialogue and negotiations, including through Indian and Norwegian mediation; they insisted on being the sole representative of the Tamil population and cause, liquidating all rival challengers; and they lost international goodwill after 9/11 as the global tolerance for terrorism as a tactic collapsed, regardless of the justice of the cause.

Yet, even if true -- and, as always, much of this was contentious and furiously contested -- this did not obscure the humanitarian tragedy of large-scale civilian deaths and shelling of civilian targets such as schools and hospitals in the shrinking area still held by the Tigers as government troops closed in. Government claims of zero civilian casualties caused by their firepower are simply not credible. Around 7,000 civilians died this year alone.

To what extent did the global community's unanimously endorsed responsibility to protect (R2P) norm apply to the Tigers, the government and the international community for evacuating -- by land, sea and air -- the civilians caught in the crossfire?

R2P places the responsibility first and foremost on the state itself. Given the Tigers' nature and record, it was not unreasonable for the government to build the capacity and demonstrate the determination to defeat the Tigers as part of its responsibility to protect. R2P proponents cannot advocate the international use of force against government troops engaged in atrocities against civilians, but not permit governments to use military force to protect their people from atrocities perpetrated by terrorists.

Pacifists can denounce all use of force. But those who accept that the use of force is sometimes necessary cannot deny that option to governments engaged in fighting a brutal insurgency that kills civilians without compunction.

Had the Tigers been amenable to letting civilians caught in the crossfire escape, outsiders could legitimately have asked for another pause or ceasefire in order to help evacuate them. Another means for avoiding a bloodbath was for the Tigers to surrender. Absent this, it was hypocritical and wrong -- morally, politically and militarily -- of westerners to fault Sri Lanka.

Ceasefires are not neutral in their impact on the warring sides. The Tigers used previous pauses to rest, recover, regroup, recruit, rearm and return to terrorism. Another 25 years of war would have killed many more civilians.

There is also the moral hazard of validating the tactic of taking civilians hostage as human shields. Calls for a ceasefire, without materially helping the Tamil civilians, infuriated the government and reduced space for those making the calls to establish their bona fides with the government for how best to move from a civil war into a post-conflict peacebuilding environment.

Canadian MP Bob Rae discovered the truth of this when, after landing at Colombo airport Tuesday night, he was detained and then expelled from Sri Lanka. Those who choose to be referees and award penalties against one team cannot switch to playing coach of that team.

Where R2P does apply to the government is in its preventive and rebuilding components. The fact remains that the Tigers were the after-product of systematic and institutionalized discrimination by the Sinhalese majority against the Tamil minority that quickly degenerated into oppression and then killings. Calls for equal treatment when ignored escalated into demands for autonomy and finally, a homeland.

A military victory, while necessary, will not guarantee a peaceful future for a united Sri Lanka. The responsibility to reconstruct and rebuild, with international assistance, shows the way forward. The best time for the state to adopt measures of accommodation and power sharing within a federal framework is in the flush of military victory, when

The world was wrong to oppose a military solution in Sri Lanka

no one can accuse it of weakness. The Sri Lankan Tamils as well as the international community will mark the government's noble magnanimity.

Conversely, should there be vulgar triumphalism, gloating and an atavistic return to oppression and killings, Sri Lanka will suffer a reprise of the brutal civil war.

Ramesh Thakur is director of the Balsillie School of International Affairs and distinguished fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation in Waterloo.

Load-Date: June 11, 2009

End of Document

A new cold war in the Mid-East

The Australian

June 11, 2009 Thursday

1 - All-round Country Edition

Copyright 2009 Nationwide News Pty Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 12

Length: 1220 words

Byline: Greg Sheridan, foreign editor

Body

The usual power structure prevails despite the outcome of the election in Lebanon

WAS the surprising Lebanese election result, in which the pro-Western government won a clear victory over the Hezbollah-led opposition, the first flower of Barack Obama's new spring for the Muslim and Arab worlds? Were enough Lebanese voters won over by the charm and eloquence of the handsome young American President to give the fading Western power one more try?

I am tempted to write a wholly optimistic column. I want to declare "Let Lebanon be Lebanon", as Ronald Reagan at the height of the Cold War so famously and effectively declared "Let Poland be Poland". Lebanon, its sons and daughters will tell you, used to be the best country in the world. Beirut was the Paris of the east. It was the cradle of much civilisation. Its offspring have been magnificent citizens of Australia, from the last Victorian premier to the incumbent NSW Governor.

Can this glory come again? Well, sadly, it is better to tell the truth.

This election result is good news, but it is very modest good news.

Hezbollah won all the seats it contested. The alliance it leads will have just under a half of the parliament. Hezbollah is a devoutly Shi'ite terrorist group controlled by Iran.

It will continue to wield by far the most powerful army in Lebanon. It will continue to receive weapons and financial support from Syria and Iran at will. It will continue to possess 50,000 rockets deployed on Israel's border. It will continue to exercise dominance within Lebanon whenever it wants to by force of arms.

The best piece of writing on Lebanon in recent months was a brilliant cover story in the May 20 issue of The New Republic. In it, journalist David Samuels recounts an interview with former Lebanese president Amin Gemayel, in which he outlines Hezbollah's strategic value to Iran.

Gemayel says: "In the form of Hezbollah, they [Iran] get a brigade on the Mediterranean and on the border with Israel. So \$100 million a year they spend here is nothing."

In 2007, Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah made a famous speech in which he answered directly the charge that Hezbollah was not complying with UN resolutions that forbade it from bringing armaments into Lebanon.

A new cold war in the Mid-East

Nasrallah said: "We are being very clear and we have arms. We have arms of all shapes and sizes. The resistance [Hezbollah often refers to itself as the resistance] has arms. It is saying it in public, adding that it is rearming and increasing the scope of its armaments in order to get more dangerous arms ... We are transporting the arms secretly and in straw trucks so as not to embarrass you [the Lebanese government]. I am saying we will remain on the border, in Beirut and everywhere in Lebanon."

You've certainly got to hand it to Nasrallah and Hezbollah generally: they say what they mean, even if a thousand Western commentators try to find some other meaning in their words.

One of the most striking features of Samuels's long essay is his description of his interview with Saad Hariri, son of Lebanon's assassinated former prime minister, Rafik Hariri, and the leader of the winning coalition in the recent election. Hariri, the successful and just-elected senior politician in Lebanon, lives behind a fortress, seldom leaving his stockade, with street traffic kept at least a block away so no car bomb can kill him as it killed his father.

If he wants to go out for an evening meal at a restaurant, he goes overseas.

Of course, much normal life goes on in Lebanon. The Lebanese have a national genius for making the most of what normality is afforded to them. But giant, convulsive and violent forces are at work within their society, and from outside.

In one sense, the Lebanese election was the latest episode in what is becoming a fairly clear cold war in the Middle East. On one side of this cold war are the US, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and, despite Arab unease with them, the Israelis. On the other side are Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas , which rules the Gaza Strip. Communal, ethnic, religious and national identities and loyalties are infinitely more complex than these cold war divisions, naturally, but the strategic competition between the US and Iran is a central axis around which the region revolves.

This was reflected in the alliances in the Lebanese election. Hariri's group was called the March 14 alliance. It consists of the main Sunni parties, the Druze group led by Walid Jumblatt and some Christians who were associated with the old Phalangist Party. They got strong political support from the US and a lot of money from Saudi Arabia.

The Hezbollah group is called the March 8 coalition and involves Hezbollah, another Shia group called Amal and the Christian forces of former general Michel Aoun.

Aoun's forces were the big losers in the election.

The inherent madness of Lebanese politics and the sheer desperate scramble to survive is evident in Aoun's electoral alliance with Hezbollah. This is an alliance against nature and against conviction.

Aoun was once the hero of Lebanese resistance to Syrian hegemony. One of Aoun's election posters featured a dazzlingly beautiful, bare-armed young woman wearing saucy orange lipstick and with plucked eyebrows. The caption urged women to "be beautiful and vote".

Yet Aoun's allies, Hezbollah, are Islamic fundamentalists who want an Islamist state. Go figure.

Samuels argues that Lebanon offers a taste of the future of the Middle East, once Iran has a nuclear weapon and can operate anywhere without fear of military retaliation. For Iran and Syria today operate with a virtually free hand in Lebanon.

The UN has been investigating for a very long time the assassination of Rafik Hariri, but the UN's various actions and inactions have put no serious curb on Damascus or Tehran.

Hezbollah has accepted the election result but it has also said clearly and repeatedly that it is never giving up its arms, that it requires its arms for anti-Israeli resistance. Hariri wants Hezbollah to join the government. There is no force in Lebanon that can disarm Hezbollah. Thus Lebanon is a state that cannot exercise sovereignty over its own territory.

A new cold war in the Mid-East

One reason American strategic players are so keen to push an Israel-Syria peace deal is the hope that this could be a process by which Syria is strategically reoriented away from Iran. Middle East expert Martin Indyk argues this position with particular eloquence. But how realistic is it? For Syria to cut off its assets in Hezbollah, to betray its other proxies in Lebanon, to earn the hostility of Tehran, which everyone in the region believes will soon enough possess nuclear weapon: all this for what from the Syrian point of view? So that the Americans can bring them into the disciplines of the World Trade Organisation and lecture them about the virtues of democracy?

People of goodwill everywhere should wish the Lebanese government good fortune, and we should do what we can to help it build its state and deliver as normal a life as it can for as many of its citizens as possible.

But strategic matters in the Middle East are seldom solved by elections. This was a good election result, but it doesn't much change the Lebanese status quo, which is pretty grim. Perhaps we'll have better luck in tomorrow's presidential election in Iran. But I wouldn't bet the house.

Load-Date: June 10, 2009

End of Document

MOST TEENAGE PREGNANCIES NOW END WITH AN ABORTION

DAILY MAIL (London)

May 11, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 Associated Newspapers Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 1208 words

Byline: BY STEVE DOUGHTY

Body

MOST pregnancies among girls under 18 ended in abortion last year.

Out of around 40,000 pregnancies more than 20,000 were terminated ñ the first time more had chosen this option than become mothers.

The figure is higher than 2007, when it just hit 50 per cent, and consistent with a steady upwards trend since the Government started its controversial Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in 1999.

Figures out on May 21 will also show that for the first time the number of abortions performed on women living in England and Wales topped 200,000.

The teenage pregnancy strategy, which has cost taxpayers more than £300million, was meant to halve the number of conceptions among girls under 18 in England between 1998 and not met Government targets, and in 2007 the rate actually rose.

Teenage pregnancy rates are now higher than they were in

Pregnancies among girls under 16 ñ below the age of consent ñ are also at the highest level since 1998.

Critics labelled the Government scheme the 'Teenage Abortion Strategy'.

Tory MP Julian Brazier said: 'This is a further sickening Ministers have tried to slash teenage pregnancies by freely handing out contraceptives and expanding sex education.

But the fall in pregnancy rates have indicator of a society that has broken down and lost its moral compass.'

Phyllis Bowman, of the Right to Life group, said: ' Contraception campaigners and clinics depend for their living on providing contraception and abortion to underage girls.

'The Government listens to them, but they are responsible for this disaster.

'We have the highest level of sexually transmitted disease in Europe and the highest level of sexual activity among teenagers in Europe.

'Unicef says we have the unhappiest teenagers in Europe.

MOST TEENAGE PREGNANCIES NOW END WITH AN ABORTION

'The young have been deliberately sexualised in a culture which sneers at the idea of telling teenagers they should not have sex.'

Until the mid-Nineties, fewer than four out of ten pregnant teenage girls opted for an abortion.

But the number of teenage abortions shot upwards after a contraceptive pill health scare in 1995 and have risen steadily since Tony Blair launched the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

Last year's increase means abortions among teenagers have gone up by more than a quarter since Labour came to power in 1997. Ministers say the rise in abortion is the result of too much risky sex among teenagers.

They have called for a redoubling of efforts to persuade young girls to use contraception.

However, health authorities are also stepping up their efforts to make young women aware of the availability of abortion.

The Broadcasting Committee-of Advertising Practice, which sets the guidelines for television advertising, has proposed allowing abortion clinics to put out TV commercials for the first time. It also wants to see widespread TV advertising of condoms.

The increase in abortions has also been welcomed by prominent figures in the sex education lobby.

Ann Furedi, of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, has claimed: 'The fact that teenagers felt able to end their pregnancy in abortion is actually a positive sign.

'If they have other plans for their teenage years aside from motherhood, they felt more able to make that choice.'

A Department of Health spokesman said: 'One of the key aims of this Government, as set out in the Sexual Health and Teenage Pregnancy Strategies, is to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and consequently abortions, through better access to contraception.

'Prescribed contraception is available free of charge under NHS arrangements, and the Department of Health has recently invested additional funds to allow for improvements in contraception services.'

--

FOUR TERMINATIONS BEFORE I WAS 16

BY the time she reached 16, Lucy Lanelly had already had four abortions.

She first became pregnant at 12 after sex with a boy of 15 because, she says, she was too young to understand contraception.

'My mum organised the termination,' she added.

'There was no question of keeping the baby. I didn't want it. I was too young.'

Miss Lanelly, now 19, left, of Toll Bar, near Doncaster, had a three-month contraceptive jab but failed to return for a follow-up as was 'too busy'.

A year later she became pregnant by a 19-year-old man while drunk. Her mother, a mental health nurse, arranged her second abortion. When she became pregnant for a third time ñ by a 15-year-old who said he was infertile ñ she could not face telling her mother and went to the clinic with her grandmother.

Then three years ago, she became pregnant again to her boyfriend, 20, when a condom failed.

Miss Lanelly, who left school at 15 with no GCSEs, has no regrets about her abortions and claims they have left no lasting emotional damage.

MOST TEENAGE PREGNANCIES NOW END WITH AN ABORTION

She said: 'When it happens four times before you're 16, you wonder what's going on. I regret having sex when I wasn't mature enough.'

'I don't know why so many teenagers are falling into the same trap. Sex education is obviously not working.'

s.doughty@dailymail.co.uk

U.S. ACCUSED OF PHOSPHORUS BOMB ATTACK ON THE TALIBAN

BY DAVID GARDNER

THE U.S. was accused last night of using white phosphorus bombs in a battle with the Taliban that left scores of Afghan civilians dead.

Doctors say they found horrific burns on victims of the slaughter a week ago.

They believe they could have been caused by the chemical, which bursts into fierce fire on contact with the air and can stick to flesh and burn deep into it.

While phosphorus can be legitimately used in battle to light up the night sky or create smokescreens, but it is illegal to use it as a weapon.

Human rights groups say its use in populated areas can indiscriminately burn civilians and constitutes a war crime.

Last night the U.S. military denied using phosphorus, saying if it had been used, the Taliban were to blame. But that idea was rubbished by experts and denied by the Taliban themselves.

As many as 147 civilians are said to have died during the battle in the Farah district, although the Pentagon insists the toll has been exaggerated.

Dr Mohammad Aref Jalali, head of a hospital burns unit where some of the victims were treated, said: 'I think it's the result of a chemical used in a bomb. If it was the result of a burning house, the burn would look different.'

United Nations investigators have also seen 'extensive' burns and questioned how they were caused. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission has interviewed patients and is investigating.

The U.S. used white phosphorus in the battle of Fallujah in Iraq in 2004 and Israel's military used it against **Hamas** targets in Gaza in January.

Marc Garlasco, senior military analyst at Human Rights Watch and a former senior Pentagon analyst, said there has been widespread and regular use of white phosphorus by U.S. and Nato forces in Afghanistan.

He said it was unlikely the Taliban would use it because the Americans had equipment that could see through the smoke.

The Afghan Defence Ministry said the government was not aware of insurgents using white phosphorus in any attacks.

The row blew up as U.S. commander General David Petraeus claimed Al Qaeda has been beaten back and was no longer operating in Afghanistan.

He said the terrorists had also suffered 'very significant losses' as a result of new Pakistani offensives against their hideouts in border areas.

Load-Date: May 10, 2009

MOST TEENAGE PREGNANCIES NOW END WITH AN ABORTION

End of Document

Letters

The Jerusalem Post
May 6, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1158 words

Byline: Yitzchak Ben-Shmuel, Isidore Solomons, Eric Strayer, Barbara A. Bloom, Stanley Cohen, Judy Prager, Michael D. Hirsch, Sarah Williams

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Timely reminder

Sir, - Once again, Caroline Glick gives Jerusalem Post readers insights and facts with which to arrive at intelligent conclusions ("A cautionary tale," May 5). In reviewing the sordid details of the AIPAC scandal involving Keith Weissman and Steve Rosen, she recounts how certain anti-Israel bureaucrats in the Bush administration twisted truths to prosecute innocent Israel lobbyists and intimidate many pro-Israel organizations, including AIPAC, into fearful silence.

Her expose is not so much shocking as it is revealing. It reminds many, in case we still need reminders in these days of worldwide Israel bashing, that the scourge of anti-Semitism runs deep; and that the first casualty of that poison is Jewish fear and self-doubt.

YITZCHAK BEN-SHMUEL

Modi'in

Diplomatic doublespeak

Sir, - Making progress in furthering the peace process with the Palestinians a condition of the US's ability to confront Iran in its race for nuclear weapons is a brilliant piece of diplomatic doublespeak by Hillary Clinton and Rahm Emmanuel.

Now the failure of talks with Iran aimed at stopping its acquisition of weapons of mass destruction can be blamed on the intransigent Israelis, as usual ("Peres backs Arab League plan," May 5).

ISIDORE SOLOMONS

Beit Shemesh

Ready to serve

Sir, - As an ex-American paratrooper who participated the day Israel gave Sinai back to Egypt, I am fully behind your country. I'm older now, but prepared, mentally and physically, to serve again for what's to come.

Letters

ERIC STRAYER

Grove City, Ohio

False witness

Sir, - The disturbing "Professor probed after sending email comparing Israel to Nazis" (May 3) compels me to respond.

How absurd that a Jewish professor, William I. Robinson at the University of Santa Barbara, Cal., would make such an obscene comparison. Did the Nazis turn over land to the Jewish people "for the sake of peace" in WWII - as Israel did in Gaza? The nefarious result of that is the Arabs using this land for smuggling weapons and training terrorists. Isn't it the hostile Arabs who should be compared to Nazis?

Their terror groups, Hamas, Hizbullah, Islamic jihad, Al-Qaida and sundry others, have made abundantly clear their intention to eliminate Israel.

Israel's incursion into Gaza in Operation Cast Lead was a defensive, not offensive action to halt the many years of rockets and missiles bombarding innocent civilians daily in their homeland.

For Prof. Robinson to call the investigation against him "a violation of academic freedom" is a gross distortion of that concept. His remarks were slanderous, libelous and a thinly veiled effort to influence his students with his prejudicial views against Israel.

It behooves the professor to study Torah Judaism, which teaches: "Thou shall not bear false witness"... against fellow Jews.

BARBARA A. BLOOM, President

Peace Through Torah Truth, Inc.

Jerusalem/Baltimore

Much further to go

Sir, - Hillel Goldberg attempts to redress the balance of Jewish attitudes to Poland before, during and after WWII, but in doing so errs on the side of providing a universal blanket of forgiveness which sweeps the truth under it ("New Poland," Letters, May 5).

That there were about 4,000,000 Jews in Poland in 1939 of whom most failed to survive the war is not in doubt. That there were examples of bravery and selflessness among their Christian neighbors is also well-known.

What Hillel Goldberg's "blanket" covers is the large numbers of returning Jewish camp survivors who were murdered by their 1939 neighbors, many of whom had moved into their vacated homes and were reluctant to move out.

One prime example lies in a recording of Hirsh Glick's famous Partisan Song, recorded by the Polish Army Orchestra and Chorus in 1945. Many of the Jews who took part in this recording were subsequently murdered by their erstwhile neighbors and were thus obviously unable to oblige the many requests for further performances.

Documentaries have been made recently of families of survivors returning to their Polish homes to enquire about their returned relatives, only to be told that they had been shot and secretly buried so that the grandfathers of the present occupants could retain their new-found homes.

If Jews and Poles alike are to move forward and away from all this, we need, all of us, to address the whole truth of Poland and the Polish people.

Letters

Two thousand years of religious dogma branding us as Christ-killers had its consequences. We need to go a lot further to redress the balance.

STANLEY COHEN

Jerusalem

Stick to your job

Sir, - What gives Shimon Peres the right to offer sovereignty over Christian sites to the Vatican? ("Peres said willing to cede sovereignty over certain Christian holy sites," May 5.)

The president is supposed to be apolitical, and it is not in his purview to hand out chunks of sovereign Israel to anyone, especially the Vatican, which has thousands of Hebrew/Jewish artifacts in its possession and no intention of returning them to the State of Israel.

Do we need another religious argument with various Christian denominations who will want their voices heard in this discussion?

Peres should stick to his job of representing Israel, which he does admirably, and keep his fingers out of these very contentious issues.

JUDY PRAGER

Petah Tikva

Sir, - Instead of giving six Christian sites to the Vatican and receiving nothing in return, why not make it a trade?

In return for these holy places, let the Vatican give back to Israel all the holy objects from the Second Temple secreted away in its vaults.

MICHAEL D. HIRSCH

Kochav Ya'ir

Where's the

(halachic) beef?

Sir, - I am always bemused by knee-jerk reactions such as Ellie Morris's ("Oh, yeah?" Letters, May 5) to Jewish traditions and halachic requirements deemed "non democratic" by those who seek to undermine Halacha in the name of "democratic principles."

Your correspondent overlooks the fact that "democratic" does not mean instant entree for all.

An example: People under 18 are excluded from voting, as are non-citizens; and citizens may vote, but not residents. The same is true of many social benefits - one doesn't qualify for National Insurance if one's status is tourist rather than citizen.

In a democracy, privilege entails responsibility. Being part of a minyan or quorum is a responsibility, which is mandated for men. Your reader no more qualifies halachically to help make up a men's minyan than a 16-year- old qualifies to vote, or a tourist qualifies for state medical benefits.

Where's the beef? Your reader is not precluded from joining a women's minyan, nor from belonging to any of the more progressive and halachic synagogues which are inclusive of women within the framework of Halacha.

If this isn't good enough, she can go join a Reform or Conservative congregation and be part of its minyan.

Letters

That's democracy - she has a choice. But leave me my choices, also. As a lifelong feminist and working mother, I prefer not to be obligated to show up for every minyan.

SARAH WILLIAMS

Jerusalem

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Everyone should apologise during papal visit

Daily News Egypt

May 11, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2013 Daily News Egypt - Egyptian Media Services Ltd. Provided by Syndigate.info, an Albawaba.com company All Rights Reserved



Length: 1206 words

Body

When the Vatican announced that Pope Benedict XVI would embark on a pilgrimage to Jordan, the occupied West Bank and Israel, senior cardinals mobilized a massive media campaign in anticipation of angry reactions from Jews, Muslims and Orthodox Christians.

They even went so far as to embed journalists on the ecumenical equivalent of Air Force One. Comprehending the herculean task of climbing Mount Public Relations, the Vatican embedded an Al Jazeera journalist on board, hoping that the channel once unfairly and maliciously associated with Osama bin Laden, could carry the papal message that he was a "pilgrim of peace".

But that has proven to be insufficient.

In Jordan, the first leg of the papal visit, the Muslim Brotherhood railed against the pontiff saying he was overdue for issuing a "public apology" for remarks he made about Islam and the Prophet Mohamed, which many Muslims at the time regarded as offensive and Islamophobic.

In 2006, while delivering a speech at the University of Regensburg in Bavaria, Germany, Benedict quoted a 1391 passage in which a Byzantine emperor had indicated that Islam, an evil and inhuman religion, was spread by the sword.

His remarks were ill-advised as they were self-righteous; during the Middle Ages, millions of people were put to the sword by 'Christ's soldiers' who marched through European villages murdering and pillaging Jews and non-Catholics. In hopes of bringing 'civilization' to the New World, they plowed through the Aztec and Incan jungles, eradicating entire societies in their wake.

After an international outcry, Benedict said he was "deeply sorry for the reactions" to his speech and that the passage did not reflect his personal opinion.

But many in Jordan say this did not come far enough and demanded a public apology.

Everyone should apologise during papal visit

While visiting the King Hussein mosque in Amman, Benedict said he had profound respect for Islam and called on Muslims to safeguard the rights of Christians in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq where the ancient community has been targeted and slaughtered in the war-ravaged country since the US-led invasion.

But Orthodox Christians in the region say the pope has ignored visiting their churches and holy sites and they accuse him of enflaming tensions between their beleaguered community and the Muslims.

Many Muslims in the region would agree. They say that if the Vatican can issue repeated public apologies for the Holocaust, it can do the same for offending Muslims.

Not so fast, say their Jewish cousins. Since World War II, the Jews have been angry with the Vatican for not condemning their slaughter, not intervening, and often offering what they say is implicit support for Nazi atrocities against their communities and a dozen or so other races and minorities.

Jews are also aghast that Benedict will beatify Pope Pius XII who ran the Church during World War II.

The fact that Benedict, a German, was a member of the Hitler Youth brigades, many of which were responsible for beating Jews in the streets of Berlin and Vienna, further enrages their sensitivities.

Benedict's supporters say that membership in the Hitler Youth was mandatory for all German boys.

Like their Muslim Brotherhood counterparts, Israel's Jews say such explanations are not enough.

Earlier this year, the Rabbinate in Israel severed relations with the Vatican after Benedict revoked an ex-communication order on Richard Williamson, a Holocaust-denying bishop, who will also be welcomed back into the fold of the Roman Catholic Church.

Hoping to reach out to Jews, the pontiff will visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem in one of the final stops in his pilgrimage, and in support of Palestinian Christians, visit Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank, which the Bible says is the birthplace of Jesus Christ.

He is also expected to visit a Palestinian refugee camp but that act of "solidarity" with Arab suffering comes after he meets with Avigdor Lieberman, a radical rightist and the Israeli foreign minister.

Lieberman and other Israeli leaders were all gung-ho during the Israeli attacks on Gaza in January. Many Palestinians say that if the pope wants to express solidarity with Palestinians, he should visit Gaza, one of the most densely-populated places in the world where civilians continue to survive despite abject poverty and appalling conditions.

He is expected to call on Palestinian Christians to stay in the occupied territories echoing a similar appeal he made to Christians in Iraq and throughout the Middle East.

Since 2000, emigration of Christian communities from the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and Palestine, has surged. Unfortunate and shameful, as Arab Christians have been as much a fabric of the combined heritage of the Middle East as have Jews, Muslims, Druze and Mandeans.

"Certainly, the contradiction of tensions and divisions between the followers of different religious traditions, sadly, cannot be denied," Benedict said in Jordan. "However, is it not also the case that often it is the ideological manipulation of religion, sometimes for political ends, that is the real catalyst for tension and division?"

The pope has reiterated that his trip is not political.

This is astonishingly naive; one cannot visit the Middle East without expecting to be baptized in the geopolitical conflicts that have ruined this region for centuries.

During the Iran-Iraq war, both sides quoted verses from the Quran to justify attacking the other. **Hamas** calls itself the Islamic resistance movement; Hezbollah says it is the Party of God, although I must confess, I see no rationale

Everyone should apologise during papal visit

why God would require a party; Jews in Israel say God gave them the parched land to make a home in; Christian evangelicals urge massive support for Israel against Muslims; the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Egypt use Islam to justify opposition to their governments.

And recently, revelations that US troops in Afghanistan were proselytizing (similar news emerged in Iraq following the US invasion) do not bode well.

Religion and politics are one and the same in this part of the world; zealous bedfellows. The pope should have anticipated that his trip was as likely to succeed as it was to end in miserable failure.

However, those demanding apologies from the pope cannot claim any moral high ground. Muslims are yet to acknowledge and condemn the horrors of suicide bombings; the stoning, beheading, and setting on fire of young **women** on the mere suspicion that they have engaged in extra-marital and pre-marital sex; and the radical hate speech that is unfortunately uttered from many a pulpit. Jordan is itself not immune to criticism - honor killings continue to plague the social fabric there and the government has yet to seriously prosecute offenders.

Israeli society should also not cast stones, either - the continuing occupation, stealing of Palestinian lands, beating of Arab farmers at the hands of Jewish settlers (many of whom were not even born in the region) is appalling. The siege and wars on Gaza, the war against Lebanon; the list goes on and on.

One can only hope for better odds once Barack Obama addresses the Muslim World from Cairo on June 4.

Alex Gainem is a journalist and commentator who has been writing on Middle Eastern affairs since 2001.

Load-Date: May 11, 2009

End of Document

Tehran is terrified: America is being friendly; Iran's hardline leadership has been knocked sideways by Barack Obama's conciliatory tone. But how will it affect the election?

The Times (London)

April 24, 2009 Friday

Edition 1

Copyright 2009 Times Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

THE TIMES

Section: NEWS; Pg. 28

Length: 1105 words

Byline: Richard Beeston

Body

In Tehran drivers dutifully wear their seatbelts but think nothing of racing through a red light.

Women must cover their faces and bodies under strict Islamic laws, but young women stretch the rules to reveal designer clothes, dyed hair, heavy make-up and prominently displayed bandages from recent cosmetic surgery.

The state-controlled media fill the papers and air waves with a solid diet of prayers, documentaries about the Iran-Iraq war and speeches from the country's leaders. In the privacy of their homes, most Tehranis watch illicit satellite television channels beaming Persian music videos from California and uncensored news bulletins or just read foreign websites.

The very same Iranian who would chant "Death to Britain" at the end of Friday prayers would also regard English football as his second religion. Steven Gerrard and Wayne Rooney are household names and the visa queue at the British Embassy stretches around the block. Iranians are hospitable to a fault. But the same generous host can just as easily lapse into paranoid conspiracy theories about how British spies run the country and the Jews rule the world.

Welcome to Iran, now marking 30 tumultuous years since the Islamic revolution and facing an identity crisis as it ponders middle age. True, the country is young and energetic and has a strong sense of its culture and heritage. It is also endowed with huge energy resources. But power still resides in the grey-haired clerics whose policies have provoked international sanctions and pariah status in the West. Many Iranians still struggle to find work and feed their families in the face of double-digit inflation.

As it battles between preserving the ideals of the revolution and navigating its way in a complicated modern world, one figure looms large. The late Ayatollah Khomeini, the father of the Islamic revolution, may have died 20 years ago but he still looks down on his people with a stern gaze from every office wall and billboard. His legacy continues to cast a powerful shadow.

Tehran is terrified: America is being friendly Iran 's hardline leadership has been knocked sideways by Barack Obama's conciliatory tone. But how will it affect....

Now two serious problems have converged at the same time to confront Iran with some difficult decisions. One is Barack Hussein Obama, the first US President who broke the mould of previous leaders of the "Great Satan" by proposing to end 30 years of hostility. His address to the Iranian people last month knocked the regime off balance. This is not what American presidents are meant to do.

The Iranian leadership is desperately looking for a way out.

One confided to me this week that the proposal was a "mask" that concealed a new plot against Iran.

The ailing Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, conceded that Mr Obama had reached out a "velvet glove" but warned his people that it concealed a hand of steel. Another aide told me he regretted the passing of George W. Bush who, he said wistfully, was at least "honest".

Anti-Americanism is a central pillar of Iranian revolutionary dogma. Iran has watched with alarm the handshake between Hugo Chávez and Mr Obama last week and the rapprochement with Cuba.

Removing America as the bloodthirsty foe would not only mean redecorating the walls of many Tehran buildings covered in anti-US propaganda but it would also remove a central tenet of Khomeini's ideology. If that went, what would be next? Would American culture again swamp the country as it did during the Shah's reign? Would the millions of Iranian expatriates in America flock back and turn Tehran into the Los Angeles of the Middle East? The other big challenge facing Iran is the nuclear programme. Its conventional military may be obsolete but it has invested heavily in long-range missiles and acquiring the technology and hardware to build an atomic bomb, some believe within the coming months. This sets Iran on a collision course with the West, the Arab world and Israel, which has repeatedly stated that it will prevent Iran building a nuclear weapon, by force if necessary.

Iran is an imperfect democracy.

Any candidates outside the mainstream of politics are banned..

Critical journalists and human rights workers are regularly arrested or intimidated. But every four years it still holds presidential elections that do express the will of most of the 46 million eligible voters.

On June 12 President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is expected to seek re-election that would give him another four-year mandate to pursue his hardline policies. At home this means strengthening the security apparatus that keeps the regime in place and cracking down on dissent.

Abroad it will mean greater support for militant Islamic groups such as **Hamas** and Hezbollah. He will again seek to challenge the West on the international stage, as he did with such effect in Geneva this week at the United Nations conference on racism, when his tirade against Israel led to 30 countries walking out of the event. Above all, it will mean that Iran will pursue its nuclear programme with renewed vigour and risk a new war in the Middle East.

Lined up against Mr Ahmadinejad are two reformist candidates, the strongest being Mir-Hossein Mousavi, a soft-spoken former Prime Minister, best known for his leadership during the Iran-Iraq war. Although called out of semi-retirement, Mr Mousavi appears to have brought together the fractious reformist groups. Certainly, his campaign headquarters appears well funded and well staffed by young Iranian volunteers. He told me this week that he would seek to improve relations abroad and change Iran's image, and that he hoped one day to shake the hand held out by Mr Obama.

Few Iranians are prepared to give up their nuclear programme, which was begun by the Shah, but there is a sense that a victorious reformist candidate could take the poison out of the dispute by co-operating with the international community and turning down the bellicose rhetoric.

Mr Ahmadinejad is on the record as denying that six million Jews died in the Holocaust. He has also called for Israel to be "removed from the pages of time" - a comment many regard as advocating wiping the Jewish state off the map Mr Mousavi's biggest problem is people like Mehsohrabi, a spiky-haired youth with nothing but contempt for

Tehran is terrified: America is being friendly Iran 's hardline leadership has been knocked sideways by Barack Obama's conciliatory tone. But how will it affect....

the entire political Establishment. Like almost half the electorate, he does not intend to vote, something Mr Ahmadinejad's well-organised hardline supporters are counting on to win.

But if the country's modern history is anything to go by, the teenager might do well to reconsider. Who leads Iran after the elections could decide which path the country will take, a move with great consequences not only for Iran and the region, but also the rest of the world.

Richard Beeston is foreign editor of The Times

Graphic

An Iranian woman walks past graffiti on the former US Embassy in Tehran

AP/VAHID SALEMI

Load-Date: April 24, 2009

End of Document

Israel still looks good, warts and all

The Australian

May 6, 2009 Wednesday

5 - Australian Literary Review Edition

Copyright 2009 Nationwide News Pty Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 12

Length: 4025 words

Byline: GREG SHERIDAN

Body

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The alliance between the Western Left and Islamic anger is perplexing

I HAVE my very own Israel problem and it is this: the Israel I know, which I have visited for weeks at a time, which I experience through its literature and media and the Israeli citizens I have met, bears no relation to the Israel I see in most of the Western media. That Israel seems almost to dominate Western intellectual life. It is commonly held that Israel lies at the heart of the widespread Muslim hostility to the West and much of the ideological conflict in the Middle East. But Israel must surely also lie at the heart of the West itself; it is so often the centrepiece of raging ideological debate, shrill mutual denunciation, ferocious polemic, emotional demonstrations, university activism and academic boycotts.

That Israel of the Western mind (and indeed of the Arab mind) is a hateful place: right-wing, militaristic, authoritarian, racist, ultra-religious, neo-colonial, narrow-minded, undemocratic, indifferent to world opinion, indifferent especially to Palestinian suffering.

Yet the Israel I know is mostly secular, raucously, almost wildly democratic, has a vibrant left wing, having founded in the kibbutz movement one of the only successful experiments in socialism in human history. It is intellectually disputatious; any two Israelis will have three opinions and be happy to argue them to a lamp post. It is multi-ethnic, there is a great stress on human solidarity, there is due process. And I've never heard an Israeli speak casually about the value of Palestinian life. I've heard Israelis voice a desire to neutralise Hezbollah or remove **Hamas** from leadership in Gaza, but I've never in any context heard an Israeli express the view that the value of a human life is determined by race.

The Israel I know is a Western democracy, often under siege, often making mistakes, sometimes moral mistakes. But I also see its institutions, its courts, its free press and vigorous academics challenging those mistakes and trying to correct them, sometimes exaggerating them in the process. I see a society striving for the good, sometimes doing the wrong thing, certainly not beyond criticism, but overall behaving as well as any comparably sized Western society would or could in all the circumstances.

How to explain this contradiction between the Israel I see and that other, evil Israel that dominates so much Western intellectual life?

Israel still looks good, warts and all

One reason Israel generates such passionate responses is because of the multiplicity of its identities and the variety of functions it fulfils in political debate. Each of these identities or roles is affected by all the others, but it's helpful to disentangle them conceptually.

First, Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. Turkey is a democracy but is not technically in the Middle East. Lebanon is no longer a full democracy, its politics dominated by armed militias and Syrian interference. Israel is the only society in the Middle East with all the institutions of a democracy: a media that reveals all its secrets, a free parliament, independent courts, independent universities and the rest. This earns it a lot of support, especially in the US, but it also means that Israelis generate much of the most damaging criticism of Israel.

This is a singular quality of Israel but it also discloses a singular quality of the Middle East. Is there another region in the world in which there is only one democracy? This fact alone demonstrates how utterly at odds with its own region Israel is, but also how very odd that region is. The Jewish people, as Walter Russell Mead has written, are an old people but the Israelis are a young people. And deeply imprinted on their DNA is the culture of democracy.

Israel is also the only Western nation in the Middle East (with the exception of substantial but minority parts of Lebanon). Israel is the only national expression of Western values, and indeed Western power, in today's Middle East. These terms can be confusing. The West aspires to universal values of democracy and human rights that can be as well observed in Japan, South Korea or India, nations with very different cultural traditions from the West. Nonetheless these values, while universal, define Western nations in their polities.

This leads to the third of Israel's distinctive roles. Second only to the US, Israel is the most acute object of the hostility to the West that flourishes in Western intellectual life. Official Iranian propaganda has described the US as the "Big Satan" and Israel as the "Little Satan". In the West, this is a view mostly found on the ideological Left but it has echoes more generally. Much of it is heir to traditional Marxism, which saw the structure of capitalist societies as inherently unjust and built on exploitation. This ideology was expanded to incorporate the international economy: Western nations are rich because they exploit poor nations. This is not the social democratic critique of neo-liberalism recently articulated by Kevin Rudd. It is instead the view that capitalist societies, and the international system, are of their essence irredeemably and intolerably unjust.

If you add to this inheritance the polemic of Noam Chomsky and his disciples against Western militarism, of Edward Said against Western scholarship and understanding of the Middle East and indeed of all formerly colonised peoples, and of the epistemological assault on traditional Western knowledge mounted by French critical theory from the 1960s onwards, you have a paradigm for understanding the West into which Israel fits all too neatly.

This paradigm can be reduced to four propositions: Western societies are inherently evil and unjust in their economic order; they are inherently racist both as successors to European colonialism and in their treatment of their own racial minorities; their knowledge is inherently false, they labour under false consciousness; and they maintain global hegemony through military and financial power.

It is easy to see where Israel fits in this analytical grid, and why it has a starring role. It is capitalist, Western, an ally of the US and uses military force when necessary to maintain its security. It rules, if temporarily, over an occupied Arab population and despite its own racial diversity is a mostly non-Arab population in a predominantly Arab region.

Of course a lot of people in the West are hostile to Israel without embracing this intellectual world view but the coherence and strength of some version of it in the most politically active minorities in the West -- academe, media, many church bureaucracies -- gives great added force to the generalised hostility to Israel.

But there is another factor, probably as important as these, and this is Israel's role as the homeland of the Jewish people. Israel's founders decided that it would be a Jewish state and a democracy, a home and a refuge for Jewish people, but which also gave full political, civic and human rights to all its citizens regardless of their religion or racial background.

When you come from a predominantly Western, immigrant society such as Australia or the US, you know some groups well but you know them only as minorities. When you visit their homelands, it is a strange experience; you

Israel still looks good, warts and all

see them no longer as minorities but as the setters of social, cultural, even religious norms. I had this experience when I first visited India, Vietnam and Israel. You see the minority as the majority and it's at first slightly disconcerting, then exhilarating.

Israel's role as the Jewish homeland, when Jewish civilisation was nearly wiped out by the Holocaust, gives it a special place in the estimation of those who love and admire Jewish culture. It is an inherent part of Israel's purpose and identity, which is little remarked in mainstream media because there is an understandable focus on covering the occupied Palestinian territories rather than the life inside Israel.

But it is the central reality for those motivated by anti-Semitism. And the evidence is strong that anti-Semitism is once more a growing force in the world. Anti-Semitism has a long, shameful and astoundingly resilient history in Western civilisation. You can make a case that Western anti-Semitism predates Christianity because of Jewish resistance to ancient Rome. In a sense, the world owes monotheism to the Jews.

But classical Western anti-Semitism begins with the view of the Jews as the people who rejected Jesus, and indeed were responsible for his death, thus being guilty of deicide.

This Christian hostility to Jews was not present among the first Christians but took some centuries to develop fully. Many of the finest Christian thinkers struggled to work out their religion's relationship to the Jews. Were the Jews at best the chosen people who rejected Christ? Were the Jews no longer the chosen people, with that mantle transferring to Christians who accepted Christ's incarnation as the messiah? The greatest of the early church fathers, St Augustine, in the fourth century titled one of his last works *Sermons Against the Jews*.

Through the Crusaders to the Spanish Inquisition and beyond, the persecution of Jews, to varying degrees of intensity, was a factor of Western life, culminating in Hitler's Final Solution. It was not until the Second Vatican Council that the Catholic Church issued its definitive instruction: "True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (cf John 19.6); still, what happened in his passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the holy scriptures."

That was a welcome statement by Vatican II but a culture cannot easily eradicate something as ingrained as Western anti-Semitism, even after the horror of the Holocaust and the clarity of modern church teaching.

What can be surprising to the modern consciousness is how pervasive anti-Semitism was in Western culture, and not very long ago. Recently I spent a summer holiday self-indulgently reading Victorian literature. I made my first direct acquaintance with the works of Charles Dickens. Consider this description of Fagin from *Oliver Twist*:

Standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old, shrivelled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair.

Dickens was a writer of genius and a man of prodigious moral and political imagination. Yet throughout *Oliver Twist* Fagin is almost always referred to as "the Jew" and presented as the embodiment of moral depravity and manipulation, whose only interest is money and whose chief activity is the corruption of the young.

I also read Maise Ward's biography of G. K. Chesterton, who straddled Victorian and later periods in English letters. Ward's biography is the only serious study of Chesterton to be written before the Holocaust. She airily admits and dismisses Chesterton's relatively mild anti-Semitism, unlike later sympathetic biographers who hide it or explain it away. Chesterton was a man suffused with decency and gentleness, and the greatest English proponent of the Catholic vision, yet he was also a kind of mildly anti-Semitic Zionist who believed Jews could not live well in a Christian kingdom such as England and therefore should all go and live in Palestine.

What has this to do with today?

Apart from the deicide charge, the most powerful elements of classical Western anti-Semitism were the contentions that Jews wielded vast and malign "money power", manipulated politics for their own benefit, corrupted, generally

Israel still looks good, warts and all

in some sexual way, the morals of Western societies, were disloyal to the nations they lived in and, later, were behind the rise of international communism.

This resulted in an operational double standard towards Jews. Any crime, and many harmless actions, by an individual Jew tended to be seen as part of a Jewish conspiracy. And Jews were held to standards no one else was held to.

There are clear echoes of this in modern attitudes to Israel. In 1975 the UN passed an infamous resolution equating Zionism with racism. More than 15 years later this was rescinded. Now, Israel is frequently called an apartheid state. The foundational basis of Israel is argued to be illegitimate.

But this, surely, is remarkable. Nobody declares Saudi Arabia an illegitimate state because it has no democracy or human rights, and its doctrinaire Wahhabi Sunni establishment rules over a marginalised Shia minority. Nobody declares Turkey an illegitimate state because it has a disgruntled Kurdish minority, some of whom certainly aspire to statehood. Even North Korea, the most extreme Stalinist gulag on earth, is constantly reassured that the West accepts not only the legitimacy of its state, but does not even seek regime change. Only the legitimacy of Israel is routinely questioned: a special standard for the Jewish state.

Similarly, a malign Zionist or Jewish influence in the media is frequently asserted, even though the Western media is full of criticism of Israel.

Increasingly, anti-Israel demonstrations in the West include direct references to Jews as well as to the state of Israel. Even in a peaceful society such as Australia, the Jewish community routinely has to take security precautions at religious, educational and social functions that no other religious community has to. In Jewish suburbs in London, the graffiti could not be more direct: "Kill the Jews". British novelist Howard Jacobson has written of how he now feels uncomfortable as a Jew in Britain. He has written of "the slow seepage of familiar, anti-Semitic calumnies into the conversation".

Every American Jew who supported the US intervention in Iraq was suspected, without evidence, of doing so because of consideration for Israel, thus reviving the old canard that Jews cannot be loyal citizens of the states they live in because of their over-arching loyalty to Israel.

Even where hostility is directed specifically at Israel rather than at Jews, when this hostility is extreme and beyond reason, it affects the social atmosphere for Jews. As Jacobson comments, there is "a deranged revulsion, intemperate and unconcealed, which nothing Israel itself has done could justify or explain were it 10 times the barbaric apartheid state it figures as in the English imagination".

However, even as classical anti-Semitism has had to make its reappearance in the West in mostly disguised form, it is raging without any disguise at all across the Arab world. The examples are limitless but let me offer just a few. The government-aligned Al-Gomhuria newspaper in Egypt published a cartoon of a serpent strangling Uncle Sam. The caption read: "The Jews taking over the world".

An Egyptian cleric, Ahmad Abd al-Salam, on Al-Nas TV, said: "I want you to imagine the Jews sitting around a table, conspiring how to corrupt the Muslims ... The Jews conspire how to infect the food of Muslims with cancer."

Also on Al-Nas TV, another Egyptian cleric, Safwat Higazi, revealed the wholly fictitious scoop that the female figure in the Starbucks logo was really Queen Esther of the Jews.

Throughout the Arab world, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a notorious tzarist forgery, figure in popular culture. The Iranian Government, famously, sponsors conferences in which the sole purpose is to deny that the Holocaust took place.

Throughout Gaza and the West Bank an extravagant anti-Semitism is a central part of the Palestinian discourse. Anyone who doubts this should Google the Hamas charter, where they will learn that even Rotary and Lions clubs are part of the worldwide Jewish conspiracy.

Israel still looks good, warts and all

One of the most telling examples of this Arab anti-Semitism is provided in Martin Indyk's brilliant new book, *Innocent Abroad* (Simon & Schuster, 494pp, \$49.95 hardback). Although focused predominantly on the '90s Middle

Continued Page 18

From Page 13

East peace process, when Bill Clinton was US president and Indyk one of his senior advisers, it is one of the best recent books on the modern Middle East, with a compelling narrative, shrewd insider accounts, engaging personal insights and a sense of the broad sweep of history.

But for the purposes of this analysis, a meeting Indyk describes in 1998 between Clinton and Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia is most instructive. This was at the height of the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Indyk writes:

Abdullah leaned across the table and explained to Clinton in a hushed voice that he had information that Monica Lewinsky was Jewish and part of a Mossad plot to bring the president down because of his efforts to help the Palestinians. He told the president that he intended to share this intelligence with senators he would meet after lunch in an effort to help forestall his impeachment.

This anecdote echoes one of a generation earlier told in Henry Kissinger's memoir, in which Kissinger holds a formal meeting with a Saudi ruler who tells him the world is beset by a global communist conspiracy, which is a mere part of the broader global Jewish conspiracy.

The Indyk and Kissinger anecdotes, each astonishing in its way, confirm the pervasiveness of Arab anti-Semitism and that it is not wholly a construct of Arab regimes for internal political purposes but is to some extent genuinely believed in Arab societies.

Nonetheless it would be wrong to underestimate the benefits that anti-Semitism can provide Arab regimes. Israel is the licensed grievance for these societies. By theologising the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, and presenting it as a case of Western and specifically Jewish persecution of an Arab minority, Arab regimes, even those allied with the US, can offer an outlet to anger on the street and attempt to channel both Islamist and pan-Arab sentiments in a direction that does not challenge their rule.

This exploitation of anti-Semitism fits a broader political narrative of the Arab world. A few years ago a committee of Arab intellectuals working under the auspices of the UN produced a devastating indictment of the Arab encounter with modernisation. Middle East scholar Bernard Lewis recounts and updates some of their most shocking findings in the March-April 2009 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Here are a few of the depressing highlights. In the previous quarter century, real per capita gross domestic product has fallen in the Arab world. Combined Arab GDP in 2000 was less than that of Spain. One-fifth the number of books are translated every year into Arabic as are translated into Greek in Greece. Between 1980 and 2000, Egypt registered 77 patents in the US, South Korea 16,328. And so on.

As a matter of mere logic, the presence of 5.5million Jews in Israel cannot be responsible for the economic and political development of hundreds of millions of Arabs. But the Arab mind is presented with a disagreeable conundrum. The Arab world possesses, in its view, the one true religion, the greatest culture and much of the world's oil, yet its societies are impoverished and dysfunctional. How can this be explained? In societies that do not allow searching criticism of ruling regimes, the answer has to come in the form of anti-Arab conspiracies, centred on the West generally, but more specifically on the US, Israel and the Jews.

This Arab anti-Semitism, popular and official, is incidentally a huge obstacle to peace. If Israel is not just a nation like any other but the most visible and offensive manifestation of a giant Western and Jewish conspiracy against Islam and the Arabs, then making peace with it is not honourable but despicable.

What is perplexing is the emerging strategic alliance between the Western Left and Islamist anger. This is evident especially in Western demonstrations where left-wing protesters carry banners saying things such as ``We are Hamas".

Israel still looks good, warts and all

But it is also to be observed in the general silence of the Western Left on human rights abuses throughout the Arab world and in Iran. One of the most arresting sights in Israel is the magnificent Bahai headquarters in Haifa. The Bahais have an equally beautiful temple in New Delhi. The Bahais fled to Israel and India, two states where minority religions are not subject to official persecution, because of the murderous repression they suffer in Iran. Yet the Western Left is infinitely more active about Israeli human rights abuses, real or alleged, than Iranian human rights abuses. Similarly, the more left-wing the Western feminist, the less will be said about the routine abuse of women's rights in much of the Arab world.

The strategic alliance of the Western Left and Islamist sentiment, on the basis that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, is evident at the UN. There, Arab and African majorities in league with the UN bureaucrat class constantly formulate condemnations of Israel's alleged human rights abuses while no resolution is moved regarding human rights in Iran or Saudi Arabia or China. Much criticism of Israel is genuinely concerned with Palestinian welfare and the injustices numerous Palestinians have suffered. It is the exaggeration of Israel's sins, some of them real enough, and the hysterical criticism and denunciation of Israel, that owes so much to meta-rational factors.

Similarly, the assumption that Israel does not seek peace and a just solution for the Palestinians is flawed. Again, Indyk is most instructive on this. He provides the crispest account so far of the 2000 Camp David peace conference and the offers that Israel's prime minister Ehud Barak, under Clinton's influence, made to Yasser Arafat. It is clear that Clinton and Barak offered Arafat a Palestinian state on more than 95 per cent of the West Bank and all of Gaza, as well as a territory transfer from Israel proper to make up for the less than 5 per cent of the West Bank that would be taken in the main Jewish settlements. The Palestinian state was to embrace all the Palestinian suburbs of East Jerusalem and even have a form of sovereignty over the Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem.

It may be a long time before Israel feels enough confidence in a Palestinian interlocutor to make such an offer again, as such a settlement would involve grave risks to Israeli security.

Whatever the reasons for Arafat's blanket rejection, the offer flatly rebuts the idea of Israel as determined never to make peace. Since 1977 Israel has given up territory equivalent to three times its size in exchange for peace with various neighbours. This was land acquired in defensive wars that made a contribution to Israeli security. Israel may be guilty of many things but a refusal to compromise is not one of them.

There are also several positive identities that Israel projects. Israel's successful economy, built from nothing, ought to be an inspiration to the rest of the Middle East. Israel is also a front-line state in the conflict with terrorism. Israeli policymakers are forced to confront and think through the political and moral dilemmas all democratic states face in the age of terror. Israel's agonising internal debates are of interest to all democracies. Israel does not have the option of not taking terrorism seriously, yet its diverse and feisty people are determined to remain democratic. Beyond security, its multicultural and multiracial peoples, and the compromises they need to make to forge a common nation, are relevant to a society such as Australia.

Both the intense hatred and in other circles the affection that Israel inspires have little to do with the actions any Israeli government could reasonably take. It is rather Israel's multiple identities, going to the heart of Western history and contemporary Arab politics, the hostility among intellectuals to Western society, the inheritance of anti-Semitism and the search for scapegoats for the Arab world's troubled encounter with modernity, that ensure that the Israel of the mind will remain at the forefront of international concerns.

Comment on ALR stories at www.theaustralian.news.com.au/thearts/alr

Load-Date: May 5, 2009

Let's not die for; timid and misguided political correctness

The Sunday Telegraph (London)

April 12, 2009

Copyright 2009 Telegraph Media Group Limited All Rights Reserved

The Sunday Telegraph

Section: FEATURES; Comment; Pg. 21

Length: 1225 words

Byline: DOUGLAS MURRAY

Body

The fact that the latest suspected terrorist threat involves students should come as no surprise. It is the predictable result of three things: an insatiably violent Islamist ideology; the politically-correct refusal of our political class to admit reality; and the comprehensive neglectfulness of our university authorities. This country has already produced a number of students who have gone on to become jihadist murderers. If this situation is not to get even worse, it is time not just to start asking questions, but to demand answers.

Greedy for the extra cash they bring, our universities desperately seek overseas students and often ask no questions when some of them fail to appear for classes. Following the introduction of tougher visa rules in the United States, the number of visas issued to students from Pakistan since 2001 has more than doubled in the UK. The problems that this brings with it are now being displayed.

In 2007, at Portsmouth University alone, 379 students from Pakistan were unaccounted for. Immigration minister Phil Woolas recently admitted that the student visa system is "the major loophole in Britain's border controls". It is a loophole that risks becoming a death-trap. Yet those like me who have repeatedly warned about the consequences of our appalling immigration policy and flawed border security policies, and the fact that our universities have become centres of Islamic radicalisation, have been ignored - even as we have been, sadly, vindicated.

Last summer, the Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC), in conjunction with the polling company YouGov, released a survey of Muslim student opinion in the UK. Forty per cent of Muslim students polled supported the introduction of sharia into British law for Muslims; a third supported the introduction of a worldwide caliphate instituted in accordance with sharia; and a third believed that killing in the name of their religion could be justified. This is the sea in which Muslim students who go on to carry out acts of terror are able to swim. But instead of engaging with the problem, Bill Rammell, the Minister for Higher Education, attacked the poll for finding out these things and declared that the problem of radicalism on campus was in fact "serious, but not widespread". It is just one example of a government that cannot make the moral distinction between firefighter and fire.

In its recently published counter-terrorism strategy, "Contest 2", the Government congratulated itself on its "key achievement" of promoting the UK as "a centre of excellence for Islamic studies outside the Muslim world". Yet - as

Let's not die for timid and misguided political correctness

the CSC again warned, two weeks ago, in a publication on the sources of foreign funding to UK universities - such courses are at huge risk of being sponsored by exactly the type of people who have caused the problem.

The Iranian government recently revealed that it was in talks with British Islamic studies departments - the same ones that the Government has described as a vital component of its counter-terrorism policy - in order to "train and educate experts on Islam". So now the Iranian regime, the world's largest sponsor of Islamic terror, is funding the very institutions the UK Government says are part of the means of stopping that terror.

Meanwhile, there is a situation on campus which not only radicalises British students, but says to Pakistani and other foreign students that the most backward ideas of their own societies - in relation to women, non-Muslims, homosexuals and others - are entirely acceptable in Britain.

And so figures like the Hamas spokesman Azzam Tamimi repeatedly appear on UK campuses. Last month, after weeks of effort, we finally managed to prevent Hizbollah spokesman Ibrahim el-Moussawi from entering the UK to lecture at the School of Oriental and African Studies. He was only eventually barred when I threatened the Home Secretary with the issuing of an international arrest warrant if Moussawi were to enter the country.

Last month, Bilal Philips, barred from entering Australia because of security concerns, was scheduled as guest of honour at the Queen Mary University Islamic Society's (ISOC) annual dinner. The annual dinner of City University's ISOC last week had advertised guest speakers including Anwar al-Awlaki, the alleged spiritual leader of three of the 9/11 hijackers.

During the Gaza conflict, Islamic and far-Left student societies up and down the country held "sit-ins" to protest against Israel's defensive action. During a tense period some universities - including Cambridge - stood up to the protesters. Others - including Oxford - caved in and gave into the demands of the "occupying" students. Such small acts of appeasement on behalf of university authorities give the radicals the idea that right is on their side and that, given time, everyone will see this.

Muslim students who don't care about foreign conflicts are made to feel un-Islamic unless they endlessly whip themselves up into a fury against Israel and America. At the time that the Gaza demonstrations were going on up and down the country, I was due to fulfil a longstanding commitment to chair a discussion at the London School of Economics. Shortly before the event, I was contacted by the university and told not to come to campus because there was a threat of violence if I did.

Just as, internationally, the Islamists give us the offer "say my religion is peaceful or I will kill you", so domestically we are told "say there's no radicalism or we'll be radical".

Like the Government, the Conservative Party refuses to identify - let alone deal with - the problem. Our politicians are stuck in what some think is complacency but which is in reality simple cowardice. David Cameron and shadow security spokeswoman Dame Pauline Neville-Jones try to make the Tories appear tough by saying a Conservative government would ban the extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir. But Tony Blair said exactly the same thing in 2005. Our politicians are keener to position themselves than to take vital decisions.

The Government knows that three quarters of all terror plots being investigated in Britain originate in Pakistan. With such a colossal Pakistani community in the UK it is unsurprisingly tough working out who poses a problem and who is part of the non-extremist mainstream. They could make a start by working out who is actually here.

In February, it transpired that the Foreign Office is spending pounds 400,000 on television adverts to be aired in Pakistan, explaining that Britain is not "anti-Islamic". Even by the standards of this Government, that strikes one as ignoble as well as ineffectual. This country should look like a less attractive proposition than it currently does, not a more attractive one.

As it is, any aspiring jihadi would not only currently find it easy to come to Britain, they would find in our universities the ideal place to take cover and, indeed, inspiration. It is why you are more likely to become a terrorist in this country if you have been to university.

Let's not die for timid and misguided political correctness

There are many messages that we should be giving out. But one in particular should go straight away to our political class: political correctness may be something that they are willing to fight for, but it is not something that most of us are willing to die for.

Douglas Murray is director of the Centre for Social Cohesio

Load-Date: April 12, 2009

End of Document

The Downside of Letting Robots Do the Bombing

The New York Times

March 22, 2009 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

Section: Section WK; Column 0; Week in Review Desk; Pg. 4

Length: 1171 words

Byline: By MARK MAZZETTI

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

-- In the mountains of northwest Pakistan, the psychological impact of America's drone strikes can be measured by this: Some locals have given up drinking Lipton tea, out of a growing conviction that the Central Intelligence Agency is using the tea bags as homing beacons for its pilotless planes.

But in Pakistan's cities there is a different impact: a sense that the gizmos, created to instill fear in America's enemies, only reveal the fears of Americans to take casualties themselves. There, a song of protest taunts the world's most powerful country for sending robots to do a man's job:

America's heartless terrorism Killing people like insects But honor doesn't fear power.

Even as the C.I.A. crosses names off its list of Al Qaeda leaders with each successful strike in Pakistan, Washington is struggling to understand the long-term implications of a push-button conflict. One question is whether the robot wars are only a holding action in a far more complex political and ideological war, against an enemy whose resilience America still doesn't fully understand.

President Obama and his advisers acknowledge that it will take years, and billions of dollars, before Afghanistan's own army and police can secure that country's hinterlands from the now-resurgent militants of both the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Meanwhile, the militants are likely to remain part of the fabric of Pashtun culture in the tribal lands on both sides of the mountainous border, where the governments of both Afghanistan and Pakistan have proved unable to exert control.

Given this complexity, the drone strikes are a seductive tool. They have delivered body blows to Al Qaeda's leadership in the tribal areas of northern Pakistan without risking a single American soldier on the ground. And last week, Mr. Obama was reported to be considering widening their use to include killing Taliban leaders who direct insurgents in Afghanistan from other sanctuaries, near Quetta, in southwestern Pakistan.

Leon E. Panetta, the C.I.A. director, recently called the spy agency's campaign in Pakistan the "most effective weapon" available to the Obama administration to take on militants there -- a finely tuned bit of praise, given the Pakistani government's past denunciations of forays by American ground troops onto Pakistani soil.

The Downside of Letting Robots Do the Bombing

The drone campaign is, at the same time, the antithesis of the grinding, patient and high-risk counterinsurgency doctrine currently in vogue at the Pentagon. Following the pattern of Iraq, that doctrine's proponents want to persuade at least some tribal groups to work with the Americans, as well as with the Afghan and Pakistani governments, rather than the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

But in Pakistan, some C.I.A. veterans of the tribal battles worry that instead of separating the citizenry from the militants the drone strikes may be uniting them. These experts say they fear that killing militants from the sky won't undermine, and may promote, the psychology of anti-American militancy that is metastasizing in the country.

"Unless we come up with a coherent Pakistan policy, then nothing works," said Milton Bearden, who as C.I.A. station chief in Islamabad once led the agency's campaign to arm Afghan mujahedeen against the Soviet Union. (It was Mr. Bearden who learned, from an executive at Lipton's parent company, Unilever, that Lipton tea wasn't selling well in some parts of Pakistan, and why.)

Over the last six months, C.I.A. operatives wielding joysticks have launched more than three dozen strikes by Predator and more heavily-armed Reaper drones. Missiles fired from them have hit militants gathering in mountain redoubts, and they have hit truck convoys ferrying ammunition across the border into Afghanistan.

Some agency veterans draw comparisons to the Israeli policy of "targeted killings" of Hamas leaders -- killings that claimed scores of the group's top operatives in the Palestinian territories, but didn't keep new recruits from attacking Israel.

Intelligence officials in Washington and Islamabad said it was nearly impossible to measure the impact of the strikes on the so-called "war of ideas." Even when precise, the drone strikes often kill women and children in militant compounds. When that happens, local Pashtun customs of "badal" obligate their survivors to seek revenge.

And then there is the matter of bravery. For his new book about the rise of robot warfare, "Wired for War," P. W. Singer interviewed insurgents in the Muslim world who said that America's reliance on drone weapons is a sign that the United States is afraid to sacrifice troops in combat.

This ought to be a particular concern now, Mr. Singer said, as the United States struggles to build alliances in Pakistan and Afghanistan. There, he said, trust is built by displays of personal bravery.

"If courage is the coin of the realm, then courage is what proves to the local Pashtun tribes that you are their allies," he said. He cited the protest song, which he came across while researching his book.

The United States learned hard lessons in Iraq about the limits of technology. The march to Baghdad made good on the Bush administration's promises of a swift victory over Iraq's army. But after the Iraqi troop columns melted into the landscape, the war turned nasty, brutish and long.

Now, there seems to be no chance that President Obama will order an invasion of western Pakistan, and some experts see the drone strikes as only the best of many bad options.

Seth Jones, an analyst at the RAND Corporation and author of a forthcoming book about Afghanistan, "In the Graveyard of Empires," acknowledges a possibility that expanded missile strikes, aimed at Taliban leaders across the border in western Pakistan, could affect the fight in Afghanistan. They may demoralize Taliban foot soldiers there and weaken them in the eyes of fence-sitting Afghans who are waiting to see which side will win. If those Afghans come to think the Taliban can no longer return to Kabul, the foot soldiers might even be driven to the negotiating table, he said.

But Pakistan is different, Mr. Jones said. In the northwest, where Al Qaeda's leaders are now based, he sees little hope that the drones alone can address the core problem, which he says is a militancy already strong among local residents. So continued strikes there, he said, may mean only more trouble and instability for Pakistan.

"You don't clear territory, you don't hold territory, and you don't undermine Al Qaeda's support base with Predator strikes alone," he said.

The Downside of Letting Robots Do the Bombing

Members of Mr. Obama's team, like their predecessors in the Bush administration, say they know this. It's just that everyone is struggling to come up with a better plan for Pakistan's tribal lands.

Dennis C. Blair, the director of national intelligence, summed it up in recent testimony to the Senate, with more than a hint of frustration in his voice: "No one I've talked to has come up with a grand strategy for that area."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: ANGER: Drone attacks in northwest Pakistan were one grievance for protesters in Karachi last month, at a demonstration called by the Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami. (PHOTOGRAPH BY REUTERS)

UNMANNED: A Predator B drone. (PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN STENNES/THE HERALD, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Load-Date: March 22, 2009

End of Document

Accounts of Gaza Killings Raise Furor in Israel

The New York Times

March 20, 2009 Friday

Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1112 words

Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

In the two months since Israel ended its military assault on Gaza, Palestinians and international rights groups have accused it of excessive force and wanton killing in that operation, but the Israeli military has said it followed high ethical standards and took great care to avoid civilian casualties.

Now testimony is emerging from within the ranks of soldiers and officers alleging a permissive attitude toward the killing of civilians and reckless destruction of property that is sure to inflame the domestic and international debate about the army's conduct in Gaza. On Thursday, the military's chief advocate general ordered an investigation into a soldier's account of a sniper killing a woman and her two children who walked too close to a designated no-go area by mistake, and another account of a sharpshooter who killed an elderly woman who came within 100 yards of a commandeered house.

When asked why that elderly woman was killed, a squad commander was quoted as saying: "What's great about Gaza -- you see a person on a path, he doesn't have to be armed, you can simply shoot him. In our case it was an old woman on whom I did not see any weapon when I looked. The order was to take down the person, this woman, the minute you see her. There are always warnings, there is always the saying, 'Maybe he's a terrorist.' What I felt was, there was a lot of thirst for blood."

The testimonies by soldiers, leaked to the newspapers Maariv and Haaretz, appeared in a journal published by a military preparatory course at the Oranim Academic College in the northern town of Tivon. The newspapers promised to release more such anecdotal accounts on Friday, without saying how many.

The academy's director, Dany Zamir, told Israel Radio, "Those were very harsh testimonies about unjustified shooting of civilians and destruction of property that conveyed an atmosphere in which one feels entitled to use unrestricted force against Palestinians."

The revelations caused an immediate uproar here, with some soldiers and reservists saying they did not recognize the stories being told as accurate.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak told Israel Radio that he believed such incidents to be exceptions, adding, "The Israeli Army is the most moral in the world, and I know what I'm talking about because I know what took place in the former Yugoslavia, in Iraq."

Accounts of Gaza Killings Raise Furor in Israel

It was clear that Mr. Zamir felt that his concerns, which he had raised earlier in a letter to the military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, had not been taken seriously and that was why he published the testimonies.

Since the war ended, others have raised similar questions, generating a heated debate within military circles.

"According to the code, a soldier has to do his utmost to avoid civilian casualties and that involves taking some risk," said Moshe Halbertal, a Jewish philosophy professor at Hebrew University who, along with three others, rewrote the military ethics code eight years ago. "That is the question we have to struggle with. From the testimonies of these soldiers, it sounds like they didn't practice this norm."

Amir Marmor, a 33-year-old history graduate student in Jerusalem and a military reservist, said in an interview with The New York Times that he was stunned to discover the way civilian casualties were discussed in training discussions before his tank unit entered Gaza in January. "Shoot and don't worry about the consequences," was the message from the top commanders, he said. Speaking of a lieutenant colonel who briefed the troops, Mr. Marmor said, "His whole demeanor was extremely gung ho. This is very, very different from my usual experience. I have been doing reserve duty for 12 years, and it was always an issue how to avoid causing civilian injuries. He said in this operation we are not taking any chances. Morality aside, we have to do our job. We will cry about it later."

Some 1,300 people were killed in the Gaza war, but how many of them were combatants remains a matter of controversy. Israel lost about 10 soldiers in Gaza, some because of fire by its own forces.

The Gaza-based Palestinian Center for Human Rights, which has documented the Gaza deaths, says that about two-thirds of the 1,300 were civilians, among them 121 women and 288 children, which it defines as anyone 18 and younger.

But the Institute for Counter-Terrorism in Israel said Thursday that it had analyzed the Palestinian center's names and found that some that it listed as civilians were identified as combatants on Hamas-related Web sites. Some listed as children were 17-year-olds with guns, it said, adding that more than 500 of those described by the center as civilians it considered "unknowns" because most were men of combat age whose activities could not be easily traced.

It argued that the proportion of women and children among the dead was relatively low, showing that Israel had not killed in an indiscriminate fashion.

Gur Rosenblat, a company commander during the Gaza operation, said in an interview: "To say that people were killed without justification -- the opposite was true. We put soldiers at risk to prevent harming their civilians."

Israeli experts noted that Palestinian women had served as suicide bombers in the past so that soldiers in Gaza did not always know when a woman was approaching whether she was a threat.

One of the soldiers' testimonies involved the killing of a family. The soldier said: "We had taken over the house, and the family was released and told to go right. A mother and two children got confused and went left. The sniper on the roof wasn't told that this was O.K. and that he shouldn't shoot. You can say he just did what he was told."

Much of what happened in Gaza, some military experts said, was in reaction to the way events unfolded in the second Lebanon war in 2006 when Hezbollah caused many Israeli casualties.

In that war, when Israeli soldiers took over a house, they sometimes found themselves shot at from a house next door. The result was that in Gaza, many houses next to those commandeered by troops were destroyed to avoid that risk.

Still, Israeli ethicists say they are troubled by what they have heard.

"Unfortunately, I think that selective use of killing civilians has been very much on the agenda for fighting terror," said Yaron Ezrahi, a political scientist at Hebrew University who has been lecturing at defense colleges. "The army

Accounts of Gaza Killings Raise Furor in Israel

believes that a weak spot of Israeli deterrence is its strong commitment not to kill civilians, and there has grown the sense that it might have to temporarily overcome that weakness in order to restore deterrence."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO: An elementary school in the Gaza strip that was heavily damaged during the Israeli bombardment that ended two months ago.(PHOTOGRAPH BY TYLER HICKS/THE NEW YORK TIMES)(pg. A9)

Load-Date: March 20, 2009

End of Document

Working hard to deserve better

The Jerusalem Post
March 1, 2009 Sunday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1061 words

Byline: Liat Collins

Highlight: Is it the political system or the political culture that needs reforming? First published in the International Edition of February 27, 2009.

Body

In a performance in Israel a decade ago, comedian Sandra Bernhard summed up the Israel-Arab conflict with the conclusion: "You two peoples deserve each other." It was a typical Bernhardism. She's so pithy, she can't help but pith people off.

If I recall correctly it was also Bernhard who said: "I've been with men and I've been with women. They deserve each other." If it wasn't her, it should have been. It suits her witty, worldly philosophical style.

Ahead of her scheduled performance this week (it couldn't have been so bad last time) she told The Jerusalem Post's David Brinn of her infamous Sarah Palin gang-rape quote: "Women deserve better."

The "deserve each other" style jibe readily adapts itself to a wide range of topics: Fatah and Hamas? They deserve each other. The boss and the income tax man? They deserve each other. Reality TV and television viewers? They deserve each other.

Tzipi Livni and Bibi Netanyahu? Well, you get the point.

The problem is, of course, that the sound-bite school of life is itself part of the problem: People who believe in sound bites also get what they deserve.

While the coalition talks between Kadima and Likud were characterized more by the "stale" than the "mate," there was much discussion of the need for widesweeping political reform.

One slogan that quickly proved its meaninglessness was Livni's "Politika aheret" - "a different type of politics." Or maybe it could mean anything and nothing at the same time in the "deserve it" style.

IT OCCURS to me that it is not necessary to overhaul the whole political system. Long before the Livni and Netanyahu show(down), we had the Ehud Barak vs Netanyahu face-off in direct elections. As a result, a newly elected Livni in 1999 told me: "Both major parties came crashing down, and the reason is the Direct Election Law."

Perhaps it is not the system that needs changing but the political culture?

After all, it is the nature of democracy to let the people have their say and then say "no" to the wishes of a large proportion of them. Changing the system without making an effort to change our fundamental approach and

Working hard to deserve better

demand accountability will not get rid of the wheeling and dealing. It will just move the coalition bargaining to before the elections instead of afterwards.

One obvious change mentioned by almost all those in favor of electoral reform is to raise the threshold so that more votes are required for a party to acquire its Knesset seats.

But what if the public simply gave out the clear message that the small parties were making a lot of noise and creating a disturbance? A party combining Holocaust survivors with the lobby to legalize marijuana sounds more like a tasteless joke in a stand-up comedy than something that could be considered a serious contender for a seat in the House.

Having more than one Green party was also detrimental to the cause, especially as they identified more with the Left. What is a Right-thinking environmentalist to do? And, at the risk of offending both Left and Right Greens, it could be asked whether there needs to be an environmental party in the Knesset at all, or whether it wouldn't be more productive to identify sympathetic MKs across the board and lobby via NGOs, not bound by coalition agreements and the need to toe a party line.

It is rather ironic to have a party (Israelim) dedicated to pushing for electoral reforms which could not realistically have expected to have passed the threshold and did not seem to have a comprehensive stand on other (minor?) issues like the Iranian nuclear threat, the security situation posed by missiles from both the North and South, and the economic crisis.

IN THE five years I covered the Knesset as the Post's parliamentary reporter, no matter who was in the Speaker's chair, I don't remember the start of a winter sitting without the warning that "it's going to be stormy" or a summer sitting without the prediction "it will be hot."

Part of the problem could be fixed were the opposition to feel it has a real role to play in the House.

At the moment, there is a conflict of interests: Labor needs to stay in opposition as long as possible to rehabilitate itself; Kadima - assuming it does move to the opposition benches - needs to try to bring down the government as soon as possible, before Livni's standing disappears, some of its frustrated members return to the Likud and power, and before Labor, with the more attractive list, succeeds in gaining strength. There is no real incentive, then, for stability or a different type of politics.

Politicians by their very natures need a large ego. One method of bringing a dose of stability to the Knesset would be to establish a shadow government. Very few MKs in the past made the successful transition from power to the back benches. One of the few who come to mind is former finance minister Avraham Shochat (Labor) who after losing his cabinet post continued to work hard as a "simple" MK, in effect monitoring what was happening in his particular area of expertise. It is understandably hard for someone who has been addressed as "Minister" to return to being a humbled MK. Instead of using the time to write memoirs of what has been, these parliamentarians should start doing what it was they were elected to do: listen to the people and draw up legislation.

Admittedly, it is not going to be easy for them to be literally shadows of their former selves. But it would provide them with a sense of purpose and - most importantly, unfortunately, in today's political reality - a platform from which to keep their names in the public eye via the media.

Newly elected MKs, too, should find their niche and stick to a special field of interest. There is no lack of social-economic issues that need tackling.

The public also has a role: Instead of asking how to bring down each government the moment it is elected, people need to ask themselves the price of these constant changes. Hint: Ask those Green supporters about the country's environmental infrastructure in times of a water and energy crisis.

When ministers know they have probably got only two years in office, they are not going to plan very far ahead. They're tempted to cut as many corners and red ribbons as possible.

Working hard to deserve better

Keep in mind what George Bernard Shaw with his lasting wit once said: "Democracy is a device that ensures we shall be governed no better than we deserve."

Graphic

Photo: President Shimon Peres leads a toast to the new Knesset on February 24. MKs and the public need to work on a different type of relationship. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Letters

The Jerusalem Post
March 10, 2009 Tuesday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1126 words

Byline: Michael Goldberg, Stuart Pilichowski, Anders Svensson, Michael Levine, Aharon Levy, Paul W. Buchanan, Norman N. Gross, Trudy Gefen, Linda Silverstone

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Drive deprived

Sir, - I made aliya in August '07. I had been driving previously in New York City for 45 years with an excellent record. It took me 10 months, four driving tests and about NIS 3,000 to finally get my Israeli license. I was devastated by the whole ordeal since none of the test failures was justified - and am thrilled to see that this issue is being brought to the public's attention.

Many years of driving experience should negate an oleh's need to go through this horrific experience ("Driving us mad," Eric Scheier, March 9).

MICHAEL GOLDBERG

Beit Shemesh

Sir, - I'm sure everyone agrees that the wheels of our bureaucracy could stand some additional greasing. Eric Scheier's essay left me wondering what it's like for, say, an Israeli to try and obtain a New Jersey driver's license.

But is Dr. Scheier really upset that a medical problem invites a delay in the licensing procedure?

I hope his foray into creative writing proved therapeutic. On a practical level, getting involved in politics and effecting actual change might be a better plan.

STUART PILICHOWSKI

Mevasseret Zion

Pro-Israel in Malmo

Sir, - Re "Sweden's anti-Israel apartheid policy is about more than sport" (Abraham Cooper and Harold Brackman, March 9): I want you to know that the tennis protesters were a minority in Malmo. There is also strong Israeli support in the city.

Letters

There were some pro-Israel posters around in Malmo, saying Slapp biljetterna nu - "Put the tickets on sale." But it's the loud and aggressive Left that gets the media attention.

ANDERS SVENSSON

Malmo, Sweden

Intelligent, admirable

Sir, - Herb Keiron's extremely intelligent "The significance of going to Damascus" (March 5) represents the intelligent viewpoint on what the Obama administration is doing. It was a fresh change of pace from the neo-con garbage on the talkbacks.

Nearly all the readers seem to view all Obama's foreign policy moves as weakness and surrender. They are still living in the age of WWII, where America ruled all. No longer are the battles fought in that manner: a dozen or so men were able to change the lives of every American in 9/11, and no military could've stopped it. It's time to reenter the globalized world and start reopening lines of communication.

What the Obama administration did on the Durban conference was phenomenal. "Let's hear what they have to say" instead of the closed-minded Bush years, "and if it doesn't sound right, we leave, but at least we are seen as willing to hear their side."

When the US truly shows it is ready to be a world power again, it will regain support from other powerful nations. Unfortunately, though, we are constantly looked at as stupid aggressors. It's time for the US to show it's back, regain international support, and drop the hammer when necessary (like Iran).

Liberal foreign policy is not weak, it's smart. It's about using diplomacy when you can, but not being afraid to use force.

Thank you for instilling some logic into the readership.

MICHAEL LEVINE

Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

How fair and how balanced are you?

Sir, - It is quite true that Israel is often singled out and hyper-criticized in Britain's newspapers, and the examples given in David Horowitz's "Bats, balls, bullets and guns" (March 6) are good cases in point. But I'm afraid the interpretation itself is skewed.

For while terror is cruel wherever it is, it is not identical, as this column would have us believe. Pakistan is not occupying and colonializing any nation at the moment, like Israel, and hasn't been doing so for the past four decades.

So while Hamas is an extremist, Islamist, murderous group, it cannot be compared to the nihilistic brutality of the terrorists in Pakistan, who haven't even got the pretext of killing in the name of "a battle for national liberation."

And besides, is this call for balance not a bit rich coming from The Jerusalem Post, which virtually never utters a word of criticism against Israel's policy in the territories, whose line is so patently one-sided (as evinced by its editorials), and whose closest attempt in this column to acknowledging our wrongdoing is calling it "Israel's choices and challenges as regards territorial compromise?"

I will continue reading this newspaper as my longtime breakfast treat, but I do say - please remember your own duty to remain fair and balanced before pouncing on the The Independent and the Guardian and their like!

AHARON LEVY

Letters

Tel Aviv

Sir, - I read The Jerusalem Post on-line daily to keep informed about what is happening in the Middle East. The Post always tells it like it is. It is more reliable than any US news outlet.

I see Israel more and more standing alone in the world. And now you are about to see even the US begin to start turning away from you, even though thousands of Americans still believe in Israel.

Remember, though, that it is better to have God on your side than 1,000 countries.

PAUL W. BUCHANAN

Harrisburg, North Carolina

Speaking up's the thing

Sir, - Our organization, Promoting Responsibility in Middle East Reporting, urges all supporters of Israel and the Jewish people to adopt the mantra "Silence is NOT Golden." We must respond vigorously to all biased, one-dimensional, inaccurate and incomplete media coverage regarding Israel and the Jewish people.

NORMAN N. GROSS

President, PRIMER

Palm Harbor, Florida

He ain't the tarnisher

Sir, - May I point out to Tova Landau ("The tarnish spreads," Letters, March 8) that the stain on the offices of the president and prime minister was caused by former president Moshe Katsav and soon-to-be-former prime minister Ehud Olmert, and not by Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz.

True, Mazuz can be admonished for procrastination, but the blame for these figures' despicable behavior can hardly be laid on him. Let's hope both these cases, finally, come up quickly for trial so that if guilt is determined, justice will be done and seen to be done.

TRUDY GEFEN

Kiryat Ono

Forgettable show

Sir, - I am indebted to Nadia Beidas for "Unlock the subconscious" (Billboard, March 6-12) explaining Philippe Genty's Bolilloc. Had I read it before I saw the show, I and my friends might not have walked out halfway through.

Surely we cannot be the only people who didn't comprehend the reasoning behind the "acts" and found the content childish and boring? No, two other women walked out with us, muttering. Perhaps those who stayed in their seats did so in the hope that things would improve.

The Herzliya Performing Arts auditorium was filled to capacity with people who had paid an extortionate price for an evening of "magic, surprise, illusion and unforgettably enchanting scenes set to wonderful music."

Granted, the illusions were clever - but if this is French humor, it's not for me. But then, I'm British!

LINDA SILVERSTONE, Herzliya Pituah

Graphic

Photo (Credit: Anders Svensson)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Letters

The Jerusalem Post
March 1, 2009 Sunday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1178 words

Byline: Albert Jacob, Ester Zeitlin, David Katcoff, Bernice Dubois, Malka Marcovich, Gerry Mandell, Stanley Lawson, Fred Casden, Haran Fainstein

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Peculiar medicine

Sir, - "British Medical Journal" complains of 'obscene' attacks by pro-Israel lobby in e-mail campaigns" (February 25) referred to the now-defunct World Medicine, which I used to receive regularly.

We did not have to pay for the journal. When this is the case, the publication is usually a vehicle for drug advertisement. It was an amusing rather than informative magazine.

I took strong exception to the article attacking Menachem Begin when it appeared, and wrote a rebuttal and sent it to the editor, Michael O'Donnell, who predictably ignored it. I was acting as an individual and would regard any assertion that I was acting on behalf of an organization or lobby group as libelous.

I suggest that the demise of the journal was because of cost-cutting by the firms who advertised, and consider the accusation that a pro-Israel campaign "led to the dismissal of Michael O'Donnell as editor and closure of the magazine" to be a more sophisticated version of "the Jews control everything" conspiracy theory.

I have complained to the British Medical Journal in the past concerning its inclusion of political articles and advised the editors to confine their material to medical matters, which would free more pages for medical articles it rejects for lack of space. This is important since much of the anti-Israel material is not evidence-based.

In conformity with current practice, I submitted an article for its Personal View column, in response to anti- Israel material - but the journal could not find room for it!

Finally, the subject of free speech. If, in the UK, one raises the possibility that an anti-Israel commentator might just be a teensy-weensy little bit anti-Semitic, one is likely to face an action for libel. Is that not an interference with free speech?

ALBERT JACOB

Beersheba

Icon of tolerance

Letters

Sir, - "Provoking anti-Semitism" (February 26), in which Larry Derfner labels one of our new leaders a fascist, proves we in Israel value free speech. But a fascist is a dictator with complete power to suppress opposition and criticism.

This op-ed omits manifold facts about Gaza's violent transformation from a self-supporting agricultural export community into a terrorist attack base - yet may Mr. Derfner long serve as a useful example of our tolerance.

ESTER ZEITLIN

Jerusalem

Problems - where?

Sir, - Rafael Medoff criticizes Roger Cohen's New York Times op-ed piece for its pollyannaish view of Iran's Jewish minority ("Don't turn Iran's Jews into a political football," February 26).

Cohen appears to be following in the footsteps of former New York Times Moscow bureau chief Walter Duranty, who denied the existence of a famine in the Ukraine in the 1930s and took Stalin's show trials at face value. Duranty won a Pulitzer Prize for telling people what they wanted to believe, rather than the unpleasant truth.

DAVID KATCOFF

Jericho, Vermont

Shouting 'red lines'

to sleeping consciences

Sir, - In his reply to Caroline Glick's "Obama's Durban Gambit" ("Assessing Durban," Letters, February 24) David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, claims to have played a central role by having "publicly praised France and the Netherlands, among other countries, for insisting on clear red lines and threatening to withdraw if they are breached."

Unfortunately, it is quite true that the AJC has been publicly visible on numerous occasions in the context of various European structures, governmental and others, in connection with Durban II. The AJC has repeatedly supported the participation of European governments in the Durban review process.

This infiltration of the AJC in Europe has had negative effects on individuals and organizations in Europe who have attempted to condemn the capitulation of their own governments throughout the Durban process and the spectacle of European governments seeking consensus at any price, however costly for our democracies.

Well before President Obama's election, the moral support of a large organization such as the AJC gave European governments the cover of good behavior. For example, the AJC gave President Sarkozy its "Light unto the Nations" award. France, then sure of AJC's friendship for its president, launched the now-famous concept of deciding Durban II participation on the basis of whether the process crossed so-called "red lines."

But these red lines were never precisely defined by France or by Europe; they purposely evolve as negotiations continue.

Today, Mr. Harris and various European governments seem to believe it sufficient to shout "red lines" and threaten to leave in order to influence negotiations. In practice, they are fully aware that throughout the Durban II negotiations this has not worked even once.

By affirming that France is still talking in the abstract about red lines - that have surely been crossed - the AJC camouflages the reality of a grave situation.

Letters

The AJC's paternalistic attitude toward European Jewish communities has had the dangerous consequence of helping to lull European consciences to sleep, while Munich-like appeasement grows stronger with each passing day.

BERNICE DUBOIS

MALKA MARCOVICH

Paris

Dubois is co-founder of French Coordination for the European Women's Lobby (CLEF) and of the European Council of WIZO Federations (ECWF). Marcovich, a historian and human rights consultant, is the author of 'DisUnited Nations: How the UN Buries Human Rights.'

Aiming to win

Sir, - Re "William Howe echoes down the ages" (February 26): Thanks to Evelyn Gordon for reminding us that victory is still an option in our war with the PA and Hamas.

GERRY MANDELL

Omer

A winner, on

& off the court

Sir, - In the Shahar Pe'er visa affair, Andy Roddick put his money where his mouth is. Venus Williams did not ("Roddick steps up by stepping down from competition," Allon Sinai, Sports, February 25.)

STANLEY LAWSON

Jerusalem

Bridge to nowhere

Sir, - Reading David Brinn's "Heeere's Sandy," (UpFront, February 20) about Sandra Bernhard was in many ways like being forced to watch a train heading for a bridge that isn't there. We are suddenly being invited to share Ms. Bernhard's crude and violent sexual fantasies about dealing with female politicians with whom she does not agree. We learn more about her personal life than some of us would care to know.

To make matters worse, we are asked to take seriously a discussion of "her dedication to the study of Kabbala" and her criticism of its "pop culturization," although she seems unaware of the all-too-obvious irony of her remarks.

No doubt, Ms. Bernhard is one of the funniest patients in the asylum, but we needn't confuse her with any of the doctors and ask her to prescribe medication for the rest of us. Nor should we feel required to join her in her private version of Bedlam - even for extended visiting hours.

FRED CASDEN

Ma'aleh Adumim

Bless you

Sir, - E.M. Hammer's story about his 35th birthday in Israel brought tears to my eyes ("When I came home," February 25). Bless him for putting his experience as a schoolteacher here in writing - and thank you, Jerusalem Post, for publishing it.

Letters

HARAN FAINSTEIN , Rehovot

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Tzipi's Shavit problem

The Jerusalem Post

February 6, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 1180 words

Byline: RUTHIE BLUM LEIBOWITZ

Highlight: MEDIA MATTERS

Body

A funny thing happened to the local media on the way to the elections.

Just as journalists were sharpening their proverbial pencils and pundits their serpent tongues in preparation for the battle ahead (not the one among the throne- contenders, mind you, but their own against the right-wing candidates in general and favorite nemesis Bibi Netanyahu in particular), an actual war broke out. For accuracy's sake, it was not officially called a war, but rather an operation - Cast Lead - and it didn't exactly break out, but rather was launched, following eight years of regular rocket fire on the South.

Suddenly, voting in a new prime minister seemed so far in the future that the question arose as to whether the election would take place as scheduled. Perhaps, some suggested, it would be postponed, as had been done in 1973, due to the Yom Kippur War.

Suddenly, the press found itself curbing conventional criticism of the powers-that-be and offering a more restrained, if not outright patriotic, form of reportage than it had provided during the Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006. So much so, in fact, that Gideon Levy and his ilk accused their colleagues of acting as though they were soldiers enlisted in the service of the IDF Spokesman's Office.

Suddenly, the unmasked media euphoria in this country that, a mere few weeks earlier, had surrounded the election of Barack Obama in a foreign one was replaced by what came across as genuine responsibility toward the safety of our troops in Gaza.

This shift in attention would turn out to be short- lived, however, as the withdrawal of those troops was timed to precede the inauguration of the new US president.

At once, Cast Lead got bumped here to the bottom of the news, while correspondents stationed in Washington and their counterparts in the studios at home "ushered in a new era" and "watched the dawn of a new day" - dampened only by the fact that Martin Luther King Jr. wasn't alive to witness it.

Two things rained on this joyous parade where the Israeli press was concerned. The first was a renewed shower of missiles. The second was self-pity the public was told to feel about not having its own Obama on the upcoming ballot.

Tzipi's Shavit problem

KADIMA CHAIRMAN Tzipi Livni's spin doctors didn't waste any time adjusting their original plan for their candidate - emphasizing her "cleanliness" in a climate of rampant corruption - to suit the more current set of challenges. This is how Livni's Obama campaign came into being, with its protagonist portrayed as the harbinger of hope and change.

Still, there was the inconvenient issue of the situation in Gaza, which was causing her two rivals, Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak, to climb in the polls - with the former gaining in popularity for his political positions and the latter for his military handling of Hamas.

The one thing Livni had going for her, however, was the sympathy of the mainstream media.

This is not only because she's a woman, though the "minority" factor certainly contributes to the Obama connotation. Nor is it because she is associated with her former boss and famous "etrog," Ariel Sharon. In fact, the media aren't big these days on reminiscing about disengagement and their part in promoting it, what with Gaza's having become an Iranian proxy enclave and all.

Nor is her special status necessarily due to the meteoric sideswipe on the part of the true superstar of this campaign - Avigdor Lieberman - whose views and delivery of them are so abhorrent to the press that he has managed to replace Bibi as resident bad guy.

No, the real reason Livni rightly assumed she could rely on the media to give her a break is their belief that she - like Sharon before her - could be counted on to carry out territorial concessions.

It is thus that Livni must have been only too happy to grant Haaretz's Ari Shavit an extensive interview last weekend. (Unlike that which was published subsequently in the hugely popular women's magazine, Lalsha, Shavit's are the ones read by the more, eh, select few.)

Entitled "I still can," the lengthy Q&A lets Livni laud her own abilities, and laud it over her opponents for their shortcomings.

Little did Livni - or anybody else, for that matter - know what was in store for her a mere five days later. And from the very author of the extremely fair interview, to boot.

In an op-ed on Wednesday, "A cautionary note," Shavit revealed "findings" about the foreign minister which he felt the public needed to know before voting for her. This, he wrote, is in spite of the fact that he considers her "a principled, patriotic, exemplary human being, intelligent and a quick study."

Lest one imagine that these shocking revelations - according to which Livni is "short-tempered... has an attention deficit... is incapable of delving into the details of a document or of sustaining an extended discussion... cannot distinguish the wheat from the chaff... is opinionated and superficial... finds it very hard to make decisions... deliberates, wavers, delays and changes her opinion over and over... does not have the spine, levelheadedness and internal calm necessary to take the most critical decisions... and [lacks] emotional intelligence..." - had come to Shavit's attention through the leaking of classified documents, he opened his piece by setting the record straight.

"Over the past week," he wrote, "I took statements from about a dozen people who know [her] quite well... [and] the portrait they paint... is a disturbing one."

To add credibility to what otherwise might be considered dubious hearsay during the lead-up to an election, he assured us that none of his anonymous sources "is close to either Netanyahu or Barak," and that "most support Kadima or parties on the Left."

FAR BE it from me to defend the likes of Livni, but I - like Israel Radio's Yaron Dekel and a slew of other colleagues - am uncomfortable with Shavit's journalistic behavior here.

Where - Dekel asked Shavit on Hakol Diburim on Wednesday morning, as soon as the damning article hit the news stands and the Haaretz Web site - is this scathing view in evidence in the interview? Oh - Shavit replied - "the point of my interviews is to let the interviewees express themselves."

Tzipi's Shavit problem

Furthermore, he added, he feels just awful about having to write what he did about Livni, whom he likes so much personally and whose ideology he shares to the letter. But since Iran is the most crucial issue right now, he explained, and Livni doesn't even grasp that it is, let alone have a position on it, he couldn't keep quiet about the information his research turned up. This "research" included the statement of "a mature, restrained and conservative person," who told Shavit that "he felt like a member of some cult with a terrible secret: Tzipi Livni is not fit to be prime minister."

This is not exactly a hot news flash, as a substantial number of the talkbacks to Shavit's article indicate. But, boy is it a scoop when predictions of doom from the center- left - or left of center - are leveled at the lady who sees doves on the windowsill of opportunity.

ruthie@jpost.com

Graphic

Photo: BLINDSIDED BY anonymous attackers via an iconic interviewer. Kadima leader Tzipi Livni now has the media to contend with. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Can social networking turn disaffected young Egyptians into a force for democratic change?

The New York Times

January 25, 2009 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

Section: Section MM; Column 0; Magazine Desk; Pg. 34

Length: 5177 words

Byline: By SAMANTHA M. SHAPIRO

Samantha M. Shapiro is a contributing writer who frequently reports for the magazine from the Middle East.

Body

Only a few hours after Israel's first air strike against **Hamas** positions in the Gaza Strip late last month, more than 2,000 protesters marched through the streets of downtown Cairo, carrying Palestinian flags. This began what would become weeks of protests, in which thousands of Egyptians of all different political leanings gathered in Egypt's main cities, in public squares and at mosques and universities. Hundreds were arrested. In every city, the biggest presence at the protests was the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist political organization, active in many countries throughout the Middle East, that seeks to govern according to Islamic law. Other, smaller demonstrations were put together, sometimes spontaneously, by leftist groups and student organizations.

Anti-Israel demonstrations in Arab capitals are nothing new. From Amman to Riyadh, governments have long viewed protests against Israel as a useful safety valve to allow citizens to let off steam without addressing grievances closer to home. But in Egypt, this time, the protests were different: some of the anger was aimed directly at the government of President Hosni Mubarak. In defiance of threats from the police, and in contravention of a national taboo, some demonstrators chanted slogans against Mubarak, condemning his government for maintaining diplomatic relations with Israel, for exporting natural gas to the country and for restricting movement through Egypt's border with Gaza.

As the street protests went on, young Egyptians also were mobilizing and venting their anger over Gaza on what would, until recently, have seemed an unlikely venue: Facebook, the social-networking site. In most countries in the Arab world, Facebook is now one of the 10 most-visited Web sites, and in Egypt it ranks third, after Google and Yahoo. About one in nine Egyptians has Internet access, and around 9 percent of that group are on Facebook -- a total of almost 800,000 members. This month, hundreds of Egyptian Facebook members, in private homes and at Internet cafes, have set up Gaza-related "groups." Most expressed hatred for Israel and the United States, but each one had its own focus. Some sought to coordinate humanitarian aid to Gaza, some criticized the Egyptian government, some criticized other Arab countries for blaming Egypt for the conflict and still others railed against **Hamas**. When I sat down in the middle of January with an Arabic-language translator to look through Facebook, we found one new group with almost 2,000 members called "I'm sure I can find 1,000,000 members who hate Israel!!!" and another called "With all due respect, Gaza, I don't support you," which blamed Palestinian suffering on **Hamas** and lamented the recent shooting of two Egyptian border guards, which had been attributed to **Hamas** fire. Another

Can social networking turn disaffected young Egyptians into a force for democratic change?

group implored God to "destroy and burn the hearts of the Zionists." Some Egyptian Facebook users had joined all three groups.

Freedom of speech and the right to assemble are limited in Egypt, which since 1981 has been ruled by Mubarak's National Democratic Party under a permanent state-of-emergency law. An estimated 18,000 Egyptians are imprisoned under the law, which allows the police to arrest people without charges, allows the government to ban political organizations and makes it illegal for more than five people to gather without a license from the government. Newspapers are monitored by the Ministry of Information and generally refrain from directly criticizing Mubarak. And so for young people in Egypt, Facebook, which allows users to speak freely to one another and encourages them to form groups, is irresistible as a platform not only for social interaction but also for dissent.

Although there are countless political Facebook groups in Egypt, many of which flare up and fall into disuse in a matter of days, the one with the most dynamic debates is that of the April 6 Youth Movement, a group of 70,000 mostly young and educated Egyptians, most of whom had never been involved with politics before joining the group. The movement is less than a year old; it formed more or less spontaneously on Facebook last spring around an effort to stage a general nationwide strike. Members coalesce around a few issues -- free speech, economic stagnation and government nepotism -- and they share their ideas for improving Egypt. But they do more than just chat: they have tried to organize street protests to free jailed journalists, and this month, hundreds of young people from the April 6 group participated in demonstrations about Gaza, some of which were coordinated on Facebook, and at least eight members of the group were detained by police.

As with any group on Facebook, members can post comments or share news articles, videos or notes on the group's communal "wall." The wall of the April 6 group is constantly being updated with new posts, and the talk is often heated and intense. On a recent afternoon, members were discussing photographs that had just been posted on the Muslim Brotherhood Web site of a mass protest in Alexandria against Israel's actions in Gaza, in which thousands of members of the brotherhood took to the streets.

"They are real men!" posted a young woman using the alias Mona Liza.

"Something like this should happen in Cairo," another member typed. "People should go to the streets of Cairo until the Jewish crusaders' government falls."

Another member dissented: "We need strong actions, not protests like the brotherhood's where they sing religious songs and go home."

Ahmed Maher, a 28-year-old engineer who is one of the group's unofficial leaders, weighed in. "There are ideas about a big protest for Gaza right now," he wrote. The April 6 group should join that protest, he agreed, but "we should link it to our demands, which are of course different from other peoples' demands, like those of the brotherhood." It was a crucial point: unlike many protest groups in Egypt that were angry about Gaza, Maher saw Gaza as a way to stoke and focus discontent against Mubarak and his government. Maher saw Egypt's relationship with Israel as one symptom of a larger set of problems -- censorship, corruption, joblessness and government incompetence -- whose solution would lie not in resistance in Gaza but in democratization at home. "We should link politics with economic and social problems to show that our suffering is caused by a corrupt regime," Maher wrote.

The fact that tens of thousands of disaffected young Egyptians unhappy with their government meet online to debate and plan events is remarkable, given the context of political repression in which it is occurring. Organized groups opposed to Mubarak's National Democratic Party have long lived under constant surveillance by the government; their leaders are regularly jailed. As a result, most Egyptian opposition groups remain small and are often plagued by infighting. And although about a third of Egypt's population is between 15 and 29, young Egyptians have for years been politically disengaged. A 2004 study by the Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies found that 67 percent of young people weren't registered to vote, and 84 percent had never participated in a public demonstration.

In its official statement, the April 6 movement takes pains to emphasize that it isn't a political party. But the movement has provided a structure for a new generation of Egyptians, who aren't part of the nation's small coterie

Can social networking turn disaffected young Egyptians into a force for democratic change?

of activists and opinion-makers, to assemble virtually and communicate freely about their grievances. When I spoke earlier this month to Samer Shehata, an assistant professor of Arab politics at Georgetown University, he said that it was no surprise that young Egyptians have chosen to put their political energy into a group that is not part of the Egyptian political process. "The state of the opposition in Egypt is so pathetic that existing parties have lost all credibility," he told me. "They've been around for a long time and produced nothing." The April 6 Facebook group, he said, "has credibility because it hasn't sold out to the regime or played the pathetic, limited game of politics the regime engages in."

ON A THURSDAY AFTERNOON last fall, I made my way to a Cinnabon cafe in Nasr City, a well-to-do district of Cairo, to meet with one of the founders of the April 6 Facebook group, a 30-year-old woman named Esraa Abdel Fattah Ahmed Rashid, who works as a training coordinator for a company that makes Islamic DVDs. The Cinnabon was subdued: a few pairs of young women and one or two married couples were scattered around the seating area with open laptops and frothy, sweet drinks. Sean Paul's "Temperature" played at a tasteful volume, low enough that the dance-hall lyrics about "the right tactics to turn you on" were nearly indecipherable. Rashid was wearing a meticulously coordinated outfit: brown pants, sandals, T-shirt, eyeliner and a baby blue tunic with overlapping light blue and brown head scarves.

Rashid has a round face, a high-pitched voice and a plucky sense of determination -- Reese Witherspoon in a hijab. Her husband works in Dubai most of the year, and while he is away, she lives with her mother. She originally joined Facebook to keep up with friends; she joined groups for fans of the Egyptian singer Mohammed Mounir and the national soccer team, another for discussions of the Koran and others that offered updates on the latest styles in pajamas and modest wedding dresses. But her relationship with Facebook evolved in ways she could not have predicted. Last spring, the general strike that Rashid and her friends organized on Facebook landed her in jail, on talk shows and in newspapers around Egypt and abroad. She was now widely known around Egypt -- even by people who didn't use the Internet -- as the Facebook Girl, and she told me that she was logged into the site pretty much any time she wasn't working or sleeping. (Like most of the Internet activists I met in Egypt, Rashid spoke little English, and we communicated mostly through an interpreter.)

The April 6 movement has its roots in Egypt's brief burst of political freedom in 2005 and 2006, which came after the Bush administration put pressure on the Mubarak regime to hold its first multiparty election. Although the election was far from free, it created new opportunities for activists to organize and demonstrate, and out of the campaign a loose coalition of socialist, leftist and Islamist groups emerged called Kefaya ("enough" in Arabic). They focused on direct action and rarely discussed ideology, but they were united on one issue: that Hosni Mubarak should not be allowed to transfer power to his son Gamal. Kefaya organized street protests to pressure Mubarak to step down, hold free elections and allow the Egyptian judiciary to remain independent. Some demonstrations attracted as many as 10,000 people.

This flare-up of political activity coincided with the moment Egyptians were starting to gain access to the Internet in large numbers. Home computers and Internet cafes were becoming more popular, and the cost of getting online was dropping, thanks to a government initiative intended to encourage technological innovation in Egypt. The new technologies and political movements grew symbiotically. Shortly before Kefaya started, Wael Abbas, who is now one of Egypt's most influential bloggers, set up a Web site called Egyptian Awareness, and it quickly became the main source of information on Kefaya's activities, which were largely ignored by the state-run media.

Abbas and a few other early adopters of blog technology worked simultaneously as political advocates and crusading journalists. In 2006, Abbas posted cellphone-video footage of a police officer sodomizing a screaming minibus driver with an iron rod, which ultimately led to the officer's conviction. Another prominent blogger and friend of Abbas's, a woman in her early 30s named Nora Younis, posted stories about sexual harassment of women who participated in street demonstrations, which helped spur Egypt's mainstream media to cover the issue. (Younis worked briefly for The New York Times as a stringer.) Political blogs became essential reading for opposition parties; in 2005, Al Dustur, a weekly paper opposed to the regime, started a blog page, which reprinted important posts for readers without Internet access.

Can social networking turn disaffected young Egyptians into a force for democratic change?

During the 2005 election campaign, Esraa Rashid started volunteering at the headquarters of El Ghad, a liberal democratic party that was founded in 2004 by Ayman Nour, a wealthy lawyer and member of Parliament. Nour came in second in the election, behind Mubarak, with 7 percent of the vote; he is currently in jail for forgery charges that his supporters insist are bogus. Rashid told me that she loved working at the Ghad office, but she and some of her friends in the youth wing grew impatient with the party bureaucracy. Like most political parties in Egypt, El Ghad has a strict hierarchy, and before deciding to stage an event, the leaders would carefully weigh a number of factors, including internal office politics and their current standing with the Mubarak regime. Members of the youth wing, Rashid told me, didn't have much say in that process, or much interest in the endless deliberations. So she and some friends turned to Facebook as a quicker, easier way to plan their own events and protests. Rashid's first foray into using Facebook for organizing was to coordinate a small demonstration around the opening of a movie about corruption and torture called "Heya Fawda" or "This Is Chaos." Rashid invited all her friends on Facebook to the event; they invited more friends; and in the end, about 100 people showed up. To Rashid, the event was a huge success; exhilarated, she and friends from El Ghad planned a few more events the same way.

THEN LAST MARCH, Rashid got a text message on her phone from Maher, the 28-year-old engineer and activist, suggesting that young Egyptians should do something to support the workers in Mahalla al-Kobra, an industrial town, who were planning to strike on April 6. For more than a year, workers around Egypt had been striking, periodically, to protest high rates of inflation and unemployment, but they never coordinated their protests. Rashid and Maher met when they were both part of the Ghad youth wing, but Maher had left the party to devote himself more fully to the youth movement of Kefaya. Unlike Rashid, he had been active in street protests and had been arrested. Rashid loved the idea of doing something to support the workers, and she called Maher immediately. She suggested they create an open group on Facebook to brainstorm ideas. On March 23, Rashid set up the April 6 Strike group on Facebook with herself and Maher as administrators.

Rashid expected this protest would develop more or less like her movie outing. But almost as soon as she set up the group, there were 16 members; when she refreshed the page a few minutes later, there were more than 60. The next day, more than 1,000. Rashid watched with fear and excitement as thousands of people, then tens of thousands, started joining and posting to the group. Eventually, the number reached 76,000. As the group's administrators, she and Maher could approve messages as they were posted, and it was their responsibility to delete spam or inappropriate posts; the two took turns monitoring the site day and night.

The group never developed a unified plan of action for April 6. Rashid initially proposed that people stay home and not buy anything in solidarity with the workers -- unless they weren't afraid of protesting, in which case they should take to the streets. One girl suggested that everyone who protested on the street should give flowers to the security forces to disarm them, an idea Rashid supported. Maher started sending so many messages to the group that Facebook canceled his account; the site's automated filters presumed him to be a spammer. That left Rashid as the group's sole administrator. As the April 6 group grew, its call for a strike was endorsed by a variety of groups -- political parties, labor groups, the Muslim Brotherhood, student organizations, the Kefaya movement. On the streets, supporters handed out leaflets and sprayed graffiti to make non-Internet users aware of the action.

Members who identified themselves as government security agents joined the April 6 group, too, posting comments under the insignia of the Egyptian police, and as April 6 approached, the government issued a strong warning against participation in the strike. Rashid told me that she was scared to go out on the street that day. She would have stayed home, she said, but she felt she owed it to all the people she'd been communicating with to come out. She posted her plans on Facebook; on the day of the strike, she said, she'd meet people at the Kentucky Fried Chicken in Tahrir Square downtown. She told people what she'd be wearing and gave out her cellphone number.

On April 6 in Mahalla, thousands of workers rioted, tearing down a Mubarak billboard. There were many arrests and at least three deaths. When Rashid headed out toward Tahrir Square, she was shocked to see police and military vehicles blocking off streets; soldiers and police officers, it seemed, were everywhere. As Rashid approached the Kentucky Fried Chicken, she found it was surrounded by police. She called some friends and told them to meet her at a nearby cafe to decide what to do next. Police swept in and arrested Rashid at the cafe; they took her to jail, where she stayed for more than two weeks.

Can social networking turn disaffected young Egyptians into a force for democratic change?

Rashid was not prepared for a jail term. She had never been away from her mother for even a day without checking in, and although her mother knew she did clerical work for El Ghad, she had no idea that Rashid had been involved in organizing a general strike. Rashid's mother was beside herself, and she appeared on TV, begging the authorities to release her daughter.

While Rashid was in prison, members of the April 6 Strike Facebook group replaced their profile pictures with an image of Rashid with the words "Free Esraa!" printed below. And when Egypt's prime minister, Ahmed Nazif, came to speak at Cairo University about the government's technology initiatives, a 20-year-old member of the April 6 group named Blal Diab stood up and heckled him, urging him to free Rashid and other jailed activists from the April 6 movement. "They are the same young people who used the Internet to express their opinions!" he yelled, to thunderous applause. (One of Diab's friends captured the whole thing on his cellphone, and the video was shared widely over YouTube and on blogs.)

Rashid's release from prison was shown on live television, and it was quite a show. She ran out the door of the jail into her mother's arms, wailing. An unbelievable amount of screaming and crying ensued. Rashid's mother tilted her face to the sky and issued a continuous stream of praise and thanks to Allah. Rashid said, tearfully, that she didn't expect that posting on the Internet would get her sent to jail, and that if she'd known what would happen, she wouldn't have done it. "They treated me well!" she sobbed. "They let me remain a girl. I missed you, Mom. I prayed to God every day."

When Rashid started playing the video on her laptop for me, she had to get up and walk away. Watching it still makes her cry.

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN, a research fellow at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society, told me that the April 6 movement illustrates what he calls the "cute-cat theory of digital activism." Web sites or proxy servers created specifically for activists are easy for a government to shut down, Zuckerman says, but around the world, dissidents thrive on sites, like Facebook, that are used primarily for more mundane purposes (like exchanging pictures of cute cats). Authoritarian regimes can't block political Facebook groups without blocking all the "American Idol" fans and cat lovers as well. "The government can't simply shut down Facebook, because doing so would alert a large group of people who they can't afford to radicalize," Zuckerman explained.

When I spoke to Wael Nawara, a 47-year-old Ghad activist who is a co-founder of the party, he explained why, for him, getting on Facebook was such a big eye-opener. If you look at Egyptian politics on the surface, he said, you might think that the Muslim Brotherhood is the only alternative to the Mubarak regime. But "Facebook revealed a liberal undercurrent in Egyptian society," Nawara said. "In general, there's this kind of apathy, a sense that there is nothing we can do to change the situation. But with Facebook you realize there are others who think alike and share the same ideals. You can find Islamists there, but it is really dominated by liberal voices."

Interestingly, young Islamists in Egypt have also started blogging in ways that challenge their elders, often posting critical comments about the senior leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood. In the past, this kind of internal dialogue was suppressed by the brotherhood's leadership, or at least hidden from view, since the brotherhood's newspapers were outlawed. But the official leaders of the brotherhood and younger malcontents have both found a happy home on the Internet. Abdel Monem Mahmoud, one of the most prominent young Muslim Brotherhood bloggers, recently wrote a scathing critique of an article by a brotherhood leader arguing that all politicians must be devoted Muslims. And when the brotherhood circulated a draft of a political platform -- the first step toward becoming an official political party -- a 28-year-old brotherhood member named Mustafa Naggar used his blog to publish critiques of the platform's prohibition against electing women or Coptic Christians to the presidency.

A somewhat-grudging alliance has developed among some of the young Islamist bloggers and their secular-liberal compatriots over issues of free speech and the rights of opposition parties. I met Naggar one afternoon in a Cairo coffee shop just after he had recited the midday prayer. He told me Wael Abbas and Nora Younis's blogs are required reading for him; he visits them every day to stay current, although, he said, it really bothers him that Abbas often uses curse words in his posts. When I spoke to Asmaa Aly, a feminist blogger, she said that she was put off by the practice of many brotherhood members never to touch women other than their wives. "I could never be

Can social networking turn disaffected young Egyptians into a force for democratic change?

friends with someone who won't shake my hand!" she said emphatically. But she added that if a brotherhood blogger was jailed, she would definitely show up for a protest.

In Washington, there is increasing interest in the April 6 Youth Movement. James Glassman, the outgoing under secretary of state for public diplomacy, told me he followed the group closely. "It's not easy in Egypt, and in other countries in the Middle East, to form robust civil-society organizations," he said. "And in a way that's what these groups are doing, although they're certainly unconventional."

Other State Department officials told me they believe that social-networking software like Facebook's has the potential to become a powerful pro-democracy tool. They pointed to recent developments in Saudi Arabia, where in November a Facebook group helped organize a national hunger strike against the kingdom's imprisonment of political opponents, and in Colombia, where activists last February used Facebook to organize one of the largest protests ever held in that country, a nationwide series of demonstrations against the FARC insurgency. Not long ago, the State Department created its own group on Facebook called "Alliance of Youth Movements," a coalition of groups from a dozen countries who use Facebook for political organizing. Last month, they brought an international collection of young online political activists, including one from the April 6 group, as well as Facebook executives and representatives from Google and MTV, to New York for a three-day conference.

IN RECENT MONTHS, Ahmed Maher has edged Rashid out of the leadership role they initially shared. When she was in jail, Rashid gave Maher the password to be the administrator of the April 6 Facebook group. He changed it, and ever since, he has declined to tell her the new password. Soon after Rashid was released from jail, she was married and left for her honeymoon. In May, Maher says, state-security officers picked him up and beat him intermittently for 12 hours to try to get him to give up the password for the Facebook group. Abbas posted pictures of Maher's bruised back on his blog, and an opposition newspaper printed Maher's account of the incident. Maher and other April 6 members set up a variety of steering groups for the movement, each of which is also on Facebook; using the wall, steering-group members discuss and vote on the direction the movement should go next. The new steering groups are not open to everyone, as the original group is, and Rashid has not been invited to join.

Some Egyptian bloggers and activists told me they resented Rashid's emotional display when she was released from jail -- particularly the fact that she said she wouldn't have organized the protest if she'd known she would be arrested for it. (Rashid later recanted that apology at a meeting of the April 6 group; she quoted a lyric from a Mohammed Mounir song: "I didn't need to repent; loving Egypt is not a sin.") Abbas told me that other female activists, including the blogger Asmaa Aly, had been arrested before -- Aly spent a month in jail in 2006 for participating in a Kefaya-organized sit-in for judicial independence -- and when they were released, they didn't cry or apologize.

"What the hell was she saying?" Abbas asked, referring to Rashid's televised apology. "The girl is chicken. I am sorry to say stuff like that, but people are going to think that everyone who is active online is chicken like her. We are in the streets taking videos and photos. We aren't only sitting in our bedroom in our pajamas." (Once, looking at Rashid's Facebook profile with her, I pointed out that Facebook's software had included Wael Abbas on her page, under a tab labeled "People You May Know." Rashid looked at his picture and shook her head. "We will not be friends," she said firmly.)

Ahmed Maher and a number of his friends in the activist-blogger community spoke with respect about what Rashid had accomplished, but they agreed with Abbas that she didn't have the right stuff to run the movement. Some activists working with Maher questioned her lack of experience and said it wouldn't be appropriate for a woman to lead the group, given that the government had tortured Ahmed Maher and sent Rashid to prison once already.

Rashid says she is not happy about any of this. When she and I met in early October, she said that a month earlier, at the beginning of Ramadan, she told Maher he had until the end of the holiday to give her back the password. Now Ramadan had just ended. "The longer he takes, the more forceful my response will be," she said fiercely.

It was in many ways the unideological, unedited voice that Rashid represented -- someone who described herself as "a girl who loves Egypt" and who thought giving flowers to the police might be a good idea -- that attracted

Can social networking turn disaffected young Egyptians into a force for democratic change?

people to the April 6 movement in such numbers. Young people were drawn to the fact that the movement wasn't part of Egypt's calcified party politics. ("I am involved in no parties, never," one teenage boy told me at a protest. "I just go to Facebook events, wherever they are. I'm in the Facebook Party.") But for April 6 to keep growing, some say, that may have to change. As Amr Hamzawy, an Egyptian political scientist who is currently a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told me: "Just saying you are against Mubarak automatically gets a certain number of people behind you, but it's not enough. Kefaya wasn't capable and ready for the next step. They needed to put forth a positive platform as well as a critique of Mubarak in order to move beyond the base of elites in Cairo. April 6 will have to do this. It will have to become more organized in order to succeed where Kefaya failed."

THE APRIL 6 STRIKE was a success partly because it had its roots offline, among a cohesive, organized group of laborers; their protest was then vastly amplified by the Facebook activists. A number of the events created last summer and fall by the April 6 Youth Movement did not succeed in the same way. Protests were typically attended by only a few dozen of the group's supporters and often shut down by the police before they even began. Back in July, Maher tried to organize a "flash mob" on the beach in Alexandria that would sing patriotic songs and fly a kite with the Egyptian flag painted on it. But on the day of the protest, Maher and his crew of about 30 young people were stopped by the police before they were even able to finish unfurling their kite.

This month, as the university exam period began to cut into members' free time, the group's involvement in Gaza protests seemed to diminish. The decline in turnout led to a flurry of accusations, reflections and recriminations on Facebook. On Jan. 10, a young woman named Asmaa Mahfouz posted an angry screed on the April 6 site titled, "Are you all fed up, or what?" She accused members of opting out of protests because they thought things couldn't change, no matter how many strikes and demonstrations were organized. "Is this a reasonable way of thinking???!!!" she wrote, punctuation marks flying. "Is it reasonable???? No, no, no, nooooo, absolutely not!"

A young man named Mahmoud Dahshan Ahmed replied that he thought the group needed to coordinate with the Muslim Brotherhood if they were to have an impact. "Frankly, I am fed up," he wrote. "What is the point of us demonstrating and marching from noon till 6 p.m., when nothing ever changes?"

By organizing online, the April 6 movement avoids some of the pitfalls of party politics in Egypt -- censorship, bureaucracy, compromise with the regime. But whenever the movement's members try to migrate offline, they find they are still playing by Egypt's rules. They almost never meet in real life, certainly not in large groups, and when they do, the police often show up.

Online, members of the movement are casting votes on the Web site's walls, publishing notes with their views on the political situation and creating groups to draft a constitution for their movement. But what does it mean to have a vibrant civil society on your computer screen and a police state in the street? When I spoke to Nora Younis, she described the April 6 strike as a practice session for the new generation. "It's a rehearsal for a bigger thing," she said. "Right now, we are just testing the power of each other."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: ESRAA RASHID (center) was jailed for helping to organize protests online. (PHOTOGRAPH BY SHAWN BALDWIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)(pg. MM35)

RASHID AND COMRADES: at the Cairo office of El Ghad, an opposition party.(pg. MM36)

Can social networking turn disaffected young Egyptians into a force for democratic change?

AHMED MAHER: (left, with fellow bloggers in Cairo) says he was beaten by the police for a Facebook password.(PHOTOGRAPH BY SHAWN BALDWIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)(pg. MM39)

Load-Date: January 25, 2009

End of Document

**Thalif Deen interviews Phyllis Bennis, Institute for Policy Studies; Q&A:
Israel May Escape War Crimes Charges**

IPS (Latin America)

February 3, 2009 Tuesday

Copyright 2009 NoticiasFinancieras/Grupo de Diarios America All Rights Reserved

Length: 1320 words

Body

'The number and scope of individuals and agencies calling for independent, international investigations of war crimes is unprecedented,' says Phyllis Bennis, director of the New Internationalism Project at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington.

In an interview with U.N. Bureau Chief Thalif Deen, she pointed out that calls for such an investigation have come not only from high-ranking U.N. officials and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) but also from virtually every international human rights organisation operating in the area.

'Individual accountability for war crimes or crimes against humanity is always difficult, and for officials (civilian or military) of a government with such close ties to and such a strong history of impunity guarantees from the most powerful country in the world, it is even more difficult,' said Bennis, author of several publications both on the Middle East and the United Nations, including 'Challenging Empire: How People, Governments and the U.N. Defy the U.S.'.

That said, the extreme lawlessness of Israel's attack on Gaza, the shocking human devastation that it caused for Gaza's 1.5 million civilians, the direct attacks on U.N. facilities and personnel, and the wide range of prima facie Israeli violations of international law all elevate the possibility of real accountability, she added.

Excerpts from the interview follow.

IPS: What are the specific war crimes Israel is accused of committing?

PB: The Geneva Convention's prohibitions against collective punishment, targeting civilians, and disproportionate military force were all violated, as was Geneva's requirement that Israel provide medical care for the wounded. The use of sometimes-legal white phosphorous and DIME weapons was made illegal under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons by Israel's decision to use them in densely-populated civilian neighbourhoods. Israel's (and Egypt's) denial of the Palestinian civilians' right to flee to find refuge over Gaza's borders may represent a newly-defined war crime.

IPS: How serious are these charges in terms of warranting prosecution?

PB: Israel has been accused of virtually identical war crimes in the past. It should be viewed as a serial offender, which in a criminal justice context means Israel and its officials should not be given the benefit of the doubt regarding benign intent, and perhaps should face being denied access to the instruments of those offences, meaning an arms embargo.

The General Assembly could also request that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issue an advisory opinion on what actions should be taken against a government, or individuals, who are such serial offenders against war crimes statutes.

IPS: What are the alternatives to a war crimes tribunal specifically to try Israel?

PB: There are today far more choices for venue and jurisdiction for imposing legal accountability for war crimes. Despite the limited jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, for instance, (since Israel is not a signatory and an inevitable U.S. veto makes a Security Council referral to the ICC prosecutor virtually impossible), there is the possibility of challenging the ICC to take jurisdiction based on the rights of Palestinians in Gaza who live under a belligerent occupation and therefore should still have access to the Court.

The General Assembly could empanel its own investigative tribunal (under Article 22 of the Charter) to convene legal, military and human rights experts to investigate the entire range of war crimes allegations made (against both sides) during the Gaza war.

IPS: Is there any action individual governments can take against Israeli leaders visiting their capitals?

PB: And, perhaps most realistic, individual governments acting under the Pinochet precedent, that brought former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet into the dock in Britain, could issue warrants against Israeli officials responsible for war crimes or crimes against humanity. In fact, in recent days a Spanish judge issued a warrant against several Israeli military officers for war crimes allegedly committed in Gaza in 2002.

In that situation, whether or not the charges result in an actual trial, the existence of the warrant has a huge impact on the freedom of those officials to travel to the country issuing the warrant, or perhaps to other countries who are members of Interpol or other international covenants.

IPS: The destruction of Gaza and the killings of over 1,300 Palestinians, mostly women and children, took place for more than three weeks while the United Nations remained helpless. Was there anything that the Security Council, the General Assembly or the secretary-general could have done otherwise to stop the carnage?

PB: The United Nations was not able to stop the Israeli assault, but it would be a mistake to say it did nothing. For days the U.S. prevented the Security Council from responding at all. When the Council finally passed a resolution, its goal was not to stop the Israeli onslaught but only to undermine the potential for a much stronger General Assembly resolution; the Assembly meeting was already scheduled to meet just minutes after the suddenly-announced Council meeting.

The Council resolution was both too late and too weak, and did little to actually rein in the slaughter. But it was important for forcing the U.S. administration (of President George W. Bush), in the last days of its hold on power, to reverse its earlier position (identical to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's 2006 'We don't need a ceasefire yet' claim').

The General Assembly, despite extraordinary efforts by President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, and a number of Non-Aligned countries, was ultimately unable to unite around a strong, clear demand for an immediate unconditional ceasefire and immediate end to the Israeli siege.

Sadly, as is evident in the public U.N. summaries of the final General Assembly meeting of Jan. 15, the Palestinian and Egyptian delegations aligned themselves with some European governments to replace the stronger Non-Aligned demands with the weaker position identical to the language of the Security Council resolution.

A stronger General Assembly resolution would have set the stage for follow-up enforceable resolutions, possibly including mechanisms for holding Israeli officials accountable, an arms embargo, or even deploying a ceasefire-enforcement or protection force, perhaps based on the Assembly's own embrace of the doctrine known as the responsibility to protect.

Thalif Deen interviews Phillys Bennis, Institute for Policy Studies Q&A: Israel May Escape War Crimes Charges

IPS: Do you expect any significant developments towards a Middle East peace settlement under the new administration of President Barack Obama? And will the United Nations have any role in such a peace process?

PB: So far President Obama's language has been far too close to that of the Bush policies: refusal to talk to **Hamas**, insisting on the position of the so-called (Middle East) Quartet as binding, focusing on Israeli security as the only issue, distorting the meaning of the 2002 Arab peace initiative by leaving out the need for full Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders as a precondition for normalisation with Israel, etc.

However, his actions still provide some room for hope. The appointment of former Senator George Mitchell, rather than Dennis Ross, Richard Haass, Martin Indyk or others of the usual suspects, who share an uncritical embrace of Israel's settlement and apartheid policies, is hugely important.

Mitchell has written as recently as summer 2007 of the importance of having all players at the table, not excluding any whether or not they are deemed terrorists by some. And crucially, he described how no negotiator can demand that people give up their dreams. That bodes well for a new kind of political engagement. It's too soon to tell but so far the actions have been better than the words. That's a big change. © 2009 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

Load-Date: February 3, 2009

End of Document

Other Voices: The Goal Should Be Telling the Truth

The New York Times

February 1, 2009 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

Section: Section WK; Column 0; Editorial Desk; Pg. 9; LETTERS TO THE PUBLIC EDITOR

Length: 1120 words

Byline: By CLARK HOYT

Body

Re "Standing Between Enemies" (Jan. 11): I would say that more important than fair and balanced -- which is probably impossible and a rather overrated journalistic concept to begin with -- the reporters, photographers and editors at The New York Times have done the best job I've seen of telling the truth as they experience it, in a complete way.

We live in a messy, complicated world where we feel a compulsion to pick sides, place blame and cower a bit behind our need for security, particularly in the horror of violent conflict.

In my eyes, The Times is doing a fantastic job of not just informing, but also inspiring people to see the world as a place where there are reasons behind all behavior. I hope that inspires even more compassion in readers.

SCOTT LYONS Portland, Ore., Jan. 12, 2009

You present a clear discussion of readers' concerns about coverage of the Israeli-Hamas conflict. But when you quote a reader as asking, "Where are the pro-Israel articles?," you seem to accept "pro-Israel" to mean those who support the Israeli actions. I suggest that this needs further thought. The term has been appropriated by Aipac and its supporters without much questioning.

One should consider that the expansion of settlements, the failure to remove them, the blockade of Gaza by land, sea and air, the taking of Palestinian lands by building a wall and so on are really anti-Israel and actually endanger Israel by arousing hatred and undermining the possibility of a true peace settlement.

Thus groups like Brit Tzedek, J Street, Jewish Voice for Peace, Meretz and Tikkun (to name a few) might be considered the true "pro-Israel" forces.

I hope that The Times and its readers carefully reconsider the use of the term "pro-Israel."

RAMON GREENBERG Jamaica Plain, Mass., Jan. 13, 2009

You write that "in the case of the complex, intractable struggle between Israel and the Palestinians, even the best, most evenhanded reporting will not satisfy those passionately on one side or the other." Why is this the case? Because, to put it bluntly, many readers and activists on one side of this tragic situation simply don't care about the

Other Voices: The Goal Should Be Telling the Truth

deaths of Israelis or Jews. And many readers and activists on the other side of this tragic situation simply don't care about the deaths of Palestinians, Arabs or Muslims.

This is the terrible world that we live in.

BOB LAMM New York, Jan. 11, 2009

There is no equivalence between people who have broad, worldly ethical and life-preserving moralities and those who would send children to their deaths as bombers of other civilians, who are willing to die in the name of jihad and who hide behind civilians to run their battles.

Please stop trying to achieve balance. Fairness lies in accepting, recognizing and dealing with the facts as they are, not picking and choosing the facts that make the concept of "balance" a charade.

WARREN E. ENKER New York, Jan. 12, 2009

The Need to Verify

Re "Leaps of Faith, and the Trouble That Followed" (Jan. 18):

I am sorry that you didn't call for a retraction of the unsubstantiated allegations in the Thayer Evans article.

Had Tom Jolly, the sports editor, or Mike Abrams, who edited the article, displayed adequate diligence, they would have spotted the story as baloney right away. The signs were abundant: the writer was a stringer who has an incentive to sell stories; the allegations were unfocused, ranging from serious (recruiting violations) to lurid (drugs and naked women); and one of the "sources" made it clear she had an ax to grind.

The article did nothing except perpetuate stereotypes of college recruiting. Schools like Texas, L.S.U. and U.S.C. don't need to cheat to get players of the caliber of Jamarkus McFarland. The best players continue to go to those schools because they offer a great student experience, a solid education and, for some, the chance at playing in the N.F.L.

LORIN MUELLER Falls Church, Va., Jan. 19, 2009

"Trust but verify"? What a contradictory notion. Yet recently I've seen it cited approvingly as good advice -- as you do in closing your column.

To me, it means, "Mistrust and therefore verify" -- and I have no trouble with that sentiment as such, although it does bear a certain misanthropic tinge.

But to me, the Reagan version has always had a phony ring to it, and I've therefore been looking forward to its gradual disappearance. Instead, it seems to be in ascent!

NED ZIMMERMAN New York, Jan. 19, 2009

As a former professor of Roman history who has studied how civil war came about and brought the Roman Republic to an end, I would slightly alter the advice that you cited from Ronald Reagan: Never trust, and always verify.

Another politician, Julius Caesar, wrote an account of his violation of Roman law and ethical standards that has succeeded in misleading generations of readers. Trust in his account is misplaced. No source, however well placed, can be taken on faith.

In the wake of the Bush era, we would do well to be wary of any simplistic vision of reality. Nor should we ever let our guard down and trust someone on the sole basis of his or her own testimony. That is how democracies come to an end.

Other Voices: The Goal Should Be Telling the Truth

RICHARD WESTALL Rome, Jan. 18, 2009

A longer version of this letter, and more letters to the public editor, can be found at nytimes.com/publiceditorsjournal.

Talking Generals

Re "The Generals' Second Careers" (Jan. 25):

A simple disclaimer from the Pentagon, NBC, Fox and the rest would have brought clarity and context to both the message creator and the messenger.

What the reporter David Barstow ably uncovered was a severe breach of ethics by the government, the generals and the unquestioning media who carried the remarks. Citizens should expect the truth from the government, as embittering as it has been these last years.

Good corporations I have worked with face these inquiries daily and know to address even the greatest controversies with truth. If a company lies to reporters, then it probably is lying to its employees, stakeholders and the public

REED BOLTON BYRUM Greenville, S.C., Jan. 30, 2009

The writer, a former reporter and editor, is a past president of Public Relations Society of America.

In last Sunday's column about The Times's coverage of a controversial Pentagon public relations program, I may have inadvertently sown confusion by using the word "report" to refer to both the coverage and a finding by the Defense Department's inspector general that the program did not violate laws or regulations. Lest there be any doubt, I thought the inspector general's report was "highly flawed." I thought The Times's coverage performed an important public service. -- CLARK HOYT

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

DRAWINGS (DRAWINGS BY STEPHEN SAVAGE)

Load-Date: February 1, 2009

Bye bye 'Big Brother,' hello Yonit Levy

The Jerusalem Post

January 16, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 1160 words

Byline: RUTHIE BLUM LEIBOWITZ

Highlight: MEDIA MATTERS. As reality replaces Reality TV, the public has been resorting to keeping a watchful eye on the eyebrow fluctuations of a Channel 2 newscaster

Body

If I were more cynical or paranoid, I'd be certain that Channel 2 was behind the Yonit Levy affair. There's nothing like buzz where hiking ratings is concerned, after all.

With the entire country glued to the small screen in an attempt to glean any sliver of information it can about the war in Gaza, its three main channels - all subject to the same military-censorship restrictions - are hard put to distinguish themselves from one another.

Indeed, since the launching of Operation Cast Lead nearly three weeks ago, remote controls have been working overtime. Whereas prior to the current confrontation, channel surfing was reserved either to those viewers desperately searching for something to watch, or those absent-mindedly toying with the TV for lack of a substitute, today zap-dancing is a national pastime. Even the most loyal fans of this set of reporters or that duo of commentators find themselves in a fickle state of hopping from 10 to 11 to 22 and back again. Being afraid to miss out on any detail will do that.

But detail of the kind being sought is scarce, due to the tight control on what the media are at liberty to convey. As a result, the broadcasts are heavier on features and analysis than on hard news.

It is perhaps no wonder, then, that details of another sort entirely are taking center stage - or rather, in the case of Yonit Levy, stage left - in the battle theater.

For those of you unfamiliar with the "scandal" in question, here is a short review:

On December 31, Day 5 of the operation, a petition began circulating on the Internet, the purpose of which was to cause Channel 2 to remove anchor Yonit Levy from the air if she didn't shape up. According to the petitioners, Levy had crossed a red line in her presentation of the war by letting her left-wing leanings get the better of her. (The reference here lends itself to a play on words in Hebrew, since the anchor's first name translates literally as "dovish.")

The aim of the petition was to accrue 10,000 signatures. Within days, it had obtained close to 35,000. Apparently, a lot of people were thrilled to be given the opportunity to stick it to the sultry newscaster with a vengeance. Her alleged violation of journalistic ethics: raising her eyebrows sarcastically over IDF actions, and furrowing them sympathetically over the trauma suffered by innocent Palestinians. (For the record, incidentally, the original

Bye bye 'Big Brother,' hello Yonit Levy

petitioners just released a letter saying that Levy had clearly been influenced by the pressure, since she now seems to be subduing her previous subjectivity and striking a more neutral - hence professional - pose.)

But the publicity couldn't have been better for the broadcaster.

Suddenly, the war against Hamas was taking a momentary back seat to the war against Levy, with battalions of bloggers rushing to express sympathy for or antipathy to the protagonist whose personal life and hefty paycheck - rumored to hover around NIS 80,000 per month - were of great interest both to her supporters and her detractors long before a single soldier set foot on Gazan soil.

TO GIVE a little background to this battle of the blog, Levy, who began co-anchoring the news with Gadi Sukenik in 2002 (after his previous female partner, Miki Haimovitch, defected to Channel 10), was given the high honor of going it solo when Sukenik left in August 2007. A year ago this month, Channel 2 announced that Levy had proven capable of handling the broadcast on her own, and that this was reflected in her ratings. For some reason, this was almost as big news at the time as the items she was presenting. It was as though she had broken some sacred mold - albeit a relatively recent one - of a team consisting of a seasoned man and a sexy woman whose chemistry on camera would be conducive to keeping audiences attentive. That she was allowed to do it alone catapulted her into an old boys' network she is probably too young even to remember.

This did not stop the serpent-tongued literary critic and Ynet columnist Arianna Melamed from providing a radical feminist interpretation of the spate of attacks on Levy in cyberspace, however. And how could she resist? After all, here was an opportunity to make fun of the way most of the Israeli media have been portraying the war - patriotically, that is, "as though they are employed by the IDF Spokesman's Office" - while simultaneously settling a score with a male-dominated society. Not bad for 1,000 words and no picture, other than Levy's. Nor is it particularly surprising.

No more surprising is the letter issued by the staff of Channel 10, defending Levy's professional behavior as beyond reproach. For, though it is highly doubtful that they see themselves as fitting Melamed's negative description of their ilk as "Cast Lead" journalists, they are nevertheless on Levy's side of the divide, and under equal scrutiny by the masses whose deadliest weapon is a computer mouse.

Not only that. Soon, she and they are likely to become colleagues, rather than competitors, as a merger between Channels 2 and 10 is currently under way, pending the success or failure of corporate negotiations.

What is astounding about this whole "sordid affair" is the fact that, as of the writing of these words, Melamed's defense of Levy had already generated around 1,200 talkbacks. As Israel Radio's Keren Neubach pointed out Tuesday morning, no article on the prime minister inspires that kind of reaction. Indeed, even Olmert's run-in this week with the White House and State Department over his bragging about having phoned President Bush to insist that he keep Condi from voting for the Security Council resolution on Gaza elicited a yawn in comparison.

TWO POSSIBLE explanations for this peculiar phenomenon come to mind.

The first is that the public, genuinely concerned about the outcome of the Gaza operation, needs an outlet for its frustrations. Shouting into cyberspace by hammering away at keyboards provides just that.

The second is that this is also an entertainment- hungry society, whose favorite dish of late has been Reality TV - an ironic form of escapism if there ever was one. The war in Gaza began right after Big Brother's finale and the beginning of Survivor's second season. The former had finished; the latter was taken off the air temporarily, due to the war, though Channel 10 has just announced that the show will resume this weekend. One way of compensating for the loss and sating the appetite was to point the cameras at those key players in the saga down south whose lives and livelihoods are not jeopardized by anything more threatening than mergers.

Levy ought to be flattered. Because of the hoopla, not only is she in the actual spotlight, but she's in the virtual one, as well. So much so that the political satire program, Eretz Nehederet, composed a ballad just for her. Even I now catch myself pausing longer on Channel 2 these days to see if I can catch her in the act of which she was accused.

Bye bye 'Big Brother,' hello Yonit Levy

ruthie@jpost.com

Graphic

Photo: YONIT LEVY. Her alleged violation of journalistic ethics: raising her eyebrows sarcastically over IDF actions, and furrowing them sympathetically over the trauma suffered by innocent Palestinians. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolinski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

From Tripoli to Damascus

The Jerusalem Post
March 20, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 28

Length: 2323 words

Byline: Sarah Meltsner

Highlight: An American Israeli describes her travels through countries that don't exactly welcome bearers of either passport

Body

I'd spent five days in Beirut partying too hard and sleeping on a friend's small couch. I needed a respite from the city lined with bullet-pocked buildings and booming nightclubs. I considered Tripoli, a coastal city that has been swept by waves of successive empires, including the Phoenicians, Persians and Romans. But Tripoli has been swept by waves of recent violence as well and I'd come at a bad time—just two weeks before, Tripoli had been rocked by a series of explosions.

My host recommended a day trip to Byblos instead.

I boarded the half-empty northbound bus in central Beirut armed with a book, a cup of coffee and a wristwatch. I usually don't wear a watch, but my host had insisted, "Byblos is hard to spot, so be prepared to get off the bus about 20 minutes out of the city. Keep an eye on the time, or you'll miss the stop."

As the bus pushed its way north through gridlock, I glanced at my watch again and again. I couldn't remember exactly what time we'd left the station, wasn't sure how many minutes I should tack on to the trip to account for traffic. I felt my head drop forward, snap back up, that telltale sign that my body wanted to give in to fatigue. I looked out the window, sure I could stay vigilant. The landscape passed quickly as we broke free of the city. I watched for the word Byblos. It shouldn't be long now.

I woke up to an army tank blocking half the road. A checkpoint. The bus was stopped, the door was open, the driver was shouting in Arabic to someone, presumably a soldier, I couldn't see. The door clapped closed, the bus picked up speed again. Words on a sign: Tripoli, 5 km. Clearly, I'd missed my stop.

We slowed for another checkpoint and then eased into the city. There were tanks on street corners. Armed soldiers stood on the sidewalks, looking like statues among the pedestrians that buzzed past them. The bus inched through the city, passing gutted buildings that looked like they'd been hit by rockets. I'd entered a war zone.

I was rattled and not just because of the condition I found Tripoli in. I thought of Lebanon's proximity to Israel. I felt like I was teetering on the edge of an eventual avalanche that was sure to engulf everything around it. If Lebanon crumbled, surely the ashes and stones would fall from the north.

One by one the other passengers disembarked until I was alone on the bus. The driver stopped, opened the door, looked back at me expectantly.

From Tripoli to Damascus

"Do you speak English?" I asked.

He stared at me.

"Are you going back to Beirut?" I said.

Still nothing.

"Can you tell me where the bus station is?"

"No ingleezi," he said and he motioned for me to get off.

So I did.

I thought the best thing to do was to get oriented immediately, so I pulled out my Lonely Planet, walked to the corner and matched the street to the map.

But what now?

It was afternoon already. In the guidebook, the bus station looked far away and difficult to find. I didn't want to wander around and get lost, end up missing the last bus, and be stuck looking for a hotel at dusk or in the dark.

I decided to find a hotel sooner rather than later.

Eventually I found the nameless alley and then the small, easily missed entrance to the family-run pension I was looking for. I walked up the stairs and into the common room. Stone walls, reminiscent of Jerusalem, stretched to the high ceilings. Broad windows were capped with curved lines. A small doe-eyed boy sat in a chair watching a Disney show, dubbed into Arabic, blaring from the TV. A young woman with black hair and milky white skin, so pale it was luminescent, picked at a lunch of pita and cheese at the dining table.

I stood for a moment, not sure if these people were part of the owners' family or if they were guests.

"Are you looking for a room?" the woman asked me, her accent very American and a bit Southern.

"Yes," I said.

She looked toward an open doorway and shouted in Arabic.

"Do you work here?" I asked.

"No," she said. "But I do look like I could be the disgruntled daughter or something, huh?" She laughed. "Actually, I'm a journalist."

She'd come to Tripoli in the wake of the explosions, but she hadn't come to Lebanon just to write. Though she was Christian and hailed from the US Bible Belt, she had faint roots in the area - her father, whom her mother had never married, was Lebanese and Muslim. Miriam was their love child from college days. Searching for something to anchor her to the father she'd never met, she drifted through the Middle East unmoored.

Emboldened by Miriam's presence, I passed the rest of the day sightseeing with her. The tourist destinations were empty, and there was only a trickle of locals on the sidewalks. Taxi drivers leaned against their parked cars, waiting for the customers who weren't likely to arrive anytime soon.

We wandered through the Old City's tangled slivers of alleys and streets. We walked through souk after souk, lit windows lined with sparkling jewelry, the heads of bodiless mannequins wrapped in bright hijabs, barrels of inky black olives, silver fish with glassy eyes on neat display. Above the storefronts, apartments' green shutters open and pinned to stone walls or clamped shut, serving as a tight guard against the afternoon sun.

From Tripoli to Damascus

TRIPOLI IS famous for its soap and we made our way, stopping frequently to ask for directions, to the Khan as-Saboun (soap khan). We found an empty courtyard dotted with neat but dusty stacks of rose and sky blue. Eager salespeople offered remedies - for anxiety, a lagging love life, and other ills - in the form of colorful, fragrant blocks of soap.

Miriam and I didn't linger long in any one place and eventually we passed into a residential area. The crescent moon and star was etched into the faade surrounding faded rust-toned shutters. An unsmiling young woman watched us from an open window, her head and neck swathed in white - her long face, almond-shaped eyes, full lips and sharp chin similar to my own.

A pair of school-aged boys with black hair ran past us, toy guns in their hands. Laughing, one slammed another against a stone wall. He pushed his friend's shoulder hard with one hand, held the barrel of the pistol to his head with the other. A third boy joined them - the fake shotgun he carried as long as his small torso.

In the morning, Miriam and I boarded a bus back to Beirut. As we rolled past the tanks and out into the country, the grim mood of Tripoli dissipated. We decided to celebrate leaving Tripoli with a girls' night on the town. We agreed I'd collect my things from my host's small couch in Beirut's Hamra neighborhood and we'd take a room at a hostel closer to Gemmayze, the district where Beiruitis go to party.

My host's studio apartment was perched atop a tall apartment building on a quiet street that could be mistaken for a Tel Aviv side street - save for the occasional Hamas flag jutting over a doorway or hanging from a windowsill. Green with white letters, the Hamas flags stirred in the slight wind, rippling their greetings to Miriam and me as we passed. I pictured the Hizbullah takeover, as my host had described it. Masked gunmen lining the streets. The residents peering down from above, thin sheets of glass all that separated them from falling into the chaos below.

When we arrived at my host's studio apartment, he gave Miriam a quick handshake and an equally brief hug to me. His breath was tinged with Limoncello, a lemon liqueur, and he raked his hands through his dark brown hair.

"Listen," he said. "I've been getting some phone calls about you. From strangers. They're asking if I've got an Israeli journalist, a Zionist, sleeping here."

"What did you tell them?"

"I said that you're not a Zionist."

"But I'm not really Israeli, either," I said.

"You're a citizen. That's good enough for them."

Who was them? My host didn't know, I didn't know and Miriam didn't know. Either way, the three of us agreed that maybe it was time for me to leave Beirut and Lebanon altogether.

Miriam and I packed my mochilla and headed back to the bus station, this time in search of a gypsy cab that would take us to Damascus. Miriam's Lebanese visa was expired anyway, and she needed to exit and then reenter the country to obtain a new visa. Making a run for Syria seemed like the best thing to do, for both of us.

After more than five hours of waiting for our visas on the no-man's-land of the Lebanese-Syrian border, we took another gypsy cab to the city locals call Ash-Sham. Miriam made conversation with the driver and his male companion and they broached a topic that is normally taboo in Syrian culture - politics. The words "Bush" and "Obama" popped out of what was, for me, an otherwise indecipherable discussion that filled the car as we journeyed out of the mountains and into Damascus.

It was past midnight and the streets were empty and dark.

From Tripoli to Damascus

The driver and his companion didn't know the hotel we were looking for and the street was unmarked on our map. Miriam told them it was close to the train station downtown, so they dropped us off there. We paid them and their rambling 1980s model car slid off into the night.

We entered the hotel and faced a disinterested, mustached, heavysset clerk. He offered us the only remaining room and led us up the narrow stairwell. He opened the door, flipped on the light and we stepped into the small room.

Miriam flicked two baby cockroaches off a bed.

"How much?" I asked.

"I'm not sleeping here," Miriam whispered to me as we followed the clerk back to the small lobby.

"Look, it's almost 1 a.m. Maybe the bugs can get us a discount," I said.

They didn't - the clerk quoted us a price double that listed in our guidebook and his disinterest morphed into sourliness as we argued with him in English and Arabic.

"Including breakfast?" I asked.

"No."

"A cup of tea?"

"No."

"Wait a second," Miriam said. We all paused. She pointed to a framed document behind the counter. "It says there that the price is..."

"Get out! There's no room here for you!" the clerk shouted and pointed to the door.

And so we walked toward the glowing sign down the street.

The clerk there was thin, young, pleasant. His dark hair was slicked back.

Miriam spoke to him in Arabic and then she turned to me. "He wants to know how many hours we need the room for," she said.

I looked around. Couches lined the mirror-walled, marble-floored lobby. A handful of men sat, eyeing us up and down, up and down.

It appeared, perhaps, that we were in a hotel of ill repute.

"We need it for the whole night," I said and Miriam translated.

He raised his eyebrows.

"Look, we just need somewhere to sleep," I said.

He flipped through his ledger and glanced at the clock on the wall. "There is a room that will be open at four," he said.

Miriam and I took stock of the men and decided to move along to the next hotel.

"It's high season right now," a **female** clerk with a long black ponytail and kohl-rimmed eyes told us. "We have many, many tourists here from Iran." She walked with us through the revolving doors and pointed down the street. "Try them," she said. "Good luck."

From Tripoli to Damascus

We went to hotel after hotel only to find they were full. It was nearing 2 a.m. The streets were deserted.

"OK. So we won't sleep," I said. "We'll just keep moving, until dawn. It's only a few hours away."

But then what?

WE WERE standing at Martyrs' Square, which we'd passed several times already. We were tired and disoriented. We couldn't remember exactly which direction the last clerk had sent us in. I saw a tiny green neon sign high up on a building. Hotel.

We walked down the side street, stopped at the entrance below the sign. Nothing indicated that there was, indeed, a hotel there. The litter-strewn stairwell was decorated with graffiti and less ornate scribbles. Ahmed was here, a sign of life in what seemed like an abandoned building.

Heavy with the weight of our mochillas, we climbed the stairs. First floor - nothing. Second floor - nothing.

But we kept going. Strains of Arabic music floated down to us. We stopped on the next landing and looked up into the empty space at the center of the stairwell. A green light glowed above.

Several more flights and we were at the simply named "Hotel." The walls were a crisp, sky blue. Three old men, all mustached, sat in the common area, smoking cigarettes and sipping tea. The TV was blaring classical Arabic music.

"We. Need. A. Room," I said as I tried to catch my breath.

They chuckled at me and gestured to the chairs.

"No, no," I said and I mimed sleep.

They conferred with each other, speaking rapidly in Arabic. I looked to Miriam. She shrugged. "They're talking too fast," she said. "And I'm not very familiar with the Syrian dialect."

They turned to us. One spoke. "We have a room," he said, offering it to us for the Syrian equivalent of \$10.

We paid and received a gentle smile. No key. The door to our room, which was on the far side of the common area, didn't have a lock.

At that point, we didn't care. After Tripoli, Beirut, hours in no man's land, a surly clerk and a brush with a whorehouse, we just wanted some sleep. Miriam picked one of the three beds and tucked herself under the thick brown blanket. She readjusted her pillow and gasped.

"A knife," she said, raising a switchblade into the air.

I looked around. The room was small. There was a shirt draped on the open door of the armoire. A half-used bar of soap, a razor and a cup lined the edge of the sink. A pair of men's slippers at the end of each of the three beds, a wristwatch on the nightstand.

That's when I realized - there weren't any rooms left. The old men had given us the room they sleep in and they'd given it to us for a pittance. I realized then that all this time I'd been terrified of having to surrender myself to the mercy of the people around, but that every step of this journey had been a supreme act of faith, from the moment I stepped off the bus in Tripoli.

I turned off the light and got into bed. I slept soundly that night, knowing that three old men were sitting guard on the other side of an unlocked door.

Graphic

7 photos: Young boys play with toy guns in the Tripoli market. The courtyard of Umayyad Mosque in Damascus also serves as a gathering place for families. Old men survey olives in the fruit and vegetable market in a poor area of downtown Damascus. An abandoned building in downtown Tripoli. Men smoke nargileh and sip tea at a cafe in Damascus's old city. (Credit: Sarah Meltsner)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Letters

The Jerusalem Post

May 1, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 2

Length: 1274 words

Byline: Sheila Herron, Uri Hirsch, Miriam Lock, Adina Sherer, Galit Haim, Yoram Getzler, David Geffen

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Onward with the media blitz!

Sir, - I am a non-Jewish supporter of Israel. I am also one of the founding national directors of www.americac2c.org and have started a group there to support Israel. I feel it is urgent and vital to get the truth out to the world about Israel and the Palestinian issue.

Hamas manipulates the media against Israel at every turn. The ill-informed of the world accept this propaganda as truth. I posted David Forman's "Needed: A public relations blitz" (April 24) in the 'Israel, I Support You!' Group on AC2C. It is an excellent article - exactly what Israel needs to do, and urgently.

I want to invite you to join AmericaC2C and the 'Israel, I Support You!' Group and help us spread the truth to the world. Please let people know about us.

SHEILA HERRON

Gig Harbor, Washington

Sir, - David Forman's suggestions in "Needed: A public relations blitz" were right on. So when and how do we get started?

URI HIRSCH

Netanya

Soldiers, wherever they fell

Sir, - I want to thank Barbara Sofer for "The origins of heroism" (April 24) about Ro'i Klein, of blessed memory. She helped me understand, in a new way, that Holocaust Remembrance Day and Remembrance Day for Israel's fallen soldiers are the same exact thing: memorial days for fallen soldiers of the Jewish people, whether they fell in the Diaspora or in the State of Israel.

Seeing these two days as the "bookends" of a week of remembering our heroes is a unique and meaningful way to understand the importance of these memorial days. The fact that they come after Pessah, which is the holiday of

Letters

freedom, and before Yom Ha'atzma'ut, Independence Day, reminds us how much the Jewish people still has to mourn before being able to truly celebrate its independence.

I am both saddened and moved by Ro'i Klein's heroism. I can only pray that the day will come when heroes such as Ro'i will not have to give up their lives and will instead be able to give of their strengths and talents to Israeli society.

MIRIAM LOCK

Efrat

Religious girls in the IDF

Sir, - My immediate reaction to your article about religious girls in the IDF and Captain Ofra Gutman's work on their behalf ("Helping sem girls turn soldier," April 17) was: Who is like our nation, Israel!

By coincidence, I had just read an article in an American magazine about women who serve in the US Army. It described a toxic environment where the rate of harassment is over 90 percent. The atmosphere can be so debilitating, the report said, that women often come out emotionally crippled.

Then I read Dina Kraft's article. I know the IDF isn't perfect. I realize that there are incidents of harassment and abuse there, as there are, unfortunately, in society in general. But it's not across-the-board behavior.

You don't send your daughter off to the Israeli army assuming that she will be abused and quite possibly raped. Instead, there is a whole office dedicated to helping religious girls with refined religious and moral sensitivities find their place in the army, the emphasis being on their religious and moral comfort and security.

With all that is wrong here, with all that we have to acknowledge and face and criticize and correct in our country, nevertheless: There's no nation like ours.

ADINA SHERER

Jerusalem

A community to be proud of

Sir, - HaMinyan Hamishpachti was founded in 1996, and is affiliated with the Masorti Movement in Israel. As acknowledged by Zachary L. Grayson in "A lack of credentials" (Letters, April 24), Kfar Vradim is primarily a secular town in which there exists a profound fear of religious extremism. Despite this, there is visible evidence amongst the residents of a desire to explore their Jewish roots and traditions.

In my personal opinion, HaMinyan HaMishpachti has succeeded in breaking down many barriers and today is perceived by many as an integral part of community life. Social action projects sponsored by our community regularly involve partnership with one or more of Kfar Vradim's formal institutions.

Five years ago, HaMinyan HaMishpachti introduced the HALOM program in response to requests from largely secular families looking for assistance in educating their children to be knowledgeable and proud Jews. Since then, in a welcoming, pluralistic atmosphere, children and their families (largely not members of our community) have begun integrating Jewish ritual and tradition into their family life.

There is a marked increase in active participation in our community's Shabbat and holiday prayer services and beautiful traditions - for example, in the dead of winter, over 60 men, women and children gathered together for family-oriented Shabbat morning prayers!

HaMinyan HaMishpachti extends a warm invitation to all visitors. We invite Mr. Grayson, who for the past year has been living in the center of the country with his family, to come up North on a more regular basis and take part in more of our family-oriented prayers services and activities.

Letters

Despite the lack of our own building, which has been delayed as a result of issues with Israel's Department of Religious Affairs, HaMinyan HaMishpachti - with the support of Kfar Vradim's residents and the Masorti movement - continues to flourish, developing innovative programming and activities to meet the needs of its current members as well as the desires of the greater community.

GALIT HAIM

Kfar Vradim

Crossing controversy

Sir, - The controversy over the number of families who would take advantage of the proposed law to provide adequate compensation to civilian residents of Jewish communities east of the Green Line continues to attract interest and signals the great differences of perception among these residents ("Crossing over?" Michael Green, April 3). As I remember, the idea was part of one of Ehud Barak's proposals for an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

Are there tens or hundreds of families who would take advantage of such an offer? The answer to this question raises the emotions of those opposed and/or in favor of this law.

It seems to me that those who claim to speak with authority about the low number of people actually desiring to leave, and those who claim that there are many such families, have no actual way of knowing until such a law is actually passed.

At that point, all the claims and counter-claims will be laid to rest. Those really wanting to leave will leave; the rest will stay.

This would be an advantage to those committed to remaining in their communities, since those who are prepared to leave might, by virtue of their frustration and dissatisfaction, weaken the community the longer they stay.

YORAM GETZLER

Moshav Aminadav

Magnificent 'Mizrah'

Sir, - Growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, in the late 1940s, my vision of the dimensions of the towns and cities in Eretz Yisrael was derived from the Monsohn Press chromos. From 1910 on, my grandfather, Rabbi Tobias Geffen, aided institutions in Jerusalem and other locales here and frequently received large colorful receipts for his contributions.

A piece similar to the Mizrah on page 16 of your story ("Making an imprint," Batsheva Pomerantz, April 17), from the Monsohn press, hung on the east wall of my grandfather's study on Washington Street in Atlanta. As a small child, I listened to him explain how important the buildings of Jerusalem, Tiberias, Safed and Hebron drawn on the Mizrah were to the Jewish people.

Although he had many postcards and pictures of the Jewish communities in Eretz Yisrael, he loved to show me, my cousins and my friends the etchings on the Monsohn 2x2.5-meter artistic masterpiece. That Mizrah has now returned to Jerusalem with my wife and myself - almost a century later.

DAVID GEFFEN , Jerusalem

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Obama reaches out to the Islamic world

Pretoria News (South Africa)

April 15, 2009 Wednesday

e1 Edition

Copyright 2009 Independent News and Media Ltd All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 8

Length: 1364 words

Body

THE START of the Iraq war in 2003 marked a crucial break between the US and almost all the states of the region. "None of Iraq's neighbours, absolutely none, was pleased by the American occupation of Iraq," says the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari. Long-term US allies like Turkey astonished the White House by refusing to allow US troops to use its territory to invade Iraq.

US President Barack Obama, who made his first official visit to the country last week, is now trying to disengage from Iraq without appearing to scuttle, or leave anarchy behind. He is trying to win back old allies, and, as he made clear in a speech in Ankara last Monday, to end the confrontation between the US and Islam which was his predecessor George Bush's legacy.

It is not easy for Obama to reverse the tide of anti-Americanism or bring to an end the wars which Bush began. For all the Iraqi government's claim that life is returning to normal in Baghdad, the last few days have seen a crescendo of violence. The day before Obama arrived, six bombs exploded in Baghdad, killing 37 people.

And as much as Obama would like to treat the Iraq war as ancient history, the US is still struggling to extricate itself. The very fact that the Democratic president had to arrive in Iraq by surprise, as Bush and Tony Blair invariably did for security reasons, shows the conflict is refusing to go away.

The Iraqi prime minister and president remain holed up in the Green Zone most of the time. Obama could not fly into the Green Zone by helicopter because of bad weather, but the airport road is still unsafe and Baghdad remains one of the most dangerous cities in the world.

The Iraqi political landscape, too, was permanently altered by the US invasion and it will be difficult to create a stable Iraqi state which does not depend on the US. Opinion polls in Iraq show that most Iraqis believe it is the US, and not their own government, which is in control of their country.

One change which is to Obama's advantage is that the American media has largely stopped reporting the conflict, because they no longer have the money to do so, and a majority of Americans think the war has been won. But the danger for the president is that if there is a fresh explosion in Iraq, he may be blamed for throwing away a victory that was won by his predecessor.

The rhetoric with which the US conducts its diplomacy is easier to change than facts on the ground in Iraq or Afghanistan. Obama's speech to the Turkish parliament in Ankara was a carefully judged bid to reassure the Muslim world that the US is not at war with Islam.

Obama reaches out to the Islamic world

Everything he said was in sharp contrast to Bush's bellicose threats post-9/11 about launching a "crusade" and to the rhetoric of neo-conservatives attacking "Islamofascism", or claiming that there was a "clash of civilisations".

The leaders of states with Muslim majorities appreciate the different tone of US pronouncements, but privately wonder how far Obama will be able to introduce real change.

Turkish students at a meeting with Obama in Istanbul voiced scepticism that American actions in future would be much different from what they were under Bush. Reasonably enough, Obama replied that he should be given time and "moving the ship of state is a slow process".

But he also cited the US withdrawal from Iraq as a sign that he would match actions to words.

Istanbul, on the boundaries of Europe and Asia, was a good place for the US leader to declare a more conciliatory attitude towards Islam. The city is filled with grandiose monuments to Christianity and Islam, though religious tolerance was more in evidence under the Ottoman empire than since the foundation of the modern Turkish state in 1923.

But the reality is that secularism is dying away in Turkey's rural hinterland and is on the retreat even in Istanbul itself. Butchers selling pork are few compared to 20 years ago.

Obtaining alcohol is quietly being made more difficult, except for foreign tourists, by high taxes on wine and expensive liquor licences for restaurants.

The old middle class, particularly in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, may be resolute in their defence of the secular state, but the so-called "Anatolian Tigers" - the new companies which have led Turkey's spectacular economic growth - are generally owned and run by more conservative families where the women wear the veil.

"Socially, Turkey is becoming far more Islamic," said one expert on Turkey, "although the ruling Justice and Development Party is moving cautiously."

Obama's effort to make a U-turn in American policy towards the Islamic world will ultimately depend on how far he changes US policy towards Israel and the Palestinians, the occupation of Iraq, the confrontation with Iran and Syria and the war in Afghanistan.

The Iranians, for instance, note that despite Obama's friendlier approach to them, the US official in Washington in charge of implementing sanctions against them is a hold-over from the Bush administration.

The American confrontation with Islam after 9/11 always had more to do with opposition to foreign intervention and occupation than it did with cultural differences; the most ideologically religious Islamic countries, such as Saudi Arabia, supported the US and it is doubtful how far al-Qaeda fighters were motivated primarily by religious fanaticism.

The chief US interrogator in Iraq, Major Matthew Alexander, who is credited with finding out the location of the al-Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, says that during 1 300 interrogations he supervised, he came across only one true ideologue. He is quoted as saying: "I listened time and time again to foreign fighters and Sunni Iraqis state that the No 1 reason they had decided to pick up arms and join al-Qaeda was the abuses at Abu Ghraib and the authorised torture and abuse at Guantanamo Bay."

This diagnosis by Alexander is confirmed by the history of Islamic fundamentalism across the Muslim world over the past 30 years.

In Egypt, the nationalism of then president Gamal Abdel Nasser was discredited by humiliating defeat in the 1967 war with Israel.

In Iraq, for all his military bravado, Saddam Hussein was a notably disastrous military leader.

Obama reaches out to the Islamic world

All the military regimes espousing nationalism and secularism in the Arab world began, or ended up, turning into corrupt and brutal autocracies.

In contrast, political Islam has been able to go some way towards delivering its promises of defending the community.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah guerrillas were able to successfully harass Israeli forces in the 1990s where Yasser Arafat's commanders had abandoned their men and fled.

In Gaza this year, **Hamas** was able to portray itself as the one Palestinian movement committed to resisting Israel.

In Iraq, al-Qaeda got nowhere until it could present itself as the opposition to the US occupation and as an ally, though a supremely bigoted and murderous one, of Iraqi nationalism.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban has the advantage of fighting against foreign occupation.

Secularism in the Arab world and in Afghanistan, on the other hand, has the problem that it is seen as being at the service of foreign intervention.

It is why secularism and nationalism are ultimately stronger in Turkey than they were in almost all other Islamic countries.

Kemal Ataturk and the Turkish nationalists successfully defended the Turkish heartlands from foreign attack between 1915 and 1922. This gave secularism and nationalism a credibility and a popularity in Turkey which they never had in Iraq, Egypt or Syria.

Obama's aim of ending the confrontation between the US and the Muslim world is both easier and more difficult than it looks.

It is easier because the confrontation is not primarily over religion or clashing cultures.

But the confrontation is over real issues such as the fate of the Palestinians, the future of Iraq and the control of Afghanistan. And even if Obama wanted to change the US political relationship with Israel, it is not clear that he has any more political strength at home than Bush had to do so. If these concrete issues are not resolved, then America's relationship with the Muslim world may remain as confrontational and difficult as it was under Bush. - The Independent

Load-Date: April 14, 2009

Letters

The Jerusalem Post
April 8, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1257 words

Byline: Judy Ford, Andrea Moriah, Barry Eisenberg, Meir Lavi, Elin Suleymanov, Joyce Kahn, Yaacov Peterseil
Rabbi Jacob Chinitz, Alice Russell Billings, Jerusalem Post staff

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Festival funding

Sir, - The pictures of this week's Tel Aviv festivities, which will continue all this year to celebrate 100 years of the first modern Jewish city, were delightful. Then I learned the price of this extravaganza, and was astounded.

In this time of so much unemployment, I think the money would be better spent on helping poor and needy families meet their daunting costs ("Record layoffs of 20,072 in March," April 6).

JUDY FORD

Petah Tikva

Explain it

Sir, - Did anyone else see the absurdity in "Hamas 'mega-tunnels' would enable smuggling of rockets in one piece" (April 7)? Didn't we just go into Gaza and kill hundreds of people, brave the wrath of the world and endure tens of investigations into our possible "war crimes" specifically to stop these tunnels?

ANDREA MORIAH

Har Adar

The facts? Irrelevant

Sir, - "Head of Rabin Academy to 'Post': IDF in Gaza tried to protect civilians in the most crowded place in the world" (April 7) was deeply disturbing.

First, Danny Zamir is incredibly naive if he believes something as explosive as "allegations" about soldiers' experiences in Gaza contained in "an internal newsletter" could be posted on the Internet and not picked up by the media.

Letters

Secondly, he seems to single out the foreign media, blaming them for blowing the reports out of proportion. Here he is disingenuous, at best. It was the local press that "broke" the story - in actuality not a story - and it has published very little saying it erred.

In fact Larry Derfner, in a Post article last week, advanced the Orwellian argument that even if the specific facts upon which the Israeli press based its stories were wrong, it's of little account because such terrible things happened in the Gaza offensive that accuracy doesn't really matter.

One can only conclude that when the media criticize the IDF and Israel, we are now to understand that the facts are irrelevant.

BARRY EISENBERG

Jerusalem

...indeed!

Sir, - Hallelujah! Israel is vindicated at last! When the soldiers' testimonies on acts of brutality and vandalism in Gaza first came to light, the Post labeled Danny Zamir a leftist who evaded his duty as a soldier to protect settlers in the West Bank and therefore could not be believed. But when he is under great pressure to show he is not a traitor who betrayed Israel - oh, what a different man he is!

Suddenly his account of refusing orders is given. Suddenly the entire main report in the newspaper - with a headline that would have made any Soviet paper proud - is about him, and he is allowed to speak in defense of himself and the army ("The personal code of the IDF soldier: 'May our camp be pure,'" April 7). He is now a totally credible person.

Yet even a simple look at his statements reveals that he not once says he believes the soldiers were lying.

Zamir can be excused - and indeed justified - for defending himself and the IDF. It is the Post's attitude that is shameful. For you take it for granted that the IDF "investigation" is gospel truth - while other media outlets in Israel at least bothered to highlight that it was concluded in a record time of only one week, and that most soldiers would rather lie than betray their comrades.

It is your paper that willfully ignores the flood of testimonies coming from Gaza - almost on a daily basis - about IDF soldiers shooting innocent men, women and children fleeing their homes, about killing medical personnel, about a civilian death toll much higher than Israel claims, all backed with strong evidence.

No, the Palestinian side of things will always remain a lie for you, and evidence on grave Israeli wrongdoing is not for a once-honorable paper that is rapidly becoming a mouthpiece for the propaganda of the most moral army in the world.

MEIR LAVI

Tel Aviv

Displaced in Azerbaijan

Sir, - Mark Weiss was correct in describing the legacy of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict as "bitter" ("The Karabakh war's bitter legacy," April 6). He was also right to focus on heart-breaking stories of refugees.

Yet had Mr. Weiss visited Azerbaijan and not limited his reporting to Armenia, he would have found stories of exile and personal tragedies in overwhelmingly greater numbers, as the displaced population in Azerbaijan is much more numerous than the article suggests - close to one million people.

Moreover, the majority of these people are not refugees from Armenia but internally displaced people in their own country as a result of Armenia's policy of ethnic cleansing of the occupied territories.

Letters

The bitter legacy of this war and self-isolation of Armenia result from the policy of exclusive ethnicity- based expansionism, an approach rejected by its more diverse and inclusive neighbors such as Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.

Armenia could and should be an integral part of our region, sharing in its relative prosperity. For that, it needs to think about the future more than about its past and adopt a vision which extends beyond the narrow limits of ethnicity.

ELIN SULEYMANOV

Consul General of Azerbaijan

Los Angeles

Just great...

Sir, - I wish to thank The Jerusalem Post for printing Howard Smith's marvelous op-ed on Birkat Hahama, which takes place today ("Blessing the sun: Astronomical absurdity, or spiritual encounter? April 6).

What made this piece so special was that it was written by a Harvard professor. It conveyed a feeling of greatness about the universe, creation, the Jewish people - and, most of all, God Himself.

JOYCE KAHN

Petah Tikva

Sir, - Howard Smith attempted to debunk the rabbinical Blessing of the Sun date which, in his considered opinion, is at least two weeks later than it should be. He told us that, actually, the sun was not created "on a Wednesday, nor 5769 years ago. It was created 4.6 billion years ago."

So his reason for celebrating Pessah is to "internalize and propagate its symbolic meaning," whatever that means to him.

Personally I think it's important for all individuals, especially those based at Harvard, to have a venue for their theories. But I wonder, can Mr. Smith give us the exact time of the creation of the sun - or the universe for that matter - within a two-week span?

YAACOV PETERSEIL

Jerusalem

Ten drops of wine

Sir, - I beg to differ with Judy Bamberger ("My 10 drops of wine," Letters, April 7) and the common assumption that we spill 10 drops from our full cup of joy during the Seder because the Egyptians were drowning in the sea. The citation refers to the angels, who have no right to rejoice over the death of God's creatures.

But, obviously, the Israelites did rejoice, because they sing the Song at the Sea, which expresses relish over the drowning of the enemy.

They had a right to rejoice. As a matter of fact, the Hagada multiplies the plagues from 10 to 200 and 250. I think the reason we spill 10 drops is to count, with satisfaction, the 10 punishments of our persecutors.

RABBI JACOB CHINITZ

Jerusalem

God at the helm

Letters

Sir, - Why should any nation tell you that you cannot protect your people? I do not think you should remove the security fence.

Israel did not start the war of 1967. And if those surrounding nations that did start the war had accomplished what they intended to do to Israel, do you think they would return land to it, as Israel is being urged to do?

God will have the final say. We had better listen to what He has said already. In the end, those who try to destroy Israel will be the ones destroyed.

ALICE RUSSELL BILLINGS

Montana

CORRECTION

Daniel Brenner is the executive director of Birthright NEXT, and not as stated in "Saperstein named 'hottest rabbi' by US magazine," (April 6).

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

US not tied to 'old formulas,' Clinton tells Netanyahu. Secretary of state focuses on Iranian threat * Abbas presses for Israel to accept two-state solution and stop settlement building

The Jerusalem Post

March 4, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1268 words

Byline: HERB KEINON and BRENDA GAZZAR

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

The US does not want to be tied to "old formulas" in moving the diplomatic process forward, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told Prime Minister-designate Binyamin Netanyahu on Tuesday in a meeting Netanyahu described afterward as "important, deep and very good."

Clinton made clear that the US had certain goals in mind for the region, but was willing to look at various ways of reaching them and was not married to any particular formula, especially since there was a recognition that the formulas of the past had failed, diplomatic sources said.

Among those goals was a two-state solution, Clinton said during a press conference after meeting with Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

However, Zalman Shoval, a top foreign policy adviser to Netanyahu, said the issue did not come up in the 90-minute Clinton-Netanyahu conversation.

Neither, he said, was the matter of settlements raised, nor was the word "Annapolis" mentioned. The Annapolis conference in November 2007, which was hosted by then-US president George W. Bush, articulated a two-state solution as a mutually agreed upon outline to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Netanyahu was joined in the meeting by two other key foreign policy advisers, Uzi Arad and Yitzhak Molho, and Clinton was accompanied by US envoy George Mitchell and American Ambassador James Cunningham.

Later, Clinton met with Defense Minister Ehud Barak, and then had dinner with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert at his residence in the capital.

"The main topic was Iran," and it was tackled from a number of different angles, said Shoval, who was briefed about the Clinton-Netanyahu meeting afterward.

First of all, the nuclear threat was discussed, with Netanyahu stressing the time element, and saying that while he did not dispute the US policy of engaging Iran, it was important to ensure that the Islamic republic not drag out the talks and secure nuclear arms in the meanwhile, Shoval said.

US not tied to 'old formulas,' Clinton tells Netanyahu. Secretary of state focuses on Iranian threat * Abbas presses for Israel to accept two-state solution and....

Second, Netanyahu emphasized that a nuclear Iran would completely change the whole peace process equation in the region and that more and more moderate Arab states would - out of concern for self-preservation - move into the Iranian orbit, Shoval added.

This argument contrasted with one often heard in the US that the key to neutralizing Iran was an Israeli- Palestinian peace deal, Shoval said. Under Netanyahu's formulation, unless Iran's nuclear ambitions were stopped, the chances of any peace agreement would evaporate.

Netanyahu emerged from the meeting in good spirits, saying he and Clinton agreed to work in "close cooperation" and would meet soon after a new Israeli government was formed. He is expected to travel to Washington for a meeting with US President Barack Obama shortly after forming a coalition.

"We need to think creatively in order to move forward and create a different reality, both in terms of security and politically, and this is a common goal for both sides," Netanyahu said.

Clinton did not say anything after the meeting, but rather went directly to her meeting with Barak.

That meeting also focused on Iran and the Palestinians, with Barak urging Clinton to tighten the sanctions on Teheran.

"In order for the sanctions to be effective," Barak said, "it was necessary to include Russia, India and China. Only that way would it become clear to the world in a short time whether sanctions and dialogue have a chance."

In parallel with support for sanctions against Iran, "Israel was not taking any option off of the table, and recommended to other nations to act in a similar manner," Barak said.

Clinton, at the press conference following her earlier meeting with Livni, said Israel and the US shared an understanding on Iran.

"We intend to do all that we can to deter and to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons," she said. "That is our stated policy. That is the goal of any tactic that we employ."

Clinton said no one would be "confused" by the Obama administration's talk about engagement with Teheran.

"Our goal remains the same: to dissuade and prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and continuing to fund terrorism," she said.

Whatever policy the US pursues on Iran "will be done thoughtfully, in consultation with our friends and allies - most particularly Israel," Clinton said.

During the press conference, Clinton reiterated the US's commitment to a two-state solution and said Washington's assessment was "that eventually the inevitability of working toward a two-state solution seems inescapable."

Then, in what sounded like an indirect acknowledgment of Netanyahu's view on the matter, she added, "that doesn't mean that we don't respect the opinions of others who see it differently."

Regarding the Gaza Strip, Clinton said that what was needed was a durable cease-fire, but added, "That can only be achieved if Hamas ceases the rocket attacks. No nation should be expected to sit idly by and allow rockets to assault its people and its territories. These attacks must stop, and so must the smuggling of weapons into Gaza. These activities put innocent lives of Israelis and Palestinians at risk and undermine the well-being of the people of Gaza."

Clinton made clear that the US, "regardless of our political party in the White House or in the Congress, has always worked and supported the government and the people of Israel, and we intend to continue doing so.

US not tied to 'old formulas,' Clinton tells Netanyahu. Secretary of state focuses on Iranian threat * Abbas presses for Israel to accept two-state solution and....

"Now, that doesn't mean that as good friends, which we are, we might not have opinions that we will express from time to time. And certainly, having been on the receiving end, I know that Israel is not shy about expressing opinions about our policies."

Clinton also met on Tuesday with President Shimon Peres, visited Yad Vashem, and met women involved in an NGO supporting female entrepreneurs called Sviva Tomechet.

The secretary of state was scheduled to travel to Ramallah on Wednesday morning for meetings with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salaam Fayad, and to fly out of Israel in the afternoon for meetings in Europe.

Abbas will urge Clinton to pressure Netanyahu to accept the two-state solution and to stop settlement construction, a PA spokesman said Tuesday.

While Abbas is ready to deal with any Israeli leader, "we are demanding a commitment as well from the Israel prime minister to the two-state solution and to the cessation of [building in] settlements, according to the road map," said Nabil Aburdene, official spokesman and an adviser to President Abbas.

The US-backed road map peace plan calls for a halt to all settlement construction, including for natural growth.

"The president will be clear with her that we are committed to our principles, that we are committed to the road map and the Arab peace initiative and to the understanding of Annapolis," Aburdene said.

The Arab League peace initiative calls for full Israeli withdrawal from "occupied Arab lands," the creation of a Palestinian state, and a "just solution" for Palestinian refugees in exchange for full normalization between Israel and Arab states.

Abbas wants Netanyahu to understand that a "comprehensive peace and a lasting peace means sitting down at the table and negotiating all six final-status issues, seriously and without any delay," Aburdene said.

Abbas's spokesman also welcomed Clinton's comment on Tuesday that her country will be "vigorously engaged" in the establishment of a Palestinian state.

"It's a positive step from the secretary," he said. "We urge her to continue her efforts to convince the [next] Israeli government to stop the settlement activities... These are important steps to pave the way for a new process that might lead to peace."

Graphic

Photo: PRIME MINISTER-DESIGNATE Binyamin Netanyahu and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton chat to reporters in Jerusalem yesterday. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

THE BUZZ: FLORIDA POLITICS

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

February 26, 2009 Thursday

Tampabay.com Edition

Copyright 2009 Times Publishing Company All Rights Reserved

Section: THE BUZZ: FLORIDA POLITICS

Length: 1322 words

Body

Hasner wary of Muslim activists in Tallahassee

State Rep. Adam Hasner is sounding the alarm about a group of activists who want to host Florida Muslim Capitol Day.

"By now, I can't imagine you haven't heard about this upcoming lobbying day for Muslims in Tallahassee," Hasner of Delray Beach wrote in an e-mail (<http://blogs.tampabay.com/buzz/files/hasneremail.jpg>) forwarded to more than a dozen Tallahassee lobbyists who are Jewish.

"Do you all intend to be part of an information campaign in opposition to it?" he asked in the e-mail.

Hasner, the House majority leader, would not say to whom he had sent the e-mail originally and speculated that the Muslim group United Voices for America will try to "push back" against a resolution he proposed during the January special session calling for solidarity with Israel. (story here) (<http://www.tampabay.com/news/politics/state/article979282.ece>)

UPDATE 7:30 a.m.: Hasner provides this statement: "I believe that all Floridians have the absolute right to petition their government and peaceably assemble, however, I am deeply concerned by the well-documented ties that this group's leader has to organizations that are affiliated with terrorist groups such as Hamas. While their name sounds peaceful, I would strongly encourage my colleagues to carefully scrutinize his background so they do not become an instrument in legitimizing or endorsing his radical agenda."

Posted by Alex Leary at 1:51:33 AM

* * *

Sansom's friend Odom pushes toll road

A developer closely linked to former House Speaker Ray Sansom is pushing for a new toll road to slice through a nature preserve that taxpayers spent \$16.5 million to save from development.

"They couldn't have picked a worse place to put this road," said Matt Aresco, the biologist who manages the preserve.

THE BUZZ: FLORIDA POLITICS

The eight-member board in charge of building the toll road was created by the Legislature in 2005 through a bill sponsored by Sansom, R-Destin. Sansom's brief tenure as House speaker this year has led to a grand jury investigation. The toll road board's vice chairman is Jay Odom, the developer whose ties to Sansom are among the subjects now being investigated by the grand jury.

The work of the Northwest Florida Transportation Corridor Authority was close to Sansom's heart. When Gov. Charlie Crist vetoed giving the authority \$3 million in 2007, Sansom told the Northwest Florida Daily News that he regarded that as "about the most important \$3 million in the state budget." (See story [here](http://www.tampabay.com/news/transportation/roads/article979279.ece).) (<http://www.tampabay.com/news/transportation/roads/article979279.ece>)

Posted by Alex Leary at 1:56:56 AM

* * *

Mayhem at Orange REC

Does it seem like Republicans are acting more and more like Democrats used to? From the Orlando Sentinel: (http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_politics/) An internal fight in the local GOP turned even nastier last night when supporters of a splinter leadership group met in Winter Park to elect a new party chairman and an ugly confrontation broke out after the meeting. Supporters of Deon Long -- who lost a previous party chairman vote to Lew Oliver by just one vote (http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_politics/2008/12/orange-county-g.html) -- met and roundly elected Long to take over the local party. Oliver says the election is meaningless and didn't comply with party rules. Here's some more background. (http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_politics/2008/12/orange-gop-pick.html)

"They have gone from silly to delusional," Oliver said in an e-mail.

State party Chairman Jim Greer said Wednesday the splinter group's meeting and re-election was invalid, and the party's grievance committee is considering removing Long from party positions.

"Lew Oliver is the chairman," Greer said.

Deon supporters say last night's meeting met party requirements. They also plan to complain about one protester who attended, filmed the meeting, interrupted it and afterward, spewed racial slurs at Long, a former chairman of Florida Federation of Black Republicans. (http://www.geocities.com/ffbr_federation/index.html) A pair who attended said police were called.

Posted by Adam Smith at 11:11:37

* * *

Tom Delay: Crist drove Fla. 'into toilet'

Former House Republican leader Tom DeLay is none too impressed with fellow Republicans Charlie Crist and Arnold Schwarzenegger (Hat tip Miami New Times). After Harold Ford invoked Crist's and Schwarzenegger's support for the stimulus package on Hardball (about 6:30 in), DeLay scoffs: "Two governors that are dead wrong and have driven both their states into the economic toilet."

Video: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22425001/vp/29394663>

Posted by Adam Smith at 11:29:34 AM

* * *

Jeb, Mack, Feeney and more for Dennis Ross

THE BUZZ: FLORIDA POLITICS

Republican Dennis Ross -- one of the few Republican legislators to challenge Charlie Crist's approach to property insurance -- formally kicked off his campaign for Adam Putnam's congressional seat today and rolled out a bunch of endorsements: former congressman Andy Ireland; Tom Feeney; Allan Bense; U.S. Reps. Connie Mack, Ginny Brown-Waite, Gus Bilirakis and Jeff Miller; Republican national committeeman Paul Senft; Polk GOP activist Jean Burt; Polk GOP chairman Gene Roberts; the Rev. Lynne Breidenbach; and Linda Ivell, president of the Florida Federated Republican Women. The biggest name? Jeb Bush, who said in a statement:

"I am pleased to endorse my friend, Dennis Ross, for Congress. In a time when far too many politicians go along to get along, Dennis is not afraid to take a stand or make tough decisions, regardless of the consequences. Dennis will remain true to our conservative principles in Washington, just as he has in Tallahassee. His record as a reformer is needed now more than ever. I encourage all of the voters of District 12 -- Republican, Democrat, or Independent -- to send Dennis to Congress."

Posted by Adam Smith at 1:04:17 PM

* * *

Greer slams black GOP group leader

State Republican party chairman Jim Greer has sent a tough letter (Download here) (http://blogs.tampabay.com/buzz/files/DLL_Orange.pdf) to Deon Long, who tried to oust (http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_politics/) Lew Oliver as chairman of the Orange County GOP and at least used to be head of the Florida Federation of Black Republicans. Greer says Long is NOT chairman of the Orange REC, demands that Long provide financial records from the federation within two weeks, and refers him to the grievance committee that could suspend or remove him from any party offices now held.

"...In addition, there was much enthusiasm and commitment when the Florida Federation of Black Republicans was reconstituted approximately two years ago. However, since that time when you became chairman of the Federation, no significant progress has occurred, Federation Clubs have consistently complained to the state party regarding your actions, and your failure to recognize the state party's authority as it relates to financial matters and other issues has been continuous.... Your long history of flagrantly violating the RPOF Rules and Constitution, and your frequent actions that are detrimental to the party, simply can no longer be tolerated."

Posted by Adam Smith at 3:33:00 PM

* * *

Who's more cutting edge? Gelber v. Meek

Who's the master of new technology in the U.S. Senate race? Well, Dan Gelber (<http://www.dangelber.com/>) has a lot of netroots support and announced (on his blog, natch) that he will provide regular updates on the legislative session via Twitter, the social networking tool. Google "Kendrick Meek" and up pops an ad for the Dan Gelber campaign, often touting his support from prominent blogger Howie Klein (Downwithtyranny.blogspot.com).

Now Meek has launched (<http://kendrickmeek.com/>) the early version of his flash page/microsite (whatever that means), with the full shebang expected to launch next month. Blue State Digital, which developed many of the social networking tools for Barack Obama, designed Meek's site.

Posted by Adam Smith at 9:35:42 PM

Graphic

THE BUZZ: FLORIDA POLITICS

PHOTOS (2) MAP VIDEO

Load-Date: February 27, 2009

End of Document

Hail to the chief

The New Zealand Herald
January 17, 2009 Saturday

Copyright 2009 The New Zealand Herald All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; World

Length: 5927 words

Body

Barack Hussein Obama becomes the 44th President of the United States at a time when fear and uncertainty is only matched in scale by hope and expectation.

No president since the Great Depression has faced such mountainous economic and political ruin on entering office, with wars and a monetary meltdown.

The US lost 2.6 million jobs last year, the most since 1945. And 1.9 million of them were shed in the final four months of the year, as unemployment hit 7.2 per cent, a 16-year high.

But no incoming president in recent US history carries more belief that he can stare those crises down.

Obama sits on an 82 per cent public approval rating. At the same stage in 2000 George W. Bush was at 65 per cent and Bill Clinton in 1992 was on 67 per cent, according to a CNN/Opinion Research survey.

Even before he takes the oath of office on Wednesday, it is apparent that his will be a different presidency, one to which some of the conventional rules and wisdoms may not apply.

The nature of the challenges Obama faces are matched by the opportunities he sees and also represents - as the first black president and leader of a tech-smart generation.

As he enters the White House he is pushing for the passing of what would be his signature achievement - a roughly US\$825 billion stimulus package that aims to:

Upgrade America's infrastructure.

Double the use of alternative energy in three years.

Make three-quarters of federal buildings energy-efficient.

Computerise all health records in five years.

Create three to four million jobs.

Set the nation on a more economically sustainable path.

The near-death of Detroit is also seen by the incoming administration as a chance to create a more energy-focused automotive industry.

Hail to the chief

Obama directed his team drawing up the stimulus package to incorporate principles such as "new public-private partnerships to support innovation" and "investments in ideas that work over ideology".

But questions have clouded it, with doubts over whether the package will detonate a big enough bang to jolt the economy to life.

Has too much attention been lavished on longer-term goals? Will it be a Trojan horse for multiple wasteful projects? Are its US\$275 billion worth of tax cuts a sop to Republicans? Is it actually too timid?

Economist Paul Krugman bluntly said it "falls well short of what's needed".

In contrast, his fellow New York Times columnist David Brooks has lashed its "overload", brought about by Obama's "audacious self-confidence".

Noting that "this will be the most complex piece of legislation in American history", Brooks wrote that Obama "has picked policies phenomenally hard to implement, let alone in weeks. The conventional advice for presidents is: focus your energies on a few big things. Obama just blew the doors off that one".

And Brooks felt moved to offer this prediction: "By this time next year, he'll either be a great president or a broken one."

As Obama snuggles into the mantle of most powerful man on the planet, there's uncertainty over what he'll be like as President and whether he can succeed. Partly because of the situation he inherits, but equally because it's possible to draw different conclusions about him.

The presidential campaign and the transition showed him to be capable of extreme caution and bold strategic foresight; of mixing up line-in-the-sand goals with compromise and manoeuvring; of careful efficiency and sloppy missteps; of supreme confidence but also insight into his limitations.

At 47, he becomes the fifth-youngest president sworn into office. He's new, he was only a junior senator, and he'll be working with people more senior and experienced. Can he retain control over his agenda? Can he expand into the role and turn his time into a historically great presidency? Will he be too cautious?

Obama's tendencies to occasionally over-reach in ambition and get splattered with the mud of slightly dodgy associations have also continued from the campaign into the transition.

And his peace offering to religious moderates and conservatives - in an attempt to build a centrist well of support - went too far in his invitation to Pastor Rick Warren to give the inaugural invocation.

Handing such a major role to a man who compared gay people to child abusers was a distasteful poke in the eye to liberal supporters, whatever the shrewd symbolism of papering over differences.

As for associations, disgraced Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevic joins the colourful wild bunch of the Rev Jeremiah Wright, Tony Rezko and William Ayers.

But Obama was also a campaign leader who smashed all fundraising records, wielded a revolutionary political organisation and withered the challenges of a pair of formidable senators - former First Lady Hillary Clinton and Republican John McCain. He may have stepped too far with faux Greek convention columns and Berlin rallies but he got the big calls right.

Mostly it was the confident, careful strategist who drove the transition and will - hopefully - steer policy in the White House.

The transition set the scene of what is to come, by being completely unlike any before it.

Hail to the chief

For the last three months, a deeply unpopular Bush has occupied, but not commanded, the most powerful seat in the world - mostly unlistened to and largely irrelevant. There has been an impatience in the air to press fast-forward and get the new era started.

Obama assembled a proposed administration team in record time. Bill Clinton made his first 1992 transition announcement in mid-December. This time, all the major wheels were bolted on before Christmas. Confirmation hearings got under way this week.

Obama wanted experience and competence to deal with the recession, two wars and urgent social and environmental reform and he hasn't been afraid to appoint those with personalities as large as their talents.

Hillary Clinton is Obama's nominee for Secretary of State. Robert Gates stays on as Secretary of Defence. Former general and Nato commander James Jones will be National Security Adviser.

Former Treasury chief Larry Summers will be the Chief Economic Adviser at the White House with New York Federal Reserve chairman Tim Geithner the new Treasury Secretary - as long as he clears up unpaid tax affairs - and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle is the health tsar.

Inadequate vetting saw New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, a former UN Ambassador and Energy Secretary, named and then forced to withdraw as Obama's pick for Commerce Secretary because of a federal probe into a state contract. His dispatch suggests the bar has been set at zero tolerance for anything smelling of sleaze.

It's a two-tier Cabinet with an inner ring of gnarly-handed and clear-eyed realists.

The outer ring of less familiar names - such as Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson - has a more experimental, Washington-newbie look.

Obama has also made a special appointment in energy, Carol Browner. "Carol understands that our efforts to create jobs, achieve energy security and combat climate change demand integration among different agencies, co-operation between federal, state and local governments and partnership with the private sector," Obama said.

Admiral Dennis Blair is the "outsider" pick for national intelligence. Perhaps the most interesting selection is Leon Panetta, a former Clinton Chief of Staff and experienced manager/politician, at the CIA, despite lacking a background in intelligence work.

Obama originally wanted former CIA official John Brennan as the agency's director. When that move proved unpopular with left-wingers because of Brennan's past support for harsh interrogation techniques

and rendition, Brennan withdrew from contention and Obama avoided a confrontation with his supporters. But he squeezed his man in anyway - as the top White House homeland security and counter-terror adviser. It's an illustration of how Obama can operate.

The current head of national intelligence, Michael McConnell, will stay in an advisory role and the CIA's current deputy, Steve Kappes, will remain.

"We must insist on assessments grounded solely in the facts, and not seek information to suit any ideological agenda," Obama said. "And we know that to be truly secure, we must adhere to our values as vigilantly as we protect our safety - with no exceptions."

Obama's decision to stir fresh blood into his spook pot while keeping some old hands suggests that while he'll work within the rules, he'll also still be prepared to push them. On Pakistan, Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden, Obama's approach is broadly the same as Bush's, if not more hawkish.

The new man hasn't been overly loyal. The biggest job any of his old foreign affairs advisers managed to nail in the administration was Susan Rice as Ambassador to the United Nations.

Hail to the chief

Senator John Kerry - who gave Obama his big break at the 2004 Democratic Convention, endorsed him early and was eyeing Secretary of State - gained a big fat zero, although he will have Vice-President-elect Joe Biden's old foreign affairs chairmanship as compensation.

As far as the broad swathe of middle America is concerned, it's so far so good.

"In uncertain times, Americans find it comforting that the people who are going to be advising the president are steeped in experience," Rutgers University political scientist Ross Baker told AP. "A Cabinet of outsiders would have been very disquieting."

An AP-GfK poll taken in mid November found that about 72 per cent of respondents were confident Obama could revive the stalling economy. That figure included 44 per cent of Republicans, nearly all Democrats and most independents.

A Gallup poll in early December showed 69 per cent approval for Clinton as Secretary of State and 80 per cent backing Obama's decision to retain Gates at the Pentagon. The same poll found that 78 per cent of Americans approved of the way Obama was handling his presidential transition.

Reaction from analysts and commentators was mixed, with some high praise across the spectrum but warning calls - at least initially - from the left that Obama has stuck too narrowly to a centrist path with his senior Cabinet picks and that there is little guarantee of fresh ideas in the new government. Too much cautious safety, not enough experimentation.

Their main arguments were:

There are no "progressive" liberal voices among Obama's economic and foreign/ security teams. This doesn't look like the change Obama promised.

There is too much baggage. The economic advisers are proteges of former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and are tied to the deregulatory past. Geithner, as president of the New York Federal Reserve, was involved in the key bailout decisions last year. Key foreign/security officials voted for the Iraq war. Gates is a holdover.

Specifically there are too many centrist Clinton Administration retreads and that may have implications for policy implementation.

Doug Bandow, a former adviser to President Ronald Reagan, told the Daily Telegraph: "The tone, image and symbolism will be different, and he will have more interest in multilateral solutions [than Bush]. But I don't see evidence of dramatic change."

Bandow said that Obama has not shown much sign of appreciating that "we have entered an age where the US can't dictate to the world any more" and that the US can no longer afford its global military role.

"Pulling back is not popular among Washington's elite, but in survey after survey it is popular among the public," Christopher Preble, the head of foreign policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute, told the Daily Telegraph.

He added: "Do we need so many troops in Germany two decades after the end of the Cold War?"

Obama has also "failed to appoint people who would offer a fresh perspective", said Preble.

On the surface it may have appeared that Obama, with his senior Cabinet selections, has allowed his election campaign opponents' slogan of "experience" to trump his own - winning - call for "change".

But Obama believes he can blend both great political strands. And he has given himself no wriggle room to fail.

"What we're going to do is combine experience with fresh thinking. I understand where the vision for change comes from first and foremost; it comes from me. That's my job, is to provide a vision in terms of where we are going and to make sure then that my team is implementing."

Hail to the chief

This view of Obama as agent in chief of change was foreshadowed by adviser David Axelrod. "He's not looking for people to give him a vision. He's going to put together an administration who can effectuate his vision."

As the New York Times' John Harwood commented: "That breezy formulation disregards the received wisdom of Pennsylvania Avenue. For years, Washington insiders have used the phrase "personnel is policy" for the assumption that the prior loyalties and political tastes of a president's Cabinet and White House staff heavily influence what those appointees are eager, or able, to get done."

Obama has openly talked about assembling a modern version of President Abraham Lincoln's "team of rivals" to avoid what the President-elect called "group-think" in the White House.

Again, at first blink, that's a change from Obama's highly disciplined campaign style where "No Drama Obama" became a saying and there was a preference for staffers and advisers with medium-sized egos.

The Bush Administration in its first term, critics say, had a deadly combination of clashing big guns - Colin Powell versus Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney with Condoleezza Rice in between - and an intellectually incurious president who wanted to be agreed with.

Although Hillary Clinton, Gates, Biden and Jones would appear to have at least as much firepower, Clinton is reportedly well respected by Republicans and the military brass for her work on the Senate Armed Services Committee. She is said to get on with Biden, who advised both Democrats during the primary campaign. Gates and Jones are pragmatic, respected across the parties.

"No drama" - in a Cabinet sense - appears to mean "no ideologues".

Still, as with his pledge to provide the administration's vision, Obama is trusting himself to get these potentially circling cats purring in unison.

Stephen Biddle, a defence expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, told Time: "You look at the team that George W. Bush brought in, and they also were very talented and experienced people. It turned into a disaster because the President did a very poor job managing his staff and couldn't resolve disputes among his people."

Obama's personal approach is the opposite of the anti-intellectualism of Bush. Obama is someone who likes to test his instincts against rigorous perimeters. He wants to push through his ideas and agenda but he wants them squeezed and tossed through the washer on the way.

Before the election, an old Chicago law school colleague of Obama's, Professor Cass Sunstein, related a story on Politico.com about how Obama had called him to chew through the various angles over Bush's surveillance of international telephone calls between Americans and suspected terrorists.

"Obama wanted to consider the best possible defence of what Bush had done. To every argument I made, he listened and offered a counter-argument. After the issue had been exhausted, Obama said he thought the programme was illegal, but now had a better understanding of both sides.

"Many prominent Democratic leaders had already blasted the Bush initiative as blatantly illegal. He did not want to take a public position until he had listened to, and explored, what might be said on the other side.

"He took the law exceedingly seriously, and wanted to get the statutory and constitutional provisions right.

"This is the Barack Obama I have known for nearly 15 years - a careful and even-handed analyst of law and policy, unusually attentive to multiple points of view."

Obama's ability to imagine himself adjudicating on the world's problems like a 21st-century Solomon suggests a hubristic confidence in his own intellect and temperament. He wants the best around him and also believes he can handle the best.

Hail to the chief

As the captain, he absolutely has to be a good enough all-rounder both to lead and to talk with authority to his specialists. It's also a strength not to fear others' abilities and to have the insight to acknowledge he doesn't have all the answers.

During the campaign, especially before he became the official Democrat candidate, Obama often appeared to view issues and situations from an independent voter's non-ideological vantage point rather than a more blinkered party partisan.

He's grown up in the era where scepticism of authority and of political parties of all stripes is the prevailing mindset.

His campaign drew from the disaffected masses at least some people who previously couldn't feel inspired to be Democrat activists but could be activists for Obama.

Despite the John McCain campaign's attempts to cast him as a pinko scarecrow, Obama has a missionary zeal to plot common ground.

In *The Audacity of Hope* he wrote: "Unfortunately, too often in our national debates we don't even get to the point where we weigh these difficult choices. Instead we either exaggerate the degree to which policies we don't like impinge on our most sacred values, or play dumb when our own preferred policies conflict with important countervailing values."

He railed against the view "that we're doomed to fight the same tired partisan battles over and over again" and famously wants America to be "a country that no longer sees itself as a collection of red states and blue states".

Obama knows that the vast majority of voters want to move on from Congressional red-against-blue-corner rumbles and would prefer a Cabinet in shape for a working bee rather than ready for a theory test.

He's set the overalls-and-gumboots tone early. It goes without saying he will need results to make good his gamble that this is a team that gets things done.

But his approach fits with our newly frugal times of sweat and toil where corporate jets, bulging bonuses and even chalking anything up on credit is frowned upon.

Commentators who have pointed out that Obama has only appointed two Republicans - and one of them, Gates, may actually be an Independent - after vowing to be post-partisan, have missed the point.

Obama has appointed Democrats to key positions whom Republicans and Independents can feel comfortable with. He has ripped up the "too liberal" and "not like you and me" labels the Republicans tried to strangle him with during the campaign. He has spread his tent all over the middle ground and made the Republicans look - for now - rather irrelevant.

Former Republican House speaker Newt Gingrich told the New York Times: "I think the country is so tired right now of a style of Republican attack politics that has become a caricature of itself, they instinctively go, 'I'm tired of that'.

It's ineffective against Barack Obama right now. The country is faced with serious problems and is about to have a brand new president. You'd have to be irrational not to want the new president to succeed."

America's traditional inclination to rally behind the new chief has added to his stature. But even so, the honeymoon has started early. The general Blitz spirit of the times plays a part. He's also the first black president, relatively young and charismatic. The glow may prove to be longer-lasting than previous new dawns.

Essentially he has two years - before he has to think about his re-election campaign - to make the most of the welcome mat.

Keeping his fringe party activists on board while straddling the mammoth centre will be a major challenge.

Hail to the chief

Obama will need their enthusiastic support to gain a second term. Progress by then on bringing troops home from Iraq, closing the Guantanamo Bay prison camp, improving America's standing in the world and climate-change issues are simply non-negotiable for that to happen.

Obama shows every sign of being serious about trying to achieve some major policy goals and reform:

His planned stimulus is bold in its vision of trying to ferment a new economic/energy wave rather than just treat the immediate problem.

He has said there will be a tougher regulatory and enforcement approach to the financial system.

His selection of Daschle as a health reformer is clearly an attempt to learn from Hillary Clinton's failures in her husband's first term.

He has selected firm critics of Bush Administration policy at Justice and Energy and as science advisers. He created an influential position in energy. This simply wouldn't happen if he wasn't seeking policy changes.

Gates has publically signalled that planning is under way on the Iraq withdrawal.

But aside from new impetus on global warming and possible movement on Cuba - Obama wants to lift restrictions on family travel and cash remittances and possibly talk to President Raul Castro - major change in a general sense will be difficult to achieve with foreign affairs.

The neocons have long been banished. This new bunch will essentially build from the base of the pragmapolitik implemented under the Rice/Gates regime over the past two years. The tortuous diplomatic dance with North Korea is almost a prototype for Obama's projected path.

The assertion of diplomacy has been welcome after Bush's volcanic first term. But has Obama got the balance right between continuity and the chance to shake the status quo?

By relying so much on Clinton Administration experience, he is by extension relying a great deal on the adage of learning from experience. Perhaps he has no choice.

In light of the Bush years, the Clinton era seems a haven of multilateralism and reasonableness, but there were failures. It's remembered for the tightly-prosecuted (in comparison to Iraq) Balkans conflict; near success in the Middle East; and a positive influence in Northern Ireland.

But there was also genocide in Rwanda and the Black Hawk Down incident; al Qaeda attacked in Africa and flourished in Afghanistan; and nuclear weapons spread to Pakistan and India.

Even with Obama's roll of the dice in selecting Hillary Clinton, the signs are that his priority is an essentially competent approach that restores some respect for America in the world with as few foreign dramas as possible.

When the Georgia conflict erupted during the election campaign, his initial response, made while on holiday in Hawaii, was nuanced and called for both sides to show restraint - in recognition of the fact that Georgia actually sparked the conflict with Russia by attacking South Ossetia. When McCain grabbed the issue with his "we're all Georgians now" line, Obama hardened his own stance against Russia.

Missile defence may get quietly put on the backburner for cost reasons and because it is such a stumbling block with Moscow.

Obama responded to criticism of his willingness to talk to Iran's leadership with soothing qualifications about "preparations" and becoming more overtly supportive of Israel on Middle Eastern policy.

Obama plans to make a speech in an Arab country within his first 100 days but, whatever the "outreach" to Muslim countries, the US commitment to Israel looks as unshakeable as ever. Both Clinton and Middle East envoy Dennis Ross are known as strong supporters of Israel.

Hail to the chief

However, some commentators suggest Obama may take a more independent line. The Guardian reported that the new administration will probably try to make contact with Hamas at a low level, although the story was publically denied. Obama is likely to at least be more even-handed and measured in tone with comments on the region than Bush.

The Israeli-Hamas/Palestinian conflict may look clearly defined to supporters of either side but to everyone else it's a bafflingly complex fog that's a dragging weight on relations between the West and the Middle East.

Obama and Clinton stayed utterly silent on Gaza during the initial week of air strikes. While Israel tanks were lumbering across the border, Obama was addressing economic issues in his weekly address. Perhaps it was prudent - they need at least the illusion of a fresh start as they pick up the pieces. Or perhaps it was just recognition of their very limited options.

They will probably try to nudge Israel and Syria back into talks. If Obama and Clinton are serious about restoring America's standing in the world, the Palestinian issue will need a very early airing. Or it will soon be Obama's face carried aloft on placards by protesters, not Bush's.

The appointment of Richard Holbrooke as envoy for Pakistan/Afghanistan illustrates its importance to the new president.

In Iraq, everyone's withdrawal timetables - Baghdad's, Washington's and Obama's - have been broadly in sync for some time.

Change, if it happens, will be from within the same basic framework. But is a predominant steadiness enough?

Will cautious incremental progress come to seem like inertia? Can the world hope for some advance in Zimbabwe, Darfur, Somalia and the Congo, while Afghanistan, Iraq, the Middle East and North Korea gobble most of the oxygen? Will there be enough forward thinking to keep America ahead of a more influential China?

Clinton as Secretary of State is the great unknown. She had the intelligence, experience and standing to have been a very good president. But now her fate is entwined with Obama's.

She has experienced people to advise her and a well-thumbed contact book stretching back to her days as first lady. Short of appointing a former president as secretary, Obama could not have found anyone with more mana. She was the most admired female politician in the world and now it's made official. She appeals as someone who will provide more punch after Rice's graceful steel.

But just how good is she at the arm-twisting arts in foreign capitals? Does her failed presidential run suggest she lacks the strategic ability to go with her policy librarian's brain? And how many accidental grenades will her husband toss in her path?

For Obama, the job description looked tough enough back in November when he found out it was his.

Since then, job losses have accelerated, ugly terrorism has blighted Mumbai and the Middle East war without end has flared again.

Having nervously screwed up the courage to step into the future with him, the American public has swelled with relief and pride that he's looking and acting the part.

He will bring new tones to political and cultural life in a way that we have so far only caught a glimpse of.

It is the outside world and those known unknowns and unknown unknowns - to quote Donald Rumsfeld - that are likely to disrupt Obama's dreams of an orderly swing away from the Bush years.

He may want to concentrate on righting the boat at home but he won't be able to ignore raging swells out in the deeper blue.

Hail to the chief

gamble that this is a team that gets things done.

But his approach fits with our newly frugal times of sweat and toil where corporate jets, bulging bonuses and even chalking anything up on credit is frowned upon.

Commentators who have pointed out that Obama has only appointed two Republicans - and one of them, Gates, may actually be an Independent - after vowing to be post-partisan, have missed the point.

Obama has appointed Democrats to key positions whom Republicans and Independents can feel comfortable with. He has ripped up the "too liberal" and "not like you and me" labels the Republicans tried to strangle him with during the campaign. He has spread his tent all over the middle ground and made the Republicans look - for now - rather irrelevant.

Former Republican House speaker Newt Gingrich told the New York Times: "I think the country is so tired right now of a style of Republican attack politics that has become a caricature of itself, they instinctively go, 'I'm tired of that'.

It's ineffective against Barack Obama right now. The country is faced with serious problems and is about to have a brand new president. You'd have to be irrational not to want the new president to succeed."

America's traditional inclination to rally behind the new chief has added to his stature. But even so, the honeymoon has started early. The general Blitz spirit of the times plays a part. He's also the first black president, relatively young and charismatic. The glow may prove to be longer-lasting than previous new dawns.

Essentially he has two years - before he has to think about his re-election campaign - to make the most of the welcome mat.

Keeping his fringe party activists on board while straddling the mammoth centre will be a major challenge.

Obama will need their enthusiastic support to gain a second term. Progress by then on bringing troops home from Iraq, closing the Guantanamo Bay prison camp, improving America's standing in the world and climate-change issues are simply non-negotiable for that to happen.

Obama shows every sign of being serious about trying to achieve some major policy goals and reform:

His planned stimulus is bold in its vision of trying to ferment a new economic/energy wave rather than just treat the immediate problem.

He has said there will be a tougher regulatory and enforcement approach to the financial system.

His selection of Daschle as a health reformer is clearly an attempt to learn from Hillary Clinton's failures in her husband's first term.

He has selected firm critics of Bush Administration policy at Justice and Energy and as science advisers. He created an influential position in energy. This simply wouldn't happen if he wasn't seeking policy changes.

Gates has publically signalled that planning is under way on the Iraq withdrawal.

But aside from new impetus on global warming and possible movement on Cuba - Obama wants to lift restrictions on family travel and cash remittances and possibly talk to President Raul Castro - major change in a general sense will be difficult to achieve with foreign affairs.

The neocons have long been banished. This new bunch will essentially build from the base of the pragmapolitik implemented under the Rice/Gates regime over the past two years. The tortuous diplomatic dance with North Korea is almost a prototype for Obama's projected path.

The assertion of diplomacy has been welcome after Bush's volcanic first term. But has Obama got the balance right between continuity and the chance to shake the status quo?

Hail to the chief

By relying so much on Clinton Administration experience, he is by extension relying a great deal on the adage of learning from experience. Perhaps he has no choice.

In light of the Bush years, the Clinton era seems a haven of multilateralism and reasonableness, but there were failures. It's remembered for the tightly-prosecuted (in comparison to Iraq) Balkans conflict; near success in the Middle East; and a positive influence in Northern Ireland.

But there was also genocide in Rwanda and the Black Hawk Down incident; al Qaeda attacked in Africa and flourished in Afghanistan; and nuclear weapons spread to Pakistan and India.

Even with Obama's roll of the dice in selecting Hillary Clinton, the signs are that his priority is an essentially competent approach that restores some respect for America in the world with as few foreign dramas as possible.

When the Georgia conflict erupted during the election campaign, his initial response, made while on holiday in Hawaii, was nuanced and called for both sides to show restraint - in recognition of the fact that Georgia actually sparked the conflict with Russia by attacking South Ossetia. When McCain grabbed the issue with his "we're all Georgians now" line, Obama hardened his own stance against Russia.

Missile defence may get quietly put on the backburner for cost reasons and because it is such a stumbling block with Moscow.

Obama responded to criticism of his willingness to talk to Iran's leadership with soothing qualifications about "preparations" and becoming more overtly supportive of Israel on Middle Eastern policy.

Obama plans to make a speech in an Arab country within his first 100 days but, whatever the "outreach" to Muslim countries, the US commitment to Israel looks as unshakeable as ever. Both Clinton and Middle East envoy Dennis Ross are known as strong supporters of Israel.

However, some commentators suggest Obama may take a more independent line. The Guardian reported that the new administration will probably try to make contact with Hamas at a low level, although the story was publically denied. Obama is likely to at least be more even-handed and measured in tone with comments on the region than Bush.

The Israeli-Hamas/Palestinian conflict may look clearly defined to supporters of either side but to everyone else it's a bafflingly complex fog that's a dragging weight on relations between the West and the Middle East.

Obama and Clinton stayed utterly silent on Gaza during the initial week of air strikes. While Israel tanks were lumbering across the border, Obama was addressing economic issues in his weekly address. Perhaps it was prudent - they need at least the illusion of a fresh start as they pick up the pieces. Or perhaps it was just recognition of their very limited options.

They will probably try to nudge Israel and Syria back into talks. If Obama and Clinton are serious about restoring America's standing in the world, the Palestinian issue will need a very early airing. Or it will soon be Obama's face carried aloft on placards by protesters, not Bush's.

The appointment of Richard Holbrooke as envoy for Pakistan/Afghanistan illustrates its importance to the new president.

In Iraq, everyone's withdrawal timetables - Baghdad's, Washington's and Obama's - have been broadly in sync for some time.

Change, if it happens, will be from within the same basic framework. But is a predominant steadiness enough?

Will cautious incremental progress come to seem like inertia? Can the world hope for some advance in Zimbabwe, Darfur, Somalia and the Congo, while Afghanistan, Iraq, the Middle East and North Korea gobble most of the oxygen? Will there be enough forward thinking to keep America ahead of a more influential China?

Hail to the chief

Clinton as Secretary of State is the great unknown. She had the intelligence, experience and standing to have been a very good president. But now her fate is entwined with Obama's.

She has experienced people to advise her and a well-thumbed contact book stretching back to her days as first lady. Short of appointing a former president as secretary, Obama could not have found anyone with more mana. She was the most admired **female** politician in the world and now it's made official. She appeals as someone who will provide more punch after Rice's graceful steel.

But just how good is she at the arm-twisting arts in foreign capitals? Does her failed presidential run suggest she lacks the strategic ability to go with her policy librarian's brain? And how many accidental grenades will her husband toss in her path?

For Obama, the job description looked tough enough back in November when he found out it was his.

Since then, job losses have accelerated, ugly terrorism has blighted Mumbai and the Middle East war without end has flared again.

Having nervously screwed up the courage to step into the future with him, the American public has swelled with relief and pride that he's looking and acting the part.

He will bring new tones to political and cultural life in a way that we have so far only caught a glimpse of.

It is the outside world and those known unknowns and unknown unknowns - to quote Donald Rumsfeld - that are likely to disrupt Obama's dreams of an orderly swing away from the Bush years.

He may want to concentrate on righting the boat at home but he won't be able to ignore raging swells out in the deeper blue.

Load-Date: January 16, 2009

When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews, said Martin Luther King

The Jerusalem Post

February 16, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 1234 words

Byline: ARNO LUSTIGER

Highlight: The war in the Middle East will end when the Palestinians lay down their weapons. If the Israelis were to do the same, Israel would no longer exist. The writer, born in 1924 and a survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, is a leading historian (The Red Book: Stalin and the Jews) who lives in Frankfurt.

Body

Is criticism of Israel anti-Semitic? The Six Day War sparked a wave of anti-Zionistic reactions, triggering the Left's denial of solidarity with Israel, a stance that holds until today. In August 1967, Martin Luther King wrote in Letters to an Anti-Zionistic Friend:

"You declare, my friend, that you do not hate the Jews, you are merely 'anti-Zionist'... When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews - this is God's own truth. Anti-Semitism, the hatred of the Jewish people, has been and remains a blot on the soul of mankind."

Jean Amery criticized the elitist anti-Zionism of the Left as being nothing more than run-of-the-mill anti-Semitism. In a speech in 1969, Amery stated, "Anti-Semitism was once the socialism of the stupid guys. Today it is about to become an integrating ingredient of socialism as such, and thereby every socialist turns himself, by his free will, into a stupid guy. Anti-Semitism has become respectable again, but there is no such thing as respectable anti-Semitism!"

In 1975, well-known literary scholar and dedicated leftist Hans Mayer wrote, "Whoever attacks Zionism, but by no means wishes to say anything against the Jews, is fooling himself and others. The State of Israel is a Jewish state. Whoever wants to destroy it, openly or through policies that can effect nothing else but such destruction, is practicing the Jew hatred of yesterday and time immemorial."

Unfortunately, these 30-year-old texts still hold true today.

THE ENTIRE Middle East would have become a Jew-free German protectorate called "Greater Arabia" had Rommel's Afrikakorps not been defeated at el-Alamein 66 years ago on November 4, 1942. The "Einsatzkommando Agypten" (SS Task Force Egypt), a subgroup of the Afrikakorps, was under the command of SS Obersturmbannführer Walter Rauff, infamous for his large trucks converted into mobile gas chambers which murdered hundreds of thousands in an excruciatingly painful manner in Russia and Serbia the previous year. Rauff was given the authority to carry out "executive measures on the civilian population," which was the Nazi euphemism for the mass murder of the Palestinian Jews. The move was agreed upon with Grand Mufti Haj Amin el-Husseini, a friend of Hitler and Himmler, and the Arab population was supposed to actively participate.

When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews, said Martin Luther King

Rauff's extermination unit followed Rommel's army to Tunisia, but the allied Italian army prevented the mass murder of the country's 80,000 Jews.

To this day, the war criminal Husseini remains the ardently cherished idol of the Arab people. During the war, he was the supreme field chaplain of all the Muslim SS divisions and a relentless enemy of the Jews, not just in Palestine. He is also the ideologue behind the genocidal hatred of the Jews of all Islamists today, including Hamas and Hizbullah.

IN LIGHT of this Arab collaboration with the mass murderers of the Shoah, the comparison of the lives of Palestinians in the occupied areas with the starvation and murder of Jews in the ghettos of Europe living under a death sentence is impudent and the product of possible deliberate ignorance. These claims pain and insult us, the survivors of the Shoah, in particular. The war in the Middle East will end when the Palestinians lay down their weapons. If the Israelis were to do the same thing, Israel would no longer exist. This is something that Norbert Blum, the bishops Gregor Maria Hanke and Walter Mixa, and the others who compare the lives of the Palestinians with the Jewish ghettos should ponder. They should worry about the insidious de-Christianization of the Holy Land from their fellow Christians fleeing the Middle East instead.

They might also examine more closely the accusation of Islamophobia.

Arab propaganda invented this term, designed to create an association with the persecution of the Jews. The millions of Muslims living in Europe are in no way subjected to persecution. Quite the opposite, they enjoy the Western freedoms denied the Christians, Baha'i and Jews living in their countries of origin.

Media outlets contribute to disinformation with their exaggerated criticism of Israel. Unfathomable genocidal hatred of the West and the Jews streams from the antennas of the Arabic TV stations Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya and Al-Manar, even into homes in Germany. Its effect can be seen in the attacks on those in Germany who are recognizable as Jews.

Islamic anti-Semitism should not be a worry solely for the Jews, because there are forces at work in Europe that want to bomb our civilization back into the Middle Ages. Islamic scientist Bassam Tibi explained, "Not until the German people have fought against this threat in an appropriate manner will we be able to say that they have really understood the lessons of the German past."

Anti-Semitism in Germany gives us reason to worry even today. There appears to be an increased acceptance of right-wing populist propaganda that argues anti-Semitic beliefs.

The hate, the violence against Jews and their institutions, fill me with pain and anger. In this year alone there have already been more than 800 violent and other criminal acts, but not a single arrest. I myself am a witness to the permissiveness of our judicial and constitutional bodies. On November 1, 2007, Vanity Fair reprinted a 10-page interview with Nazi ideologue Horst Mahler and also published the entire text of over 20 pages on its Web site. Much of what Mahler said there, such as his denial of the existence of Auschwitz, was a punishable crime. I filed a request for his prosecution, but the public prosecutor's office refused.

ALLOW ME to make a personal reflection here. When I co-founded the Jewish community in Frankfurt over 50 years ago, I never would have dreamed that today, many years later, our kindergartens, schools, synagogues and meeting halls would have to be guarded by the police. Thank God, Jesus and Muhammad that mosques and churches do not need this protection. Isn't it time that the German Constitutional Court judges started playing hardball when dealing with enemies of our constitution and democracy? I don't just mean the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD), but also the Islamofascist centers, such as the one in the city of Neu-Ulm, which disseminates anti-Semitic and anti-constitutional propaganda under the cloak of multiculturalism.

What will happen next? The UN's third World Conference against Racism was held in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001. It turned into a festival of anti-Western extremism and hatred of the Jews. Zionism was condemned there as a contemporary form of Nazism and apartheid. The next conference will be held in Geneva,

When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews, said Martin Luther King

Switzerland, on April 20-24 of this year. The scandal in Durban will be aggravated there even more, as anti-racism degenerates into the ideology of the totalitarian movements.

The dictators and despots of countries such as Libya, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Cuba and Venezuela, with their automatic majority, have taken over UN institutions. They have started a new inquisition, called "the denigration of religion," which of course only applies to Islam. They are misusing anti-racism for obscurantism and Islamism that will only result in the further suppression of religious minorities and women. Several countries, such as Canada and Israel, will not be attending the planned betrayal of human values in Geneva. How will the German government respond? We can hardly wait.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

WHY DOES RUSH HATE AMERICA SO MUCH?

Wisconsin State Journal (Madison, Wisconsin)

January 24, 2009 Saturday

ALL EDITION

Copyright 2009 Madison Newspapers, Inc. All Rights Reserved

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

Washington's approach to the rest of the world; .S.: Clinton Stresses 'Cooperative Engagement', 'Smart Power'

IPS (Latin America)

January 22, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 NoticiasFinancieras/Grupo de Diarios America All Rights Reserved

Length: 1415 words

Byline: Jim Lobe

Body

Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which is likely to recommend her confirmation in her new post as early as Thursday, Clinton promised that 'diplomacy will be the vanguard of [the new administration's] foreign policy' and that military force would be taken only 'as a last resort'.

'One need only look to North Korea, Iran, the Middle East, and the Balkans to appreciate the absolute necessity of tough-minded, intelligent diplomacy -- and the failures that result when that kind of diplomatic effort is absent,' she said in one of several implicit swipes at outgoing President George W. Bush's record.

'The president-elect and I believe that foreign policy must be based on a marriage of principles and pragmatism, not rigid ideology. On facts and evidence, not emotion or prejudice,' she added at another point.

On specific hot spots, she stressed that Obama 'is committed to responsibly ending the war in Iraq', although she did not repeat his campaign promise to withdraw all U.S. combat troops within 16 months of his inauguration as president next Tuesday, an omission that is likely to add to growing unease among many of Obama's early anti-war supporters.

She also stressed, as did Obama during the campaign, that the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan will be approached within a wider regional context and promised to 'work with those in Afghanistan and Pakistan who want to root out al Qaeda, the Taliban, and other violent extremists who threaten them as well as us in what [Obama] has called the central front in the fight against terrorism.'

'A strategy of smart power' in the Middle East that 'effectively challenges Iran to end its nuclear weapons programme and sponsorship of terror, and persuades Iran and Syria to abandon their dangerous behaviour and become constructive regional actors,' she said, adding that Washington would first consult with its allies before deciding how and at what level to engage both countries. At the same time, she said Iran's development of a nuclear weapon was 'unacceptable' and that 'no option is off the table' to prevent Tehran's acquisition of one.

On the current violence in Gaza, she said she and Obama 'are deeply sympathetic to Israel's desire to defend itself under the current conditions, and to be free of shelling by Hamas rockets,' but that 'we have also been reminded of the tragic humanitarian costs of conflict in the Middle East...' She added that it 'must only increase our determination to seek a just and lasting peace agreement that bring real security to Israel; normal and positive relations with its neighbours; and independence, economic progress, and security to the Palestinians in their own state.'

Washington's approach to the rest of the world .S.: Clinton Stresses 'Cooperative Engagement', 'Smart Power'

'It is critical not only to the parties involved but to our profound interests in undermining the forces of alienation and violent extremism across our world,' she stressed.

She also indicated that Obama will follow through on his campaign commitment to lift Bush-imposed curbs on travel and financial remittances by Cuban Americans to their homeland.

Clinton's confirmation testimony comes amid growing speculation about the foreign policy direction the new administration will take, particularly given the preponderance of nominees and rumoured appointees of individuals who served in senior posts under former President Bill Clinton and the retention of Bush's Pentagon chief, Robert Gates, and several other Republican realists.

The centrist cast of the prospective foreign policy team has worried many of Obama's early supporters among grassroots Democrats who were attracted to the candidate in major part for his early denunciation -- in contrast to Clinton herself -- of the Iraq War and their own impression that he shared their opposition to a global order based largely on U.S. pre-eminence and military power.

Of particular concern in recent days has been the rumoured appointment of former Clinton Middle East negotiator, Dennis Ross, to a super-envoy position that would give him control over the Iran portfolio, if not primary responsibility for developing U.S. strategy across the region. Ross has been strongly criticised, even by some of his former colleagues, for his pro-Israel bias and his endorsement of hard-line neo-conservative positions on Iran.

Clinton did not announce either Ross's or any other new appointments during Tuesday's hearing in which the only serious point of contention proved to be Republican concerns to possible conflicts of interest arising from the continuing receipt by her husband's philanthropic Clinton Global Initiative of money from foreign sources.

Much of her testimony appeared designed to draw a sharp distinction between the unilateralism and militarism that characterised Bush's first term, in particular, and the 'cooperative engagement' and 'smart power' -- defined as using 'the full range of tools at our disposal: diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural' -- she said the new administration will pursue with friend and foe alike.

'Today's security threats,' she said, 'cannot be addressed in isolation. Smart power requires reaching out to both friends and adversaries, to bolster old alliances and forge new ones.' She identified 'the gravest threat' faced by the U.S. 'is the danger that weapons of mass destruction will fall into the hands of terrorists'.

To help address that threat, the new administration will seek agreements with other countries to secure and reduce stockpiles of nuclear weapons, shore up the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime, revive negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, and urge the Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

On Russia, she said the administration will 'seek a future of cooperative engagement...on matters of strategic importance, while standing up strongly for American values and international norms.' Similarly, it seeks a 'positive' relationship with China, 'a critically important actor' on the world stage.

She also called for greater inclusion of emerging powers in 'global economic governance', particularly in light of the current financial crisis. 'We all stand to benefit in both the short and long term if they are part of the solution, and become partners in maintaining global economic stability,' she said.

The administration will 'return to a policy of vigorous engagement throughout Latin America', she said.

On Africa, she cited a laundry list of U.S. objectives beginning with 'combating al Qaeda's efforts to seek safe havens in failed states in the Horn of Africa' and ending with 'working aggressively to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)' to reduce poverty and fight disease.

Praising Bush's anti-AIDS initiative, she said the new administration intends to work with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to 'help expand the infrastructure of health clinics in Africa'. She said the incoming team is reviewing policy options on the 'terrible humanitarian crisis' in Darfur, including the imposition of 'no-fly zones'.

Washington's approach to the rest of the world .S.: Clinton Stresses 'Cooperative Engagement', 'Smart Power'

She said the administration will make climate change, which she called 'an unambiguous security threat', a top priority and promised a leadership role in September's U.N. Copenhagen Climate Conference to begin negotiations for a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, which was boycotted by Bush. She also said the administration would push for ratification of the Law of the Sea Treaty (LOS), in part to enhance its territorial claims in the Arctic.

She stressed that promoting grassroots 'social development' in poor countries will be 'integral' to U.S. policy and placed special emphasis on the promotion of **women's** rights and micro-finance for which, according to Clinton, Obama's mother, anthropologist Ann Dunham, was a pioneer in Indonesia.

She repeatedly emphasised that 'smart diplomacy' will require increasing the financial and other resources of the State Department, noting that Gates himself has frequently complained that, in his words, 'our civilian institutions of diplomacy and development have been chronically undermanned and underfunded for far too long'.

'To that I say, 'Amen',' Clinton told the senators, noting, as has Gates, that the U.S. armed forces have more musicians in their bands than the State Department has foreign service officers. Reflecting the military's own views on the matter, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Michael Mullen, also called Monday for increasing the State Department's budget. © 2009 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

Load-Date: January 22, 2009

End of Document

As Obama offers Muslims 'a new beginning,' Israel gives a wary pledge to play its part. US president, in landmark Cairo speech, hails ties to Israel but says Palestinian plight 'intolerable,' demands 'stop to settlements,' says Iran has right to peaceful nuclear power

The Jerusalem Post

June 5, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1416 words

Byline: HERB KEINON, AP contributed to this report.

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

Israel cautiously applauded US President Barack Obama's sweeping speech in Cairo Thursday, even as it was gearing up for tough negotiations with the Americans in the coming days over how to transform some of the rhetoric into a program.

During the 56-minute address to some 3,000 invited guests at Cairo University, Obama reconfirmed and pledged continued US support for Israel, but was uncompromising in his demand for the establishment of a Palestinian state, and called for a "stop to settlements."

"For decades, there has been a stalemate: two peoples with legitimate aspirations, each with a painful history that makes compromise elusive," Obama said, adding that it is "easy to point fingers."

"But if we see this conflict only from one side or the other, then we will be blind to the truth: the only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security," he said.

Regarding the settlements, Obama - to perhaps the loudest applause he received during his address - said, "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop."

In a speech whose primary goal was reconciliation with the Muslim world, Obama quoted from the Koran for emphasis, and called for a "new beginning between the United States and Muslims."

He said that together, Americans and Muslims could confront violent extremism across the globe and advance the search for peace in the Middle East.

"This cycle of suspicion and discord must end," he said. "And I consider it part of my responsibility as president of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear."

However, he said, "change cannot happen overnight."

As Obama offers Muslims 'a new beginning,' Israel gives a wary pledge to play its part. US president, in landmark Cairo speech, hails ties to Israel but says Pa....

Obama's remarks were broadcast on all radio and television outlets in Israel, and with Arabic voice-over translations by satellite stations Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera, Egyptian TV and Hizbullah's Al-Manar. The speech was not shown in Iran, where the government jammed signals to block satellite owners from watching.

Senior Israeli government sources said Thursday evening that they had been apprised beforehand of what Obama was going to say both about two states and about the settlements. Negotiations with the Americans over this issue will continue on Tuesday with the arrival of US special Middle East envoy George Mitchell.

While the officials did not criticize the president for his comments on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, they did say Jerusalem had expected Obama to take a stronger stand regarding Iran's nuclear program, at least saying what he has already said in the past - that the American engagement with Teheran would not be unlimited in time, but would be reassessed by the end of the year, and that the US was not taking any option off the table in dealing with Iran.

"It is clear to all concerned that when it comes to nuclear weapons, we have reached a decisive point," he said of Iran. "This is not simply about America's interests. It is about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path."

Obama also said he felt that any nation, including Iran, "should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That commitment is at the core of the treaty, and it must be kept for all who fully abide by it."

Some four hours after the speech, the Prime Minister's Office issued a statement saying the government "expresses hope that President Obama's important speech in Cairo will lead to a new period of reconciliation between the Arab and Muslim world, and Israel."

"We share Obama's hope that the American efforts will signal the opening of a new era that will bring about an end to the conflict, and [lead] to pan-Arab recognition of Israel as the Jewish state living in peace and security in the Middle East," the statement read. "Israel is obligated to peace and will do as much as possible to help expand the circle of peace, while taking into consideration its national interests, the foremost of which is security."

The somewhat low-key response was crafted after Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu consulted with the members of the inner cabinet who are currently in the country: ministers Dan Meridor, Moshe Ya'alon and Bennie Begin, all from the Likud. The two other members, Defense Minister Ehud Barak (Labor) and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman (Israel Beiteinu), are currently abroad, but also issued statements praising the speech.

Obama, during his long-awaited speech on relations between the US and the Muslim world, placed "the situation between Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab world" as the second major source of tension between the US and the Muslim world.

"America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties," he said. He also spoke of the history of the Jewish people and their pursuit of a Jewish homeland.

"Around the world, the Jewish people were persecuted for centuries, and anti-Semitism in Europe culminated in an unprecedented Holocaust," Obama said. "Tomorrow, I will visit Buchenwald, which was part of a network of camps where Jews were enslaved, tortured, shot and gassed to death by the Third Reich. Six million Jews were killed - more than the entire Jewish population of Israel today."

"Denying that fact is baseless, ignorant, and hateful," he told the Arab and Muslim world, in which Holocaust denial is rampant. "Threatening Israel with destruction - or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews - is deeply wrong, and only serves to evoke in the minds of Israelis this most painful of memories while preventing the peace that the people of this region deserve."

"On the other hand," Obama went on, "it is also undeniable that the Palestinians... have suffered in pursuit of a homeland. For more than 60 years, they have endured the pain of dislocation. Many wait in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza and neighboring lands for a life of peace and security that they have never been able to lead."

As Obama offers Muslims 'a new beginning,' Israel gives a wary pledge to play its part. US president, in landmark Cairo speech, hails ties to Israel but says Pa....

"They endure the daily humiliations - large and small - that come with occupation," he said.

"The situation for the Palestinians," he stressed, "is intolerable."

Asserting that "the Palestinian Authority must develop its capacity to govern, with institutions that serve the needs of its people," he also cited the Middle East Quartet's conditions for Hamas: that the terrorist group must "put an end to violence, recognize past agreements and recognize Israel's right to exist."

"At the same time, Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's," he said. "It is time for these settlements to stop."

Obama demanded that Israel "live up to its obligations to ensure that Palestinians can live, and work, and develop their society."

And then, in a criticism of Israel's Gaza policy, Obama added, "Just as it devastates Palestinian families, the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel's security; neither does the continuing lack of opportunity in the West Bank.

"Progress in the daily lives of the Palestinian people must be part of a road to peace, and Israel must take concrete steps to enable such progress," he said.

The president was adamant in his call for the Palestinians to end terrorism.

"Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and does not succeed," he said.

"Violence is a dead end. It is a sign of neither courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus," he said. "That is not how moral authority is claimed; that is how it is surrendered."

In a gesture, Obama conceded at the beginning of his remarks that American tension with the Muslim world "has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims, and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations."

Obama said some people in the United States viewed Islam as hostile to Western countries, but that this was not the case, despite fear and mistrust. At the same time, he said the same principle must apply in reverse: "Just as Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire."

Graphic

2 photos: 'Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance'. US President Barack Obama waves to the audience after speaking at Cairo University yesterday. EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak welcomes US President Barack Obama upon his arrival at Qubba palace in Cairo yesterday. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Feature - From 21st century back to the 19th; Obama's speech in Cairo last week suggested a new approach to global politics, says Uri Avnery, but Israel is still stuck in the past

Morning Star

June 10, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 People's Press Printing Society Ltd All Rights Reserved

Length: 1472 words

Byline: Uri Avnery

Body

While Obama proclaims the 21st century, the government of Israel is returning to the 19th.

One man spoke to the world, and the world listened.

He walked onto the stage in Cairo alone, without hosts and without aides, and delivered a sermon to an audience of billions. Egyptians and US citizens, Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs, Sunnis and Shi'ites, Copts and Maronites - and they all listened attentively.

He unfolded before them the map of a new world, a different world, whose values and laws he spelled out in simple and clear language - a mixture of idealism and practical politics, vision and pragmatism.

Barack Hussein Obama, as he took pains to call himself, is the most powerful man on earth. Every word he utters is a political fact.

"A historic speech," pronounced commentators in a hundred languages. I prefer another adjective - the speech was right.

Every word was in its place, every sentence precise, every tone in harmony. The masterpiece of a man bringing a new message to the world.

From the very first word, every listener in the hall and in the world felt the honesty of the man, that his heart and his tongue were in harmony, that this is not a politician of the old familiar sort - hypocritical, sanctimonious, calculating. His body language was speaking and so were his facial expressions.

That's why the speech was so important. The new moral integrity and the sense of honesty increased the impact of the revolutionary content.

And a revolutionary speech it certainly was.

In 55 minutes, it not only wiped away the eight years of George W Bush but also much of the preceding decades, from World War II on.

Feature - From 21st century back to the 19th Obama's speech in Cairo last week suggested a new approach to global politics, says Uri Avnery, but Israel is still....

The US ship has turned, not with the sluggishness everyone would have expected, but with the agility of a speedboat. That is much more than a political change. It touches the roots of the US national consciousness. The president spoke to hundreds of millions of US citizens no less than to a billion Muslims.

US culture is based on the myth of the Wild West, with its good guys and bad guys, violent justice, duelling under the midday sun. Since the US nation is composed of immigrants from all over the world, its unity seems to require a threatening, world-encompassing evil enemy, like the nazis and "the Japs" or "the Commies." After the collapse of the Soviet empire, this role was taken over by Islam.

Cruel, fanatical, bloodthirsty Islam. Islam as the religion of murder and destruction. An Islam lusting for the blood of women and children. This enemy captured the imagination of the masses and supplied material for television and cinema. It provided lecture topics for learned professors and fresh inspiration for popular writers. The White House was occupied by a moron who declared a worldwide "war on terrorism."

When Obama is now uprooting this myth, he is revolutionising US culture. He wipes away the picture of one enemy without painting another in its place. He preaches against the violent, adversary attitude itself and starts to work to replace it with a culture of partnership between nations, civilisations and religions.

I see Obama as the first great messenger of the 21st century. He is the son of a new era, where the economy is global and the whole of humanity faces the danger to the very existence of life on the planet Earth. An era where the internet connects a boy in New Zealand with a girl in Namibia in real time, where a disease in a small Mexican village spreads all over the globe within days.

This world needs a world law, a world order, a world democracy. That's why this speech really was historic - Obama outlined the basic contours of a world constitution.

While Obama proclaims the 21st century, the government of Israel is returning to the 19th.

That was the century when a narrow, egocentric, aggressive nationalism took root in many countries. A century that sanctified the belligerent nation which oppresses minorities and subdues neighbours. The century that gave birth to modern anti-semitism and to its response, modern zionism.

Obama's vision is not anti-national. He spoke with pride about the US nation. But his nationalism is of another sort - an inclusive, multicultural and non-sexist nationalism, which includes all the citizens of a country and respects other nations.

This is the nationalism of the 21st century, which is inexorably striving towards supranational, regional and worldwide structures.

Compared to this, how miserable is the mental world of the Israeli right. How miserable is the violent, fanatical-religious world of the settlers, the chauvinist ghetto of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and Defence Minister Ehud Barak, the racist-fascist closed-in world of their Kahanist allies.

One has to understand this moral and spiritual dimension of Obama's speech before considering its political implications. Not only in the political sphere are Obama and Netanyahu on a collision course. The underlying collision is between two mental worlds which are as distinct from each other as the sun and the moon.

In Obama's mental world, there is no place for the Israeli right or its equivalents elsewhere. Not for their terminology, not for their "values" and still less for their actions.

In the political sphere, too, a huge gap has opened up between the governments of Israel and the US.

During the last few years, successive Israeli governments have ridden the wave of Islamophobia that has spread throughout the West. The Islamic world was considered the deadly enemy, the US was galloping grimly towards the clash of civilisations. Every Muslim was a potential terrorist.

Feature - From 21st century back to the 19th Obama's speech in Cairo last week suggested a new approach to global politics, says Uri Avnery, but Israel is still....

Israel's right-wing leaders could rejoice. After all, the Palestinians are Arabs, the Arabs are Muslims, the Muslims are terrorists, so that Israel was assured a central place in the war of the sons of light against the sons of darkness.

That was a Garden of Eden for racist demagogues. Lieberman could advocate the expulsion of the Arabs from Israel, Ellie Yishai could enact laws for the revocation of the citizenship of non-Jews. Obscure members of the Knesset could grab headlines with Bills that might have been conceived in Nuremberg.

This Garden of Eden is no more. Whether the implications will become clear quickly or slowly the direction is obvious. If Israel continues on its path, we will become a leper colony.

The tone makes the music - and this applies also to the president's words on Israel and Palestine. He spoke at length about the Holocaust, honest and courageous words full of empathy and compassion which were received by the Egyptians in silence but with respect. He stressed Israel's right to exist. Without pausing he spoke about the suffering of the Palestinian refugees, the intolerable situation of the Palestinians in Gaza, Palestinian aspirations for their own state.

He spoke respectfully about Hamas. Not any more as a "terrorist organisation," but as a part of the Palestinian people. He demanded that it recognise Israel and stop violence, but also hinted that he would welcome a Palestinian unity government.

The political message was clear and unequivocal - the two-state solution will be put into practice. He himself will see to that. Settlement activity must cease. Unlike his predecessors, he did not stop at speaking about "Palestinians," but uttered the decisive word "Palestine," the name of a state and a territory.

And no less important, the Iran war has been struck from the agenda. The dialogue with Tehran, as a part of the new world, is not limited in time. As from now, no-one can even dream about a US OK for an Israeli attack.

How did official Israel respond? The first reaction was denial. "An unimportant speech." "There was nothing new." The establishment commentators picked out a few pro-Israeli sentences from the text and ignored all the others. And, after all, "these are just words. So he talked. Nothing will come out of it."

That is nonsense. The words of the US president are more than words. They are political facts. They change the perception of hundreds of millions. The Muslim public listened. The US public listened. It may take some time for the message to sink in. But, after this speech, the pro-Israel lobby will never be the same again.

The era of "foile shtik" - Yiddish for sneaky tricks - is over. The sly dishonesty of a Shimon Peres, the guileful deceits of an Ehud Olmert, the sweet talking of a Bibi Netanyahu, all these belong to the past.

The Israeli people must now decide - whether to follow the right-wing government towards an inevitable collision with Washington, as the Jews did 1,940 years ago when they followed the Zealots into a suicidal war on Rome - or to join Obama's march towards a new world.

Uri Avnery is an Israeli journalist, peace activist and former Knesset member. He is one of the founders of Gush Shalom, a broad-based Israeli peace group.

Load-Date: June 10, 2009

Obama speech falls short of Muslim expectations

Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka)

June 12, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 Wijeya Newspaper Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 1462 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, June 12 -- Eight days ago, the President of the United States, Barack Obama, made what analysts called a historic speech aimed at reaching out to the Muslim world. In his speech Obama, the first American president with Muslim blood, called for major changes in the Muslim world. He called on the Muslims to shun extremism, adopt democracy and respect human rights and women's rights while he urged Israel to stop settlement building.

Has anything changed in the Muslim world or in the attitude of Israel since Obama's landmark speech? Sadly, nothing. It's business as usual for the despots in the Muslim world, while Israel also appears to have not taken Obama's speech seriously. Meanwhile, the carnage continues in Iraq, Pakistan burns and Afghanistan sees no end to its miseries. One must, however, congratulate Obama for making the speech, which may be a genuine attempt at mending fences with the Muslims who are frustrated with the US foreign policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Obama appears to have had some success. A majority of the people in the Muslim world saw the speech as a welcome step in the right direction, though some dismissed the speech as a public relations stunt. Obama appeared to have done his homework and research before he came to Cairo to deliver the speech. He apparently knew how to please the Muslims. So he included verses from the Quran in three different places in his speech. On each occasion, there was applause. In addition to this, he drew the attention of the audience to his Muslim father and his childhood days in Indonesia where he said he spent several years and heard the call of the azaan (the call for prayer) at the break of dawn and at the fall of dusk. He also paid glorious tribute to Islam and the Muslims. "As a young man, I worked in Chicago communities where many found dignity and peace in their Muslim faith. As a student of history, I also know civilization's debt to Islam. It was Islam at places like Al-Azhar that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's renaissance and enlightenment. "It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra, our magnetic compass and tools of navigation, our mastery of pens and printing, our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed. Islamic culture has given us majestic arches and soaring spires, timeless poetry and cherished music, elegant calligraphy and places of peaceful contemplation. And throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality." It is little surprise that the largely Muslim audience at the Cairo University was overwhelmed by these words. They were so captivated that there were no jeers when Obama said in the same speech that the United States was committed to defend Israel and failed to mention that Palestinians in Gaza also faced holocaust in January this year when Israel massacred more than 1000 Palestinians in a scorched-earth bombardment carried out with the blessings of the United States. "America's strong bonds with Israel are well-known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history that cannot be denied. Around the world the Jewish people were persecuted for centuries. And anti-Semitism in Europe culminated in an unprecedented holocaust. Tomorrow I will visit Buchenwald, which was part of a network of camps where Jews were enslaved, tortured, shot and gassed to death by the Third Reich." Many an analysis has

Obama speech falls short of Muslim expectations

been written since Obama's Cairo speech. Most of them were critical of the United States and they exposed the US duplicity and double standards. There was also praise from some analysts. One such praise came from an unexpected source. Max Boot, a neoconservative advocate of the war in Iraq. He wrote: "I thought he did a more effective job of making America's case to the Muslim world. No question: He is a more effective salesman (of America's wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan) than his predecessor was." World Socialist Web Site analyst Patrick Martin commenting on the speech said Obama was playing the role for which he was drafted and promoted by a decisive section of the US financial elite and the military and foreign policy apparatus. This role is to provide a new face for US imperialism as part of a shift in the tactics, but not the strategy, of Washington's drive for world domination. In other words, Obama is executing the recommendations of the Project for the New American Century - a Washington D.C.-based think tank that called for America's global domination -- in a subtle manner what his predecessor at the White House, George W. Bush, did brazenly. Though many articles have been written about what Obama said and did not say in Cairo, this column could not resist the urge to comment about just one issue - extremism, which was the first of Obama's seven issues featured in his Cairo speech. If Obama is the intellect he is portrayed to be by his promoters, then he should do some research on why extremism exists and why it is being resorted to by the people who seek independence from the yoke of colonialism and the shame of occupation. Obama advises the Palestinians to abandon violence. He said resistance through violence and killing was wrong and it did not succeed. "For centuries, black people in America suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation. But it was not violence that won full and equal rights. It was a peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals at the center of America's founding." Obama was conveniently citing only a part of the American history to a spellbound audience. Why did not he say that it was a violent struggle from 1775 to 1783 that finally won the Americans independence from the imperial British? Some 25,700 Americans and 10,000 British soldiers died in this war. Among the dead were thousands of militants that George Washington led. They were perhaps the then equivalent of the present day Hamas militants. But Obama, or, for that matter, any right-leaning American, would not like that comparison. Will Obama answer this question: If the Vietnamese had not resorted to violence, would they have won their country back from the French and the Americans? If not for the armed struggle, countries such as Algeria, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Sudan and Iraq would not have received independence from the European colonialists. East Timor would still be under Indonesia and Bosnia and Kosovo under Serbia. Resistance to colonialism or occupation by a foreign army is the legitimate right of a people living under occupation. This is a right recognized by international law. With every passing day, Israel annexes more and more Palestinian territory by expanding Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The so-called security wall has also swallowed a large swathe of the Palestinian land. If this land robbery takes place in spite of Palestinian resistance, imagine the situation in Palestine if there had been no resistance. The whole of Palestine would have been annexed by Israel long ago and the entire Palestinian population would have been living in exile in Jordan, Lebanon or other neighbouring countries. Obama should also understand that the Palestinians continue their legitimate armed struggle because justice is denied to them at the United Nations. Every time the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was taken up at the United Nations Security Council, it was the United States which used its veto power and prevented a just solution to the Palestinian crisis. In this context, Obama, instead of finding fault with the Palestinians for resorting to an armed struggle to evict Israel from land that legitimately belong to them, must look inwards and say sorry. This was what the Muslims were expecting when he stood at the podium at the Cairo University. But alas, he disappointed them. But the defenders of Obama who has a large fan club all over the world, including the Muslim world, would say give Obama a chance. They ask the Muslim world to take Obama's speech as a beginning of a new era. They say America is changing. The mainstream media, which show Israel is always right even when it is doing the wrong thing, are fast losing their credibility. The left-oriented alternate media - the internet-based media - are becoming popular and have begun to shape the US public opinion. So in years to come, the US foreign policy would not be lopsided, they assure. The Muslim world can wait. But how long? Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily Mirror Sri Lanka.

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: June 12, 2009

Obama speech falls short of Muslim expectations

End of Document

Spying trouble

The Jerusalem Post

May 22, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 15

Length: 1431 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ

Highlight: If emerging reports are accurate, the apprehension of cells working out of Lebanon on behalf of Israel marks one of the greatest intelligence blunders in the country's recent history. SECURITY AND DEFENSE

Body

The equipment shown to reporters by a masked Lebanese security officer was not all that fancy - hardly the stuff of James Bond movies: an Internet router, several laptops, a few cameras and a red Igloo water cooler (with an advanced electronic mapping system hidden inside), encryption devices, a can of motor oil hiding mini tapes, forged identification papers, a car battery charger used to store and transmit data, and USB flash drives containing detailed maps of Lebanon. Some of these, according to police, showed bridges and military outposts that were hit by the IAF during the 2006 war with Hizbullah.

The equipment, according to Arab media reports that have surfaced in recent weeks, belongs to a group of several dozen Lebanese citizens who were arrested for spying on Hizbullah for Israel. Since the arrests began late last year, the Lebanese Internal Security Force (ISF) claims to have dismantled at least 10 spy rings, and arrested close to 40 people.

As it has always done in response to media reports of its espionage activities, Israel has neither confirmed nor denied its involvement. And though reports on Israeli spies surface every so often - with Iran claiming regularly to have uncovered a Mossad cell - the reports now emerging from Lebanon are of such magnitude that, if accurate, they constitute one of the greatest intelligence blunders in the country's recent history.

The value of intelligence vis-à-vis Hizbullah cannot be underestimated, particularly due to the Iranian-backed Shi'ite group's extensive use of civilian infrastructure to hide its military operations. On the first night of the Second Lebanon War, for example, IAF jets bombed more than 90 targets - many of them homes - containing the long-range, Iranian-made Zelzal and Fajr missiles. The operation, considered one of the few successes of the war, was made possible by intelligence collected over a number of years.

THE ARRESTS in question began in November, when the Lebanese media announced the ISF had arrested Ali Jarrah from the town of Maraj in the Bekaa Valley. Sophisticated photographic equipment and GPS devices allegedly had been discovered in his car, and he was accused of playing a role in the assassination of Imad Mughniyeh, Hizbullah's notorious military commander, in February 2008.

According to Lebanese security sources, Jarrah admitted in his interrogation to being a veteran Mossad spy, who had been recruited in 1983.

Spying trouble

According to a New York Times report earlier this year, Jarrah confessed to having traveled frequently to Syria and southern Lebanon, where he photographed roads and convoys that were believed to be used to transport weapons. Also according to the report, he told interrogators that he spoke with his Israeli handlers via satellite phone, and on a rare occasion - under the pretext of a business trip - flew to Europe, where he received an Israeli passport, then continued on to Israel to be debriefed at length.

In January, the ISF claimed to have cracked another cell, this one led by Marwan Fakih, the owner of a car dealership and garage in Nabatiyeh. According to Lebanese security, Fakih installed tracking devices and eavesdropping equipment in cars he serviced that belonged to Hizbullah operatives. If the allegations are true, and he was indeed working for Israel, it is possible that the devices he installed allowed Israeli intelligence to locate and identify secret Hizbullah installations.

In April, the ISF announced that it had captured a retired Lebanese general, Adib Alam, who allegedly headed a 12-man Israeli spy network. It said Alam, along with his wife, received thousands of dollars for information on Syrian and Lebanese military and civilian sites, some of which were bombed during the Second Lebanon War.

Lebanese security sources said that Alam had undergone training in Israel to learn how to operate the spy equipment and communications devices that were seized during a raid on his home. Lebanese detectives reportedly decoded four messages, one in which Alam expressed fears that he would be exposed.

Hizbullah deputy secretary-general Naim Qassem called Alam's arrest a major achievement for security forces. "Preliminary information indicates he had been working as a spy for Israel for more than 25 years, and retired from his position in national security eight years ago," Qassem was quoted as saying.

It is since Alam's arrest, say Lebanese security officials, that they and Hizbullah have succeeded in all the additional arrests. One of these was Ziad Homsy, deputy mayor of Saadnayel in the Bekaa Valley, who was allegedly ordered by his handlers to get close to Hizbullah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah. According to news reports, Homsy renewed communication with old contacts from the Lebanese opposition movements, and asked one of them to pass on a message to Nasrallah that "he was absolutely committed to the resistance option," and was ready to become a martyr for the cause.

Homsy told his interrogators he was asked by Israeli intelligence officials to request an appointment with Nasrallah, and then to report back to them once a time and a place for the meeting was set. This led to media speculation that Israel had been planning to assassinate Nasrallah.

In an interview with Agence France Presse this week, ISF chief Gen. Ashraf Rifi said that a "technological secret" assisted Lebanese security forces in uncovering the different cells. Israel, he said, would seduce the spies with beautiful women and trips abroad.

"They would pay them handsomely, say \$5,000 to \$7,000, for their first mission. After that, Israel would drop the price significantly, as it had these people hooked, and would threaten to expose them unless they cooperated," he was quoted as saying.

INTELLIGENCE IS obtained in three ways: from human agents (HUMINT); from electronic eavesdropping and signals (SIGINT); and from surveillance equipment, such as satellites (VISINT). All are important, and each has advantages and disadvantages. Human agents can go places that listening devices and satellites cannot. In addition, electronic signals can always be intercepted, decoded and traced back to their source.

If the reports are true, then, the discovery of 10 spy rings in Lebanon is of great significance, especially if the discovery of one led to the exposure of another.

When a spy is recruited, he usually has contact with no one other than his recruiter, and will never learn the identities of other spies. This way, if captured, he cannot reveal information on others.

Spying trouble

"When dealing with spy rings, one of the most important elements is compartmentalization," explained a former intelligence officer, stressing that he was not familiar with the current events in Lebanon. "If the downfall of one cell led to the downfall of another, the compartmentalization was not kept here."

DESPITE THIS supposed setback, according to foreign reports, Israel has had some significant intelligence achievements since the 2006 war. The first was the September 2007 bombing of a nuclear reactor in northeastern Syria. Then came the assassination of Mughniyeh in a meticulously-planned car bombing in the heart of Damascus; the assassination of Syrian Gen. Muhammad Suleiman, who was involved in the nuclear project by a sniper; and the successful bombing of a **Hamas** weapons convoy deep in the Sudanese desert, during Operation Cast Lead in January.

Hizbullah, some reports have claimed, decided to increase its counterintelligence efforts following the Second Lebanon War, particularly after the assassination of Mughniyeh, one of the most wanted terrorists in the world.

There is also the possibility that Hizbullah is purposely making these arrests just weeks before the Lebanese parliamentary elections. Some analysts believe it is doing this to increase public support by creating a major security crisis in Lebanon, and showing that only it is capable of confronting that crisis.

Predictions here are that Hizbullah will solidify its power base following the June 7 elections, and establish the next ruling coalition. If Hizbullah wins, Israel believes it will install "acceptable faces" in the cabinet when forming the government. But at the same time, it is concerned that Hizbullah will install a defense minister affiliated with the group who will support the participation of the Lebanese Armed Forces in a future conflict, in contrast to the Second Lebanon War, when the LAF stayed out.

Whether or not this is the case, the discovery of a spy ring is part of the ongoing espionage game that is far from over for either Israel or Hizbullah.

Graphic

Photo: CAUGHT RED-HANDED? A masked police officer in Beirut shows a device used to decipher coded messages, seized from suspected Israeli agents spying on Lebanon and Hizbullah. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Obama cites Quran to reach Muslims from Egypt

AlArabiya.net

June 3, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 AlArabiya.net. Provided by Syndigate.info, an Albawaba.com company All Rights Reserved



Length: 1434 words

Body

American President Barack Hussein Obama ended his Middle East tour and headed to Germany Thursday after he addressed the Muslim world from a tightly secured Cairo where he quoted from Islam's Holy Book and stressed the United States was not in competition with Islam in a bid to heal the rift that has developed between the two.

Obama was in Cairo following a brief stop in Saudi Arabia, where he held talks with King Abdullah, and arrived at Cairo University to give a landmark speech that was a fulfillment of his inaugural speech promise to reach out to Muslims.

The president spent the day in Egypt where he toured the Sultan Hassan Mosque, one of the world's oldest, and visited Egypt's main attraction the Pyramids of Giza. "I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect; and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition," Obama told the packed university hall.

Before continuing Obama bid the room "assalaamu alaykum," or peace be upon you, to the delight of the crowd, which cheered and applauded.

Obama addressed several issues from women's rights to economic development but not before he talked about his personal links with Islam and the role of Islam in American history and stressed that America was not at war with Islam.

"Islam is a part of America," he said as he called on Muslims to help the United States fight extremism because "we do not want to keep our troops in Afghanistan" but we need to be confident that there were no more violent extremists determined to kill Americans.

The president said that he felt it his duty to negate the negative stereotype of Islam in the West and said just as "Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire."

Israel-Palestine

Moving on to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the president began by describing his nation's bond with Israel as "unshakeable" and speaking about the years of suffering and persecution of the Jewish people.

Obama went on to decry anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, the denial of which he said was "baseless, ignorant and hateful."

Obama cites Quran to reach Muslims from Egypt

Speaking of the dislocation and suffering of the Palestinian people over the past 60 years, Obama said "let there be no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable."

"America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity and a state of their own," he said, as he called on Palestinians to abandon violence.

Obama said the only resolution was for both sides to accept a two-state solution and said that is "in Israel's interest, Palestine's interest, America's interest, and the world's interest."

He then reiterated his stance on Jewish settlements and went on to say: "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop."

Iraq and Iran

The president said that although he believed the Iraqi people were better off without the "tyranny of [former Iraqi leader] Saddam Hussein" the events that took place in Iraq affirmed that diplomacy was the best way.

Obama said the United States did not want to claim Iraqi territory or resources and promised to withdraw combat brigades by August 2010 and remove all troops from Iraq by 2012.

The president went on to say that he had ordered the closure of the controversial Guantanamo Bay prison by early 2010 and that the U.S. prohibited the use of torture.

After describing the tumultuous history between Iran and the U.S., Obama said "it will be hard to overcome decades of mistrust, but we will proceed with courage, rectitude and resolve."

Obama said the issue of nuclear weapons was not about American interests but about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could "lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path."

"I understand those who protest that some countries have weapons that others do not. No single nation should pick and choose which nations hold nuclear weapons," he said, adding that all nations, including Iran, have the right to peaceful nuclear power as long as they comply with the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The president made no mention of Israel at this point.

Democracy and freedom

Obama went on to say that the promotion of democracy did not include imposing one nation's system on another.

Obama said he welcomed all democratically elected governments, making no mention of the Islamist group **Hamas**, which was elected in 2006, but added as long as they are peaceful.

"Suppressing ideas never succeeds in making them go away. America respects the right of all peaceful and law-abiding voices to be heard around the world, even if we disagree with them," he said.

The leader went on to discuss freedom of religion and called on Muslims to embrace their religions tradition of tolerance and to close fault lines amongst themselves and put an end to the violence between Sunnis and Shiites.

He also said it was equally important for Western nations to avoid "impeding Muslim citizens from practicing religion as they see fit for instance, by dictating what clothes a Muslim woman should wear. We cannot disguise hostility towards any religion behind the pretence of liberalism," Obama said, possibly a reference to the ongoing headscarf debate and the cartoons issue in Denmark.

Quoting from the Quran

Obama gave his speech following a tour of the Sultan Hassan mosque, one of the world's oldest, and he expressed his deep respect for the history of Islam.

Likely to stir the emotions of Muslims everywhere, the president started his speech by greeting the room the Islamic way and went on to repeatedly quote from the Quran much to the delight of his audience who constantly interrupted him with applause.

"There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground. As the Holy Quran tells us, "Be conscious of God and speak always the truth," he said.

After making a couple of references to Islam's Holy Book, the president went on to quote the Ayat, or verse, and said the "Holy Quran teaches that whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind."

Bringing an end to his speech Obama sought inspiration from all three holy books of the Abrahamic faiths and said: "We have the power to make the world we seek, but only if we have the courage to make a new beginning, keeping in mind what has been written."

Obama cites Quran to reach Muslims from Egypt

"The Holy Quran tells us, "O mankind! We have created you male and a female; and we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another," he said, adding "the Talmud tells us: "The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace."

And ending with "the Holy Bible tells us, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Repairing damage

Obama's speech was aimed at targeting the distrust in the Muslim world towards the United States, which saw its image sullied by the Abu Ghraib abuse scandal, Guantanamo Bay, the stalled peace process and the Iraq war.

But many Arabs are still withholding judgment on Obama's administration, and he has a chance to win greater approval in a speech to mend ties with world Muslims, said Dalia Mogahed, Executive Director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies.

Arab approval ratings of U.S. leadership remained low-at a median of about 25 percent-in a survey across 11 Arab countries conducted after Obama took office, higher than in the last months of the prior administration in all but two countries.

Gallup, in a summary of the poll results, reported the rise may reflect Obama's pledge to pull U.S. troops from Iraq and close its detention centre at Guantanamo.

The success of the U.S. leader's diplomatic initiatives in the region-like advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace and halting Iran's nuclear program--may depend on how well Obama is able to improve U.S.-Islamic ties.

Some of his first moves as president were calling Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, giving an interview to the pan-Arab Al Arabiya TV, made an unprecedented video address to Iranians and, in Turkey, reassured Muslims the United States was not at war with them.

Obama arrived in the Middle East after sparring publicly with new Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over West Bank settlements, an issue he sees as an impediment to resumed peace talks.

Load-Date: June 4, 2009

End of Document

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)

March 16, 2009 Monday

Copyright 2009 The New Mexican

Section: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR; Pg. A-7

Length: 1462 words

Body

TIME TO REVISIT THE MEANING OF CHRISTIANITY

We can again fly the American flag without fear of being misunderstood, and it's time to address the term "Christian," which, like our flag, appears co-opted by one extreme group.

Webster's entry could be fairly summarized as "one who follows the teachings of Christ." His teachings include His words, such as "love thy neighbor as thyself," and "judge not lest ye be judged," and His deeds, befriending the stigmatized of His time, including women and lepers. He also condemned the self righteous, but His other teachings suggest we not follow that example, tempting though it may be. He condemned divorce (women had no rights then) but was silent and apparently unconcerned about homosexuality. We suggest it is inaccurate to attribute the defeat of the domestic partnership bill to those who attempt to follow the teachings of Christ, that is, Christians.

Doug and Martha Puryear

Santa Fe

Nix name-calling

The community that supports domestic partnerships is quick to describe anyone opposing their position as being guilty of "hate speech." A quick read through the March 8 letters to the editor reveals how that community describes its opposition: Ugly side of human nature; hatred-spewing; oppressive of others; fear-causing; hypocritical; bigoted; purely stupid; unloving; Anti-Christis; Bible-thumping; cowards.

We're called "homophobes" and "bacteria that thrives on fear." We "Bible thumpers" would like to join Sen. Mary Jane García in her statement on the Senate floor: "We worship a God that loves everyone."

José Vasquez

Santa Fe

Call for equality

Scriptures have served to inspire and to guide -- and to justify oppression. All are culture-bound to ancient times (including eons when marriage was between one man and as many wives and concubines as he could afford). In a free society, religion, and narrow interpretations of same, cannot be the law of the land.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We of the straight community must stand with all, including our gay citizens, for equality. Human rights, civil rights, women's rights -- all were once thought to threaten the existing society. It's time that all citizens were able to choose their partners and families without the "tyranny of the majority." Time and history are always on the side of greater freedom and greater rights. The "sanctity of marriage" is violated in abusive and failed heterosexual marriages, so let's not perpetuate the falsehood that gay unions will destroy marriage. It's time everyone be a first-class citizen.

Bobbie Ferrell

Santa Fe

Keep gate open

Many of those who would deny equal rights to gays are either unfamiliar with their own history or are deniers of it. To allow "the will of the majority" to dictate who has rights and who doesn't flies in the face of the basic principles on which this nation was founded.

Since the first Europeans set foot in North America, equal rights for all have nonetheless had to be hard fought. Who among us can deny the step-by-painful-step fight for equal treatment under the law by a series of "hyphenated" Americans (which means just about all of us), including, just for starters, Catholics, Jews, Mormons, atheists, blacks, Italians, Irish, Mexicans, Chinese, Japanese, Indians, non-English speakers, immigrants in general -- and, above all, women (over half of our population).

All have had to fight against "the will of the majority" to achieve the simple decency of being able to get an education, get a job, live in a house, vote and drink at a drinking fountain without restriction.

So we must do it again: offer the simple decency of civil unions to gays, but again with a fight. Is it not time to abandon the age-old apres moi, le deluge mentality, whose message is: "I (and my group) have made it. To hell with the others."

Lorraine Goldman

Santa Fe

Sage Sagan

I believe it was the astronomer Carl Sagan who first advanced the theory, after a NASA fly-by of Venus, that the high concentration of carbon dioxide in that planet's atmosphere would result in surface temperatures of extraordinary levels because of the "greenhouse" effect this would cause. He was scoffed at and dismissed until a probe was sent and -- surprise! You can melt lead there.

Now, if someone, be they a Ph.D. or a pizza clerk, has a better and more plausible scientific explanation for Venus' obvious "global warming," I'm sure we would all like to hear it.

Until then, climate-change critics should try to avoid that mountain of arrogance and self aggrandizement.

John Smailer

Santa Fe

Method is misinformed

A few clarifications are called for regarding the March 1 My View, "Climate change is nature at work," by Seymour Merrin.

As for his statement that Arctic ice decline has now "markedly reversed itself," please note that 2007 saw a record low ice extent, representing a 39 percent reduction from averages recorded from 1979 to 2000. Reversal?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Merrin proposed a simple test to determine the connection of carbon dioxide increases and warming, then misrepresented recorded history to claim a "disproval of that theory." Regarding the Earth's temperature averages, he claimed our hottest years should've occurred recently, but haven't. Earth's 11 warmest years in recorded history were within the last 13. Temperature averages now increase at twice the pace of the 1950 time frame.

Peer-reviewed analysis overwhelmingly refutes his assertions, per the "scientific method."

Steve Shaw

Santa Fe

Respect breeds peace

"Terror rules Mideast," Joseph Eigner's March 3 letter, asserts that there will be peace "when Hamas stops attacking Israel and accepts her permanent existence." Let's turn that around. There will be peace when Israel stops attacking, occupying, and ethnically cleansing the Palestinians and accepts their permanent existence as a sovereign nation.

When Israel treats Palestinians like human beings with national, civil, and human rights equal to those of Jews, rather than as a lesser species that can be caged, starved and attacked, Palestinian resistance will cease.

Eigner's notion, for instance, that Israeli spectators watching war from outside Gaza were, as he claims, anxiously watching "to see if their soldiers were OK," is nonsensical. From a mile away, they could see bombs exploding, buildings being destroyed, and white phosphorus flares dropping, but they certainly could not see Israeli soldiers. Cheering the destruction of civilian areas is indeed barbaric.

Bill Christison

Santa Fe

Spin, not facts

In the March 8 My View, "U.S. can't afford Israel's 'entitlement', " Kathy Christison objects to American aid to Israel, but is a bit sloppy on the facts.

Included in the Top 10 recipients of American foreign aid are Egypt, Pakistan, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, and Sudan. And now, an extra \$900 million is being sent to Gaza. This seems to represent some political balance.

Ms. Christison calls foreign aid to Israel an "earmark." Earmarks refer to congressional direction of money to a small local-interest group, when there is circumventing of the merit-based allocation processes, and when there is no executive oversight. Foreign aid, by definition, is not an earmark. But who cares about the facts. Let's lump in "earmark" with "Israel" and see if we can rile some people up.

She refers to the "kinship" with Palestinians that led Osama bin Laden and his men to attack the United States. Osama and his men were mainly wealthy Saudis who hated America and the West. Their "kinship" with Palestinians was fabricated for expedience after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. But, hey, let's cheer them on.

Richard Lieberman, MD

Santa Fe

Another noisemaker

Thanks to Jan Boyer for the March 8 My View, "Make noise if you love the forest." We are once again reminded to be vigilant against the barbaric practice of thinning and burning the forests, called clearcutting. Since when did the guardians of the forest become its profiteers and destroyers? When are we going to start criminalizing the theft of public resources? Enough is enough.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Helga Scow Stern

Santa Fe

Pets are family

As I drove on NM 76 between Chimayó and Española last week, I encountered two dead cats and a beagle puppy standing in the road in Santa Cruz, scared and confused. The cats -- an orange tabby and a black cat -- were still there when I drove home. Would someone leave a member of their family out there lying on the road?

I feel that animals are like people in many ways; they have feelings, they eat, sleep, play and love, perhaps better than humans. Their devotion is boundless when you love them back.

If humans have souls, then so do animals. And they deserve all the love and attention that a member of our family would get. Please make sure they are secure at night when it is so dangerous for them. Best of all, keep them inside where they will always be safe.

Davine B. Daniels

Truchas

Graphic

See pdf's for exact rendition, caption, graphics and photographer info.

Load-Date: March 16, 2009

End of Document

ISLAM UNCOVERED; After 9/11, Magnum photographer Abbas began a seven-year journey around Islamic countries. As these striking images show, he found the spread of a new orthodoxy, from African ports to the beaches of Asia

The Times (London)

June 13, 2009 Saturday

Edition 1

Copyright 2009 Times Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

THE TIMES

Section: MAGAZINE;FEATURES; Pg. 26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,35

Length: 1519 words

Byline: Martin Fletcher

Body

LEFT: MOMBASA, KENYA

A woman in a niqab. Abbas says, "By adopting the full-length veil - on African soil where the human body has always been an object of veneration - these women are doing something very strange. What are they, or the men who encourage them, protecting themselves against?"

ABOVE: CHITTAGONG, BANGLADESH

Self-portrait of the photographer in the car mirror

SAUDI ARABIA

Algerian pilgrims pose in front of a picture of the Kaaba shrine in a photographer's studio (street photography by pilgrims is prohibited by the Saudi authorities). In Islam, the shrine is the most sacred place on Earth, and making a pilgrimage there at least once in one's lifetime is an obligation for devout Muslims.

TOP: CAFÉ, TEHRAN

"I'd really like to be in step with my country's regime, at least once in its history," writes Iranian-born Abbas. "The length and colour of women's tunics, the quantity of uncovered hair on display, are the yardstick to measure the degree of liberalisation of the Iranian regime."

HAJJ, MECCA

ISLAM UNCOVERED After 9/11, Magnum photographer Abbas began a seven-year journey around Islamic countries. As these striking images show, he found the spread of....

Pilgrims at prayer outside the Haram mosque. "At my first Hajj, I saw that the imposing nature of the gathering was supposed to induce in the participants a sense of the power of the umma, the community of believers. Today, I'm wondering whether this sense of power isn't in fact a dangerous thing for a Muslim... The dreams to which it gives rise are illusory."

KARBALA, IRAQ

Shia men beat their chests during Ashura, the day of mourning for Imam Hussein, the prophet's grandson, who was killed in a war of succession in the early days of Islam. "Here, the sinezani, the rhythmic beating of the chest, is not accompanied by long chanted melodies, as it is in Iran; it is dry, it is tribal, its rhythm evoking African culture. Several participants lacerate themselves on the forehead with cutlasses, and their faces stream with blood."

TOP, FAR LEFT: NARATHIWAT, THAILAND

In a small fishing village, a child in an Osama Bin Laden T-shirt poses with a toy gun: "The boy is playing war games with his friends, but I'm not sure that either he or his parents have any idea what Bin Laden represents."

TOP CENTRE: GAZA

Young men and armed Hamas militants, wearing masks, observe the site of an Israeli attack. "There's no hope left here. The sea is the only beautiful thing in Gaza, the only horizon... as long as one forgets that Israeli warships are patrolling the deeper waters, preventing anyone from entering or leaving the prison-city."

BOTTOM FAR LEFT: ADEN, YEMEN

Evening prayers on the beach. "Yemen's women are very independent - despite their veils - and not at all timid like their Saudi neighbours."

LEFT: KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

A woman in a burka comes to pay respect to the dead at the Shi'ite shrine of Sakhi Jan.

ABOVE: KABUL

A guard at the National Museum reveals a painting of female nudes, which the Taleban locked away. "There are my two beauties, kicking their heels in this dismal place with a bunch of friends in other paintings, equally naked: the Taleban [had] disappeared, but the conservatism of the Afghans [had] not."

ABOVE: ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

A woman outside a lingerie store. "You see people wandering round the air-conditioned malls, doing very little, but busy doing it anyway. Everyone has Bluetooth, even the anonymous, ghostly nigabis (women wearing the full veil) who glide across the marble floors."

He calls himself Abbas, nothing more. His photographs are black and white - "Colour is a distraction," he says. His art has won him international renown, but he avoids discussing himself because he considers that a distraction too. "I like to talk about my photographs," he protests during a telephone interview from his home in Paris.

So we move on quickly to his startling new book, *In Whose Name? The Islamic World After 9/11*, a collection of 173 photographs taken during 7 years of travels in 16 Muslim countries after the terrorist attacks of 2001.

They show victims - witting and unwitting - of violence, of religious orthodoxy, of the backwardness that afflicts so much of the Islamic world. They show young men maimed in religious conflicts, mourners, graves, women and girls vanishing behind niqabs and chadors, newly liberated Shi'ite men in Iraq flagellating themselves, a man and boy fashioning a satellite dish from tin cans in Kabul, a young girl hauling gravel from a Bangladeshi river.

ISLAM UNCOVERED After 9/11, Magnum photographer Abbas began a seven-year journey around Islamic countries. As these striking images show, he found the spread of....

They show zealotry and destruction. They show passion and fervour - but only of a religious nature. Models and actresses are the only women showing off their beauty. AK47s are among the few concessions to modernity. There is little joy unless you count Yemeni boys playing football, or an Iraqi girl grinning as she tries on an American soldier's helmet.

In the travel diary that accompanies the pictures, Abbas explains, "I was born in a Muslim country and was steeped in its culture, which helped to form the person I am: this voyage was something I owed myself." Now a non-believer, he laments the "intellectual stagnation" of Islam, the "arrogance" of a religion that welcomes converts but considers it lawful to behead apostates, the way its followers are locked in the past. At one point he discovers the writings of Henri Michaux, a Belgian: "At last I've found a traveller... who doesn't feel compelled to like the inhabitants of the countries he visits."

Abbas's argument is less with Islam, however, than with the Islamists - the political ideologues who have hijacked the faith, and the jihadists who use it to justify their violence.

He decries the "creeping Islamisation" he found in almost every country - the building of ever more mosques, the relentless covering up of women, the censorship, the ever louder cries of muezzin calling people to prayer - "more like noisy fascism than faith". On an Indonesian beach he photographed women and children bathing fully clothed where they used to wear swimsuits: "Here we have an entire nation turning its back on its natural element, the tropical ocean, and adopting the customs of an imperialism derived from the desert."

These are symptoms of a more worrying phenomenon, Abbas says. "What Islamists have lost in terms of military effectiveness - and they're relentlessly hounded by all the states - they gain daily through the spread of Islamic influence and ideas." Muslim governments may be cracking down on the jihadists, but they are losing the battle for their peoples' hearts and minds.

Most are appeasing, not confronting, the Islamists in their midst, he says. "Many states are encouraging this Islamisation. Why? Because they think if they can ride the tiger they'll be safe. They forget that's what Pakistan did for many years and now the tiger has turned against them."

They should be waging intellectual war with the Islamists, challenging their self-serving interpretations of the Koran, he argues. "It's not just fighting the jihadists - that's simple. You catch a few guys, you put them in prison, you kill them - that's easy. But fighting an ideology which draws its justification from what you all believe, which is the Koran - that's more difficult."

Abbas was briefly held captive by militiamen in southern Iraq, but declines to discuss his experiences: "The work is enough, no?" The only picture of himself in the book shows his face in a car mirror with a camera obscuring it.

For the record, he was born in Iran 65 years ago, and emigrated to France with his parents while still a boy. As a young photographer he covered the wars in Biafra and Vietnam. Later he worked in other hotspots - Bangladesh, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Cuba, Chile and South Africa. More recently he has spent years at a time working on photographic essays - on Mexico, the Iranian Revolution and, from 1987 to 1994, on the resurgence of Islam.

He was in Siberia, photographing shamans for a book on animism, on September 11, 2001, when the World Trade Centre was destroyed 13 time zones away.

Three days later, on television, he saw a young British man of Pakistani origin yelling, "This is how every Muslim should die," as he left a London mosque. A year later he visited Ground Zero and saw a cross that workmen had erected from steel beams salvaged from the rubble. It was, he says, "as if the workers who erected it wanted the world to know that it is not only their country that has come under attack but also their culture, their religion and their civilisation".

ISLAM UNCOVERED After 9/11, Magnum photographer Abbas began a seven-year journey around Islamic countries. As these striking images show, he found the spread of....

At that point Abbas abandoned his animism project to try to answer the more pressing question: how would the umma - the world community of Muslims - react to the jihadists in their midst? The answer, he suggests, is that they are burying their heads in the sand.

Abbas expects *In Whose Name?* to be banned, officially or unofficially, in many Muslim countries. That is sad, he says. "My book is not meant for the West. I am telling Muslims, even intellectuals, to wake up. They are the ones who should read this book and look at the photographs."

Abbas 2009. *In Whose Name? The Islamic World After 9/11*, published by Thames & Hudson on Monday, is available from BooksFirst priced £ 26.96 (RRP £ 29.95), free p& p, on 0870 1608080; timesonline.co.uk/booksfirst

Graphic

LEFT: MOMBASA, KENYA A woman in a niqab. Abbas says, "By adopting the full-length veil - on African soil where the human body has always been an object of veneration - these women are doing something very strange. What are they, or the men who encourage them, protecting themselves against?" ABOVE: CHITTAGONG, BANGLADESH Self-portrait of the photographer in the car mirror

Load-Date: June 13, 2009

End of Document

Deputy takes it all in her stride Gillard at ease in the hot seat

Sunday Herald Sun (Australia)

June 7, 2009 Sunday

1 - FIRST Edition

Copyright 2009 Nationwide News Pty Limited All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 24

Length: 1436 words

Byline: ELLEN WHINNETT

Body

IT is less than 24 hours since Joel Fitzgibbon resigned as Defence Minister and the Rudd Government is still bruised by its first real crisis.

But Julia Gillard has left the madhouse of Canberra and escaped to her electorate, where she is sipping a coffee in the seaside suburb of Altona.

The most powerful woman in Australia is a regular here at Melissa's Cakes and people barely look twice as she perches on a wonky chair on the footpath and enjoys her coffee and the crisp weather.

The unions are after her, her friend, Joel Fitzgibbon, has lost his job and Australia has bypassed a recession by a whisker. Just hours ago, she was in the thick of negotiations over who would be the new Defence Minister and helping to steer the Government through the first major scandal of its 18-month-old term.

But to the people of Altona, the Deputy Prime Minister -- the woman who has served a history-making 117 days as the Acting Prime Minister of Australia -- is simply another local in need of a caffeine hit.

"Hello, love," says an elderly man as he walks by with a dog.

"G'day, how are you," she calls back, as comfortable here as she is in the halls of power in Canberra.

The cafe's radio has been playing Midnight Oil -- a band fronted by Ms Gillard's Cabinet colleague, Peter Garrett.

It causes Ms Gillard to reflect -- with some enthusiasm -- that she's never moved on from the 1980s when it comes to musical taste.

"Tim has more sophisticated musical tastes than me," she says of her partner of four years, Tim Mathieson.

"He (likes) jazz and more contemporary music. He is trying to prevail upon me to get the (Bruce) Springsteen CD out of the machine.

"That would be one of the old favourites. I'm from a generation of Skyhooks . . . INXS. And definitely Midnight Oil.

"I got to go to the Bushfire Relief concert and see Peter Garrett live. He was awesome.

Deputy takes it all in her stride Gillard at ease in the hot seat

“It might be a little bit harder to do the whole rock star thing as you get older, though Mick Jagger might say that's a lie.

“Physically Peter found it pretty demanding. That dancing style -- I think it was wearing him out!”

Ms Gillard says she doesn't know how much time she's spent as Acting Prime Minister, other than “quite a lot”.

For the record, it's 117 days -- meaning she's been in the top job for 20 per cent of the time that Kevin Rudd's Government has been in power.

“KEVIN, particularly in the first year, had to travel extensively to introduce the new Government to the world and the global economic events meant he and (Treasurer) Wayne (Swan) had to be at some very important international meetings including, most importantly, the G20,” she says.

It's unlikely Ms Gillard will spend as much time in the Prime Minister's chair in Parliament this year, she says.

During her 10 stints as Acting Prime Minister, she's been involved in everything from defending socialite Paris Hilton from claims she'd spent too much money in Melbourne, to urging Israel and Hamas to leave civilians out of their escalating conflict.

“During the course of the Christmas period I had to speak to the Prime Minister of Israel (then Ehud Olmert) about events that were then unfolding in Gaza, so that was probably the single biggest international incident that's happened in a period when I was Acting Prime Minister,” she says.

But it was attending the funerals of young Aussie soldiers killed in Afghanistan that she found the hardest.

“You get to meet the families, brothers, sisters, wives, kids -- very young children, very young wives -- and the dimension of the tragedy and how many people are hurt by the loss of one of our soldiers comes home to you very, very forcefully,” she says.

And the deaths of 173 people in Victoria's bushfires moved the Deputy Prime Minister to tears, as she struggled to find the right words to express her sorrow during a speech to Parliament.

“It cut deep right around the nation and the Parliament was very much capturing the national mood on the day,” she says.

“There are some things that do hit you very hard personally.”

At just 47 years of age, Ms Gillard has plenty of time left to have a crack at the top job, but simply deflects any questions about her future.

“I want to be Deputy Prime Minister and do what I do now,” she says.

She says she had “desperately wanted Kevin Rudd” to become Prime Minister and equally desperately wanted to be his deputy.

“If I get an opportunity to do this job and do it well and remake Australia's workplace relations and education system then that's more than enough for me.”

Ms Gillard also deflects questions about her personal future, declining -- with a laugh -- to discuss specifics of her relationship with Mathieson, with whom she shares a house in Altona.

The pair have busy lives, but when they get a chance they love to walk around Altona and come to this cafe for coffee and breakfast.

Ms Gillard says she's “very happy” in her relationship and understands the public's interest in it and in her.

Deputy takes it all in her stride Gillard at ease in the hot seat

“Politicians' partners do get a bit of scrutiny. (Mr Rudd's wife) Therese Rein has . . . so it's part of that, the general scrutiny that goes on.

“There's been . . . extra interest because being the first woman to do this job, he's the first man to be the partner of a woman in this position, so that's added an extra layer to it.”

The Welsh-born Ms Gillard was, in her student days, accused of being a hard-left radical through her involvement in the Socialist Forum, a group that's been described as everything from a front for the Communist Party to merely a pressure group within the ALP.

Fast-forward a few decades to today's politician, a pragmatist who muscled up to the nation's union heavies and told them not to bother lobbying Canberra for any more workplace reforms.

“I would hope my relationship with the union movement is one where they would say I am always open and clear with them and I would say I very much respect the role they play organising and supporting working people,” she says firmly.

The Government, it appears, will not be persuaded to abolish the Australian Building and Construction Commission any earlier than the February 2010 date promised in the last election campaign.

At the same time Ms Gillard was staring down the unions, her close friend, Joel Fitzgibbon, was realising his ministerial career was coming to an end -- brought down ultimately by a conflict of interest involving his brother, who heads an insurance company.

Ms Gillard, on message, says Mr Fitzgibbon's resignation was “clearly appropriate”.

But as a friend, she felt sorry for him in relinquishing his job.

“I'm sure every MP would say this -- I think in their more reflective moments members of the Opposition would say it, too -- it's a tough thing for someone to resign from a ministerial position, a tough thing for Joel and I'm sure it's a tough thing for Liberal members in the past to do it,” she says.

Ms Gillard is a walking piece of history -- first woman in Australia to hold the job of Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Prime Minister, first woman to sit in the House of Representatives as leader of the country.

She's aware of being a role model for women and girls.

“I do end up in conversations with girls when I visit schools about it and with their mums, who are chuffed to see a woman has got to that level in politics.”

“But . . . I didn't go into politics or do any of the things I have done with a view that I wanted to be the first woman to do them.

“I passionately believed in the nature of changes and the need to make this a stronger and fairer country.”

GILLARD ON ...

Her partner Tim Mathieson:

Oh, very happy would be the best way to put it.'

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd:

We're good friends, a partnership, work colleagues, great sense of mutual respect and mutual support.'

Herald Sun columnist Andrew Bolt:

What a question! That's much harder than the Kevin Rudd question! I think he's intelligent and intriguing.'

Deputy takes it all in her stride Gillard at ease in the hot seat

Music:

I don't have an iPod. Is that a dreadful thing to admit? This will have to come with a confession about what a dreadful '70s,'80s dog I am.'

Talkback king Neil Mitchell:

He's quintessentially Melbourne, everything about him is very, very Melbourne and I think he's hard hitting as a radio journalist and I think in a good way. We have had some feisty exchanges.'

Whether she's learned to cook yet:

No, there's an education revolution, but no revolution in the kitchen. Tim still does all that.'

Exercising and staying fit:

I'd like to say that, like Barack Obama, I'm out in the gym for an hour and a bit every morning or whatever he manages to do, but I'd have to say the truth is a little bit more down from the Barack-O example.'

Load-Date: June 6, 2009

End of Document

Can Games Save the News?

New York Observer

June 2, 2009

Copyright 2009 The New York Observer, L.P. All Rights Reserved

Length: 1652 words

Body

News junkies are gamers. Ask your friends a question about the latest news tidbit—say, where President Obama and the First Lady went on their dinner date this weekend. Then watch them whip out their iPhones, flip open their laptops, racing to find the right answer. Within seconds, they'll emerge from the scrolling sea of Google results, triumphant and shouting: "Blue Hill!" Our constant (okay, seemingly neverending) search for the right piece of news or information is a daily, even minute-by-minute challenge, providing a small, satisfactory triumph on blogs, Twitter and in comment sections, and even in bars and at dining room tables with our BlackBerrys.

New York Times junkies can even get their own Times IQ as high as 200 … on Facebook. Every weekday morning, the users of the New York Times News Quiz application are faced with five multiple choice questions based on the day's top news stories (as regarded by the editorial staff). Yesterday, for example, users were asked where George Tiller was shot (Wichita) and who was Robin Soderling's opponent in the big tennis upset at Roland Garros (Rafael Nadal). After they click away the quiz and submit their answers, they receive a Times IQ ranking, based on their answers. They can challenge their Facebook friends and compare their news knowledge to all users across the platform. A cheat sheet of links to The Times' latest news articles is provided after they take the day's quiz. The application is simple and fun—albeit less than popular. (There are only 2,178 active users. Compare that with the Texas Hold 'Em Poker game, one of the most popular games on Facebook, which has more than 12 million active users, out of Facebook's 200 million or so). But how else can newspapers play with their content to attract readers? Web news designers, like those whizzes at NYTimes.com, already create dazzling, interactive infographics to help readers digest vast amounts of information and understand complicated news stories. But what if users could not just click around the infographics, but become part of them—a character with dilemmas and goals—and not just understand the news, but play with it? Would reading the news become one of the best games in town? On May 29, Clive Thompson, New York Times magazine contributor and a columnist for Wired, was speaking on a muggy afternoon at the 6th Annual Games for Change Festival in the New School's Tisch Auditorium on 12th Street at a discussion titled "Games and the News." He mentioned The New York Times' Faces of the Dead feature. A photo of a U.S. soldier appears on the page—his face spliced with hundreds of tiny squares. Each one represents a service member that the Defense Department has identified as a casualty of the war in Iraq. Users can roam their mouse over the grid and click on the squares to find more information on the man or woman. "I remember looking, I mean that's really beautiful, but it didn't really make me want to go in and look at any of the individuals," Mr. Thompson said. "There was nothing to do, basically, than hover over it." Ian Bogost, a video game researcher, associate professor of digital media at Georgia Institute of Technology and founding partner of video-games studio Persuasive Games, was speaking alongside Mr. Thompson, stroking a bushy goatee and explaining how this is a common characteristic with online infographics. "There's this tradition of depicting data, and depicting data can be clarifying and can create sort of a different kind of interest in relevance," he said. "[But] by creating this sort of directed activity, then all of a sudden something that was just sort of a message or information that you didn't know what to do with can become more game-like." He said, for example, the Budget Hero game, created by American Public Media, allows users to balance the federal budget however they want to.

Can Games Save the News?

They get several spending options, with pros and cons listed for each decision, and they can cut or finance areas of the federal budget. But what if the game set more parameters? What if they could choose whether to be a middle-class or lower-class American or how many children they have? How would that affect their decision and help them understand all sides to a budget decision? “I think if you apply that example to all the celebrated infographics in the news world—all the stuff that The New York Times does, for example—it’s really interesting and high quality but is often overwhelming and if you added a type of directed goal to them, then they actually become more journalistic,” Mr. Bogost explained. He mentioned an About.com poll in which 54 percent of about 3,500 people said they buy a newspaper “all the time” just to play crossword puzzles and other games usually buried in the back sections. Another site, Archimedes-Lab.org, found that just 13 percent of their readers “never” “buy a newspaper just to do the puzzles.” “The crossword puzzle is this amazing entrypoint into the media itself,” he said. Reading the actual news articles, while flipping to the puzzle page, can be just an added bonus. “The newspaper business realized, too late maybe, their competition for classifieds and advertising,” Mr. Bogost said. What if, like classifieds, games “actually turned out to be a business that is a part of journalism and they didn’t even realize it.” Newspapers, Mr. Bogost said, have an opportunity to make gaming part of consuming the news. Last week, at the Games for Change festival, “Play the News,” an online portal of interactive, casual games created by a Pennsylvania studio, won a kind of Pulitzer of news games—the first Knight News Game Award, at an awards ceremony sponsored by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation on May 28. Newsgaming’s September 12th – A Toy World was a controversial, yet interesting, contender in the competition. Released in 2003, the game takes place in a Middle Eastern city, in which little Lego-looking characters race between buildings and terrorists wear white head dressings. The user can drop a missile on the terrorists, but if they miss and hit a civilian, another civilian will weep over the victim and then transform into a terrorist before the player’s eyes. Play the News, described as “an engaging, community-driven experience—imagine fantasy sports meets the evening news,” takes story lines from headlines (like banning fast food joints close to schools or Hamas attacks) and incorporates them into prediction and decision-making games. But the graphics seem old-fashioned and the story lines are, well, boring. So far, online news games are behind in the whizzy graphics and lifelike role-playing department—a bit like playing Mario Bros today, among the Wiis and Xbox 360s of the world, which won’t keep users engaged. But some news organizations have found exciting, yet simple, ways to incorporate game-play into their business—perhaps without even noticing it. Mr. Thompson said Josh Marshall of Talking Points Memo “almost stumbled into this alt game-like apparatus for reporting news” by asking his readers to help him tease out a tip and find information for him. Mr. Thompson compared the dynamics to an alternative reality game, like playing Halo or World of Warcraft or even trying to figure out all those crazy clues on Lost by checking out their marketing materials online. “There’s a puzzle that is created that is incredibly hidden and complex so you know, people discover little clues and then you have to collaborate to try and tease out what the hell is going on,” Mr. Thompson explained. Mr. Marshall, and other TPM writers, are the leaders who corroborate the truth and collect it for readers to understand—and because their readers feel like they are playing along with the journalists and are part of the process, they keep coming back. Mr. Thompson said newspapers can leverage this tactic by creating game-like “leaderboards,” giving the best commentators, bloggers and participants incentives, whether they be shoutouts or high rankings on the site (Digg.com and Techmeme.com have similar features, Gawker highlights their top community contributors as well). “You could regard The New York Times as its prime value is it’s a fantastic leaderboard, right?” Mr. Thompson said. “It is a great place to create variety and rewards for people.” When Times columnist Nicholas Kristof announced at his Games for Change keynote speech that he was going to create an online, social networking game to accompany his new book Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity for Women Worldwide, he said that many are skeptical of mixing journalism and games. “I think that the way to change that is the record of success that these have had and in my case, what really changed my thinking was watching Food Force and Darfur is Dying in particular, and journalism is in such desperate shape right now, frankly, that we’re groping for anything that might work, that might reach new audiences, that might connect,” he said. “I truly think that these [games] are going to play a major role in trying to make this connection because in journalism, we’re not often very good at it, and you guys can help us be that bridge.” Do newspapers have to start tapping into their readers’ competitive sides to fight in this new-media ring? Game on.

Can Games Save the News?

End of Document

**Can Obama turn rhetoric into the reality of peace with the Muslim world?;
The President's bridge-building is welcome. But it will take more than words
to erase the damage done by his predecessor, argues Patrick Cockburn**

The Independent (London)

April 8, 2009 Wednesday

First Edition

Copyright 2009 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

The  **INDEPENDENT**

Section: WORLD; Pg. 22

Length: 1526 words

Byline: Patrick Cockburn

Body

THE START of the Iraq war in 2003 marked a crucial break between the US and almost all the states of the region. "None of Iraq's neighbours, absolutely none, were pleased by the American occupation of Iraq," says the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari. Long-term US allies like Turkey astonished the White House by refusing to allow US troops to use its territory to invade Iraq.

Barack Obama, who made his first official visit to the country yesterday, is now trying to disengage from Iraq without appearing to scuttle or leave anarchy behind.

He is trying to win back old allies, and, as he made clear in a speech in Ankara on Monday, to end the confrontation between the US and Islam which was president Bush's legacy.

It is not easy for Mr Obama to reverse the tide of anti-Americanism or bring to an end the wars which Mr Bush began. For all the Iraqi government's claim that life is returning to normal in Baghdad the last few days have seen a crescendo of violence. The day before the President, arrived six bombs exploded in different parts of Baghdad, killing 37 people.

And as much as Mr Obama would like to treat the Iraq war as ancient history, the US is still struggling to extricate itself. The very fact that the Democratic President had to arrive in Iraq by surprise, as George Bush and Tony Blair invariably did, for security reasons, shows that the conflict is refusing to go away.

The Iraqi Prime Minister and President remain holed up in the Green Zone most of the time. The American President could not fly into the Green Zone by helicopter because of bad weather but the airport road is still unsafe and Baghdad remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world. The Iraqi political landscape too was permanently altered by the US invasion and it will be difficult to create a stable Iraqi state which does not depend on the US. Opinion polls in Iraq show that most Iraqis believe that it is the US and not their own government which is in control of their country.

Can Obama turn rhetoric into the reality of peace with the Muslim world? The President's bridge-building is welcome. But it will take more than words to erase t....

One change which is to Mr Obama's advantage is that the American media has largely stopped reporting the conflict because they no longer have the money to do so and a majority of Americans think the war was won. But the danger for the President is that if there is a fresh explosion in Iraq, he may be blamed for throwing away a victory that was won by his predecessor.

The rhetoric with which the US conducts its diplomacy is easier to change than facts on the ground in Iraq or Afghanistan. Mr Obama's speech to the Turkish parliament in Ankara was a carefully judged bid to reassure the Muslim world that the US is not at war with Islam.

Everything he said was in sharp contrast to George Bush's bellicose threats post 9/11 about launching a "crusade" and to the rhetoric of neo-conservatives attacking "Islamofascism" or claiming that there was a "clash of civilisations."

The leaders of states with Muslim majorities appreciate the different tone of US pronouncements, but privately wonder how far Mr Obama will be able to introduce real change.

Turkish students at a meeting with Mr Obama in Istanbul yesterday voiced scepticism that American actions in future would be much different from what they were under Mr Bush. Reasonably enough, Mr Obama replied that he should be given time and "moving the ship of state is a slow process." But he also cited the US withdrawal from Iraq as a sign that he would match actions to words.

Istanbul, on the boundaries of Europe and Asia, is a good place for the US leader to declare a more conciliatory attitude towards Islam. The city is filled with grandiose monuments to Christianity and Islam, though religious tolerance was more in evidence under the Ottoman empire than since the foundation of the modern Turkish state in 1923. Mr Obama paid visits to the great Byzantine church of Hagia Sophia and was shown the splendours of the Blue Mosque by turbaned clerics.

But the women students wearing short skirts and without headscarves asking Mr Obama questions in fluent English yesterday give a misleading impression of the balance between the secular and the religious in modern-day Turkey.

The reality is that secularism is dying away in Turkey's rural hinterland and is on the retreat even in Istanbul itself. Butchers selling pork are few compared to 20 years ago. Obtaining alcohol is quietly being made more difficult, except for foreign tourists, by high taxes on wine and expensive liquor licenses for restaurants.

The old middle class, particularly in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir may be resolute in their defence of the secular state. But the so-called "Anatolian Tigers", the new companies which have led Turkey's spectacular economic growth, are generally owned and run by more conservative families where the women wear the veil.

"Socially Turkey is becoming far more Islamic," said one expert on Turkey yesterday, "although the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) is moving cautiously."

Mr Obama's effort to make a U-turn in American policy towards the Islamic world will ultimately depend on how far he changes US policy towards Israel and the Palestinians, the occupation of Iraq, the confrontation with Iran and Syria and the war in Afghanistan.

The Iranians, for instance, note that despite Mr Obama's friendlier approach to them the US official in Washington in charge of implementing sanctions against them is a hold-over from the Bush administration.

The American confrontation with Islam post 9/11 always had more to do with opposition to foreign intervention and occupation than it did with cultural differences; the most ideologically religious Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia supported the US and it is doubtful how far al-Qa'ida fighters were motivated primarily by religious fanaticism.

Can Obama turn rhetoric into the reality of peace with the Muslim world? The President's bridge-building is welcome. But it will take more than words to erase t....

The chief US interrogator in Iraq, Major Mathew Alexander, who is credited with finding out the location of the al-Qa'ida leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, says that during 1,300 interrogations he supervised, he came across only one true ideologue. He is quoted as saying that "I listened time and time again to foreign fighters, and Sunni Iraqis, state that the No 1 reason they had decided to pick up arms and join al-Qa'ida was the abuses at Abu Ghraib and the authorised torture and abuse at Guantanamo Bay."

This diagnosis by Major Alexander is confirmed by the history of Islamic fundamentalism across the Muslim world over the past 30 years.

It was the success of the Iranian revolution against the Shah in 1978/79 which began an era when political Islam was seen as a threat by the West, but Ayatollah Khomeini's appeal to Iranians always had a strong strain of nationalism and his exiling by the Shah in 1964 was because of his vocal opposition to extra-territorial rights for US military personnel in Iran.

The success of political Islam over secular nationalism in the Arab world has largely been because of the former's ability to resist the enemies of the community or the state. In Egypt the nationalism of Nasser was discredited by humiliating defeat in the 1967 war with Israel. In Iraq, for all his military bravado, Saddam Hussein was a notably disastrous military leader. All the military regimes espousing nationalism and secularism in the Arab world began or ended up turning into corrupt and brutal autocracies. In contrast, political Islam has been able to go some way towards delivering its promises of defending the community.

In Lebanon, Hizbollah guerrillas were able to successfully harass Israeli forces in the 1990s where Yasser Arafat's commanders had abandoned their men and fled.

In Gaza this year, **Hamas** was able to portray themselves as the one Palestinian movement committed to resisting Israel.

In Iraq, al-Qa'ida got nowhere until it could present itself as the opposition to the US occupation and as an ally, though a supremely bigoted and murderous one, of Iraqi nationalism.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban has the advantage of fighting against foreign occupation.

Secularism in the Arab world and in Afghanistan, on the other hand, has the problem that it is seen as being at the service of foreign intervention. It is why secularism and nationalism is ultimately stronger in Turkey than it is in almost all other Islamic countries.

Kemal Ataturk and the Turkish nationalists were successfully defended the Turkish heartlands from foreign attack between 1915 and 1922. This gave secularism and nationalism a credibility and a popularity in Turkey which they never had in Iraq, Egypt or Syria.

Mr Obama's aim of ending the confrontation between the US and the Muslim world is both easier and more difficult than it looks. It is easier because the confrontation is not primarily over religion or clashing cultures. But the confrontation is over real issues such as the fate of the Palestinians, the future of Iraq and the control of Afghanistan. And even if Mr Obama wanted to change the US political relationship with Israel, it is not clear that he has any more political strength at home than George Bush had to do so.

If these concrete issues are not resolved then America's confrontation with the Muslim world may remain as confrontational and difficult as it was under Mr Bush.

Load-Date: April 7, 2009

'We will align our policies with those who pursue peace'. President Obama calls for open dialogue and honesty as he seeks 'new beginning' with Muslim world

The Jerusalem Post

June 5, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 3259 words

Byline: President Barack Obama

Body

I am honored to be in the timeless city of Cairo, and to be hosted by two remarkable institutions. For over a thousand years, Al-Azhar has stood as a beacon of Islamic learning, and for over a century, Cairo University has been a source of Egypt's advancement. Together, you represent the harmony between tradition and progress. I am grateful for your hospitality, and the hospitality of the people of Egypt. I am also proud to carry with me the goodwill of the American people, and a greeting of peace from Muslim communities in my country: assalaam aleikum.

We meet at a time of tension between the United States and Muslims around the world - tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate. The relationship between Islam and the West includes centuries of co-existence and cooperation, but also conflict and religious wars. More recently, tension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims, and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations. Moreover, the sweeping change brought by modernity and globalization led many Muslims to view the West as hostile to the traditions of Islam.

Violent extremists have exploited these tensions in a small but potent minority of Muslims. The attacks of September 11, 2001 and the continued efforts of these extremists to engage in violence against civilians has led some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights. This has bred more fear and mistrust.

So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, and who promote conflict rather than the cooperation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity. This cycle of suspicion and discord must end.

I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect; and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap, and share common principles - principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.

I do so recognizing that change cannot happen overnight. No single speech can eradicate years of mistrust, nor can I answer in the time that I have all the complex questions that brought us to this point. But I am convinced that in order to move forward, we must say openly the things we hold in our hearts, and that too often are said only behind closed doors. There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one

'We will align our policies with those who pursue peace'. President Obama calls for open dialogue and honesty as he seeks 'new beginning' with Muslim world

another; and to seek common ground. As the Holy Koran tells us, "Be conscious of God and speak always the truth." That is what I will try to do - to speak the truth as best I can, humbled by the task before us, and firm in my belief that the interests we share as human beings are far more powerful than the forces that drive us apart.

Part of this conviction is rooted in my own experience. I am a Christian, but my father came from a Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims. As a boy, I spent several years in Indonesia and heard the call of the azaan at the break of dawn and the fall of dusk. As a young man, I worked in Chicago communities where many found dignity and peace in their Muslim faith.

As a student of history, I also know civilization's debt to Islam. It was Islam - at places like Al-Azhar University - that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment... And throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality.

I know, too, that Islam has always been a part of America's story. The first nation to recognize my country was Morocco. In signing the Treaty of Tripoli in 1796, our second president, John Adams, wrote, "The United States has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Muslims."

And since our founding, American Muslims have enriched the United States... When the first Muslim-American was recently elected to Congress, he took the oath to defend our Constitution using the same Holy Koran that one of our Founding Fathers - Thomas Jefferson - kept in his personal library...

Partnership between America and Islam must be based on what Islam is, not what it isn't. And I consider it part of my responsibility as president of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear.

But that same principle must apply to Muslim perceptions of America. Just as Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire. The United States has been one of the greatest sources of progress that the world has ever known.

Much has been made of the fact that an African-American with the name Barack Hussein Obama could be elected President. But my personal story is not so unique. The dream of opportunity for all people has not come true for everyone in America, but its promise exists for all who come to our shores - that includes nearly seven million American Muslims in our country today who enjoy incomes and education that are higher than average.

Moreover, freedom in America is indivisible from the freedom to practice one's religion. That is why there is a mosque in every state of our union, and over 1,200 mosques within our borders. That is why the US government has gone to court to protect the right of women and girls to wear the hijab, and to punish those who would deny it.

So let there be no doubt: Islam is a part of America...

Human history has often been a record of nations and tribes subjugating one another to serve their own interests. Yet in this new age, such attitudes are self-defeating. Given our interdependence, any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail. So whatever we think of the past, we must not be prisoners of it. Our problems must be dealt with through partnership; progress must be shared.

That does not mean we should ignore sources of tension. Indeed, it suggests the opposite: we must face these tensions squarely. And so in that spirit, let me speak as clearly and plainly as I can about some specific issues that I believe we must finally confront together.

THE FIRST issue that we have to confront is violent extremism in all of its forms.

In Ankara, I made clear that America is not - and never will be - at war with Islam. We will, however, relentlessly confront violent extremists who pose a grave threat to our security. Because we reject the same thing that people of

'We will align our policies with those who pursue peace'. President Obama calls for open dialogue and honesty as he seeks 'new beginning' with Muslim world

all faiths reject: the killing of innocent men, women, and children. And it is my first duty as president to protect the American people.

The situation in Afghanistan demonstrates America's goals, and our need to work together. Over seven years ago, the United States pursued al-Qaida and the Taliban with broad international support. We did not go by choice, we went because of necessity. I am aware that some question or justify the events of 9/11. But let us be clear: al-Qaida killed nearly 3,000 people on that day. The victims were innocent men, women and children from America and many other nations who had done nothing to harm anybody. And yet al-Qaida chose to ruthlessly murder these people, claimed credit for the attack, and even now states their determination to kill on a massive scale...

We do not want to keep our troops in Afghanistan... We would gladly bring every single one of our troops home if we could be confident that there were not violent extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan determined to kill as many Americans as they possibly can. But that is not yet the case...

America's commitment will not weaken. Indeed, none of us should tolerate these extremists. They have killed in many countries. They have killed people of different faiths - more than any other, they have killed Muslims. Their actions are irreconcilable with the rights of human beings, the progress of nations, and with Islam. The Holy Koran teaches that whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind. The enduring faith of over a billion people is so much bigger than the narrow hatred of a few. Islam is not part of the problem in combating violent extremism - it is an important part of promoting peace...

Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq was a war of choice that provoked strong differences in my country and around the world. Although I believe that the Iraqi people are ultimately better off without the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, I also believe that events in Iraq have reminded America of the need to use diplomacy and build international consensus to resolve our problems whenever possible...

Today, America has a dual responsibility: to help Iraq forge a better future - and to leave Iraq to Iraqis... We will help Iraq train its security forces and develop its economy. But we will support a secure and united Iraq as a partner, and never as a patron...

THE SECOND major source of tension that we need to discuss is the situation between Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab world.

America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties, and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history that cannot be denied.

Around the world, the Jewish people were persecuted for centuries, and anti-Semitism in Europe culminated in an unprecedented Holocaust. Tomorrow, I will visit Buchenwald, which was part of a network of camps where Jews were enslaved, tortured, shot and gassed to death by the Third Reich. Six million Jews were killed - more than the entire Jewish population of Israel today. Denying that fact is baseless, ignorant, and hateful. Threatening Israel with destruction - or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews - is deeply wrong, and only serves to evoke in the minds of Israelis this most painful of memories while preventing the peace that the people of this region deserve.

On the other hand, it is also undeniable that the Palestinian people - Muslims and Christians - have suffered in pursuit of a homeland. For more than sixty years they have endured the pain of dislocation. Many wait in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza and neighboring lands for a life of peace and security that they have never been able to lead. They endure the daily humiliations - large and small - that come with occupation. So let there be no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity and a state of their own.

For decades, there has been a stalemate: two peoples with legitimate aspirations, each with a painful history that makes compromise elusive. It is easy to point fingers - for Palestinians to point to the displacement brought by Israel's founding, and for Israelis to point to the constant hostility and attacks throughout its history from within its

'We will align our policies with those who pursue peace'. President Obama calls for open dialogue and honesty as he seeks 'new beginning' with Muslim world

borders as well as beyond. But if we see this conflict only from one side or the other, then we will be blind to the truth: the only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security.

That is in Israel's interest, Palestine's interest, America's interest and the world's interest. That is why I intend to personally pursue this outcome with all the patience that the task requires. The obligations that the parties have agreed to under the Road Map are clear. For peace to come, it is time for them - and all of us - to live up to our responsibilities.

Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and does not succeed. For centuries, black people in America suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation. But it was not violence that won full and equal rights. It was a peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals at the center of America's founding. This same story can be told by people from South Africa to South Asia; from Eastern Europe to Indonesia. It's a story with a simple truth: that violence is a dead end. It is a sign of neither courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus. That is not how moral authority is claimed; that is how it is surrendered.

Now is the time for Palestinians to focus on what they can build. The Palestinian Authority must develop its capacity to govern, with institutions that serve the needs of its people. Hamas does have support among some Palestinians, but they also have responsibilities. To play a role in fulfilling Palestinian aspirations, and to unify the Palestinian people, Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements and recognize Israel's right to exist.

At the same time, Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's. The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.

Israel must also live up to its obligations to ensure that Palestinians can live, and work, and develop their society. And just as it devastates Palestinian families, the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel's security; neither does the continuing lack of opportunity in the West Bank. Progress in the daily lives of the Palestinian people must be part of a road to peace, and Israel must take concrete steps to enable such progress.

Finally, the Arab states must recognize that the Arab Peace Initiative was an important beginning, but not the end of their responsibilities. The Arab-Israeli conflict should no longer be used to distract the people of Arab nations from other problems. Instead, it must be a cause for action to help the Palestinian people develop the institutions that will sustain their state; to recognize Israel's legitimacy; and to choose progress over a self-defeating focus on the past.

America will align our policies with those who pursue peace, and say in public what we say in private to Israelis and Palestinians and Arabs. We cannot impose peace. But privately, many Muslims recognize that Israel will not go away. Likewise, many Israelis recognize the need for a Palestinian state. It is time for us to act on what everyone knows to be true.

Too many tears have flowed. Too much blood has been shed. All of us have a responsibility to work for the day when the mothers of Israelis and Palestinians can see their children grow up without fear; when the Holy Land of three great faiths is the place of peace that God intended it to be; when Jerusalem is a secure and lasting home for Jews and Christians and Muslims, and a place for all of the children of Abraham to mingle peacefully together as in the story of Isra, when Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them) joined in prayer.

THE THIRD source of tension is our shared interest in the rights and responsibilities of nations on nuclear weapons.

This issue has been a source of tension between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. For many years, Iran has defined itself in part by its opposition to my country, and there is indeed a tumultuous history between us. In the middle of the Cold War, the United States played a role in the overthrow of a democratically-elected Iranian government. Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has played a role in acts of hostage-taking and violence against US troops and civilians. This history is well known. Rather than remain trapped in the past, I have

'We will align our policies with those who pursue peace'. President Obama calls for open dialogue and honesty as he seeks 'new beginning' with Muslim world

made it clear to Iran's leaders and people that my country is prepared to move forward. The question, now, is not what Iran is against, but rather what future it wants to build.

It will be hard to overcome decades of mistrust, but we will proceed with courage, rectitude and resolve. There will be many issues to discuss between our two countries, and we are willing to move forward without preconditions on the basis of mutual respect. But it is clear to all concerned that when it comes to nuclear weapons, we have reached a decisive point. This is not simply about America's interests. It is about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path.

I understand those who protest that some countries have weapons that others do not. No single nation should pick and choose which nations hold nuclear weapons. That is why I strongly reaffirmed America's commitment to seek a world in which no nations hold nuclear weapons. And any nation - including Iran - should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That commitment is at the core of the Treaty, and it must be kept for all who fully abide by it. And I am hopeful that all countries in the region can share in this goal...

THE FOURTH issue that I will address is democracy...

I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. Those are not just American ideas, they are human rights, and that is why we will support them everywhere...

The fifth issue that we must address together is religious freedom.

Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance... Among some Muslims, there is a disturbing tendency to measure one's own faith by the rejection of another's. The richness of religious diversity must be upheld...

The sixth issue that I want to address is women's rights...

It is no coincidence that countries where women are well-educated are far more likely to be prosperous... Our daughters can contribute just as much to society as our sons...

THE ISSUES that I have described will not be easy to address. But we have a responsibility to join together on behalf of the world we seek - a world where extremists no longer threaten our people, and American troops have come home; a world where Israelis and Palestinians are each secure in a state of their own, and nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes...

There is so much fear, so much mistrust. But if we choose to be bound by the past, we will never move forward...

We should choose the right path, not just the easy path. There is also one rule that lies at the heart of every religion - that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us...

We have the power to make the world we seek, but only if we have the courage to make a new beginning, keeping in mind what has been written.

The Holy Koran tells us, "O mankind! We have created you male and a female; and we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another."

The Talmud tells us: "The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace."

The Holy Bible tells us, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

The people of the world can live together in peace. We know that is God's vision. Now, that must be our work here on Earth. Thank you. And may God's peace be upon you.

'We will align our policies with those who pursue peace'. President Obama calls for open dialogue and honesty as he seeks 'new beginning' with Muslim world

Graphic

Photo: US PRESIDENT Barack Obama speaks at Cairo University yesterday. Obama's address was designed to reframe relations between the US and the Muslim world in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the war in Iraq. (Credit: Gerald Herbert/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Sex, lies and red tape

The Jerusalem Post
March 13, 2009 Friday

Copyright 2009 The Jerusalem Post All Rights Reserved

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 1539 words

Byline: RUTHIE BLUM LEIBOWITZ

Highlight: The coverage of the Katsav case is divided along gender lines - and united around revenge. MEDIA MATTERS

Body

Every year at Beit Sokolow in Tel Aviv, the prime minister holds a meeting with the local editors of newspapers, radio stations and television networks to mark "Kav Tet B'November" - the anniversary of the 1947 UN resolution to partition Palestine. Nearly two and a half years ago, at the 2006 event, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert energetically and cheerfully fielded questions on the topics of the day from as many of us in attendance as were able to make it to the microphone. As one of the lucky ones, I didn't want to waste the opportunity on a single query, so I slipped in an additional one for good measure.

The first related to the conclusions the PM was going to reach in the wake of Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas's failure to achieve a national unity government with *Hamas*. The second was: "What is your view of the Katsav affair, and who is your preferred candidate for his replacement?"

At this, Olmert giggled. Everybody else in the room proceeded to do the same.

The event was broadcast live on the radio. As soon as it was over, I began to receive phone calls from colleagues. "Why did Olmert laugh?" each asked, wondering if they had missed something visual.

I wasn't sure what to say. Not that I didn't know the answer. But it seemed so unlikely that, in the context of serious criminal allegations surrounding the president, the mere hint of sex was enough to cause chuckling. In this case in particular, which purportedly involved rape - a violent crime that could hardly be considered titillating - it was beneath all dignity for a group of adults to respond as though they were in grade-school. And these were not just any adults. They were the leader of the country and the heads of media departments charged with covering the developments of that very case.

Still, it was, and is, telling on two counts.

The first is that, whatever the cultural climate, sex and violence sell, news-wise - especially when attached to a public figure. And if Moshe Katsav's name elicited snickering among editors, imagine what kind of attention it would draw from the readers, listeners and viewers to whom we editors cater.

The other is that members of the media are also members of the public, with individual interests and tastes that govern the way we select, prioritize, present and view issues. The decision to zero in on a certain topic on a given day, then, is as much a function of the above as it is of an actual shift or breakthrough in a situation. The coverage

Sex, lies and red tape

of Gilad Schalit is a perfect example. Though nothing new happened after his family pitched a protest tent in front of Olmert's residence, Schalit was the top story in the Hebrew press for days.

Where Katsav is concerned, I can give another personal example. Last week, with renewed focus on the corruption case of former finance minister Avraham Hirschson and the announcement of a probable indictment of outgoing Prime Minister Olmert, as well as a new investigation into the dealings of Israel Beiteinu head Avigdor Lieberman, I was suddenly reminded of Katsav.

Commissioning a piece from legal affairs reporter Rebecca Anna Stoil, I requested that she find out where the by-now quite old - and, in some circles, forgotten - case stands today. This resulted in her article last Friday in these pages, entitled "The slow wheels of justice."

As its name suggests, the piece examined why it's taken so long for Attorney-General Menahem Mazuz to decide whether to indict Katsav or drop the case for lack of sufficient evidence. The upshot was that an indictment was "pretty close."

On Sunday morning, Mazuz announced his intention to indict the former president.

As much as I would like to take credit for astute aforethought, I have to admit that this editorial coup was more due to fortune than skill.

What has emerged in the Hebrew press since that moment, however, is the result of neither fortune nor skill. It nevertheless comes with an interesting twist. Unlike the first wave of reportage on the Katsav case - which was characterized by the debate it aroused on whether the president indeed forced himself on his accusers, or whether the women in question were coming forth after feeling scorned - this time around, the argument is over whether the attorney-general is acting in good faith, or speeding up an indictment to save face, and perhaps his job, before the new government is formed.

This is not to say that the debate is no longer divided along gender lines. On the contrary, there is a clear distinction between the way that male and female talk-show hosts and pundits discuss the issue. Whereas the latter continue to see it as Katsav vs. the "Alephs" and "Heh," the former present it as Katsav vs. Mazuz, with both portrayed as bad guys. In other words, the uniformity of reportage lies in the assumption of male wrongdoing. That Mazuz's announcement happened to fall smack on International Women's Day only fanned these flames. Added to all the reports about lack of equality in the workforce, was the juicy morsel about Katsav, which provided "proof" of women's being prey to the predatory nature of men in positions of power. Oh, and of course, the across-the-board agreement that the former president should certainly be stripped of his pension and other benefits - before it's even been established whether he is guilty of anything.

Regarding the problematic evidence of one of the Aleph's testimony, due to the emergence of several taped phone conversations between her and her alleged attacker after he supposedly raped her, Israel Radio's Keren Neubach had a solution to this inconvenient hitch. "And now to our next guest, the head of trauma at Ichilov Hospital, who will explain why rape victims might keep in touch with their attackers."

Neubach's male colleague, Yaron Dekel - whose Hakol Diburim program is broadcast immediately after Neubach's Seder Yom - didn't even mention the women. He went straight for Mazuz and Katsav, the former for the timing of his announcement (several months after the plea bargain he consented to with the accused), and the latter for attacking - who else? - the media.

Which brings us to another key element of the case: the poor relationship between Katsav and the press.

It is a relationship that Katsav's lawyers and family fear will carry weight, both in the actual courtroom and in the court of public opinion. Indeed, Katsav and his team continue to blame the media for much of his plight. Meanwhile, however, out of the other side of their mouths, they insist that a majority of the public considers him innocent. If they are right, the media couldn't be having the kind of impact they keep harping on.

Sex, lies and red tape

This doesn't mean Katsav is wrong to feel he's not getting a fair shake where the media is concerned. There he's got a point. For, whatever crime he did or did not commit against this or that woman in his employ over the years, one "sin" for which he will not be forgiven by the media is his shouting match with Channel 2's Gadi Sukenik, during his January 24, 2007 press conference, at which he said he was the victim of a media witch-hunt. He also said he wouldn't resign unless indicted.

Things didn't work out that way, of course. But this wasn't the media's fault. If anything, the carry-on in the Knesset, especially among lady MKs, was so deafening that Katsav was left with no choice but to step down.

WHICH BRINGS us to Thursday evening's press conference.

After massive media build-up prior to the event - televised live on all three channels - Katsav took the self-imposed "witness stand" in his home town of Kiryat Malachi. Sukenik sat among the panel of "judges" in the Channel 2 studio, and Kinneret Barashi, formerly the first Aleph's lawyer, sat in that of Channel 1, where she is now employed as a talk-show host.

The question that kept being raised by the members of the press providing ongoing commentary was whether Katsav was about to attack the legal system and the media again, going as far as to say that he could end up having another indictment on his hands - for insulting public servants Mazuz and State Attorney Moshe Lador.

Well, on that score, they weren't disappointed. Katsav indeed killed two birds with one stone, accusing the attorney-general and the police of being in cahoots with the media to bring him down. After hurling accusation upon accusation at Mazuz, he began naming individual journalists. And then mini-hell broke loose, with Ma'ariv's Rino Tzror leaving the room and Shalom Yerushalmi (fired from that paper after complaints from Katsav, said the former president) following suit.

What no one had anticipated, however, was how long Katsav was going to rant. After more than an hour and a half, the stations began broadcasting other news. The "press conference," in the end, went on for two hours.

One thing's for sure, if Katsav thought that through this display, he would somehow clear his name prior to his trial, he's got another think coming. Boring a bunch of journalists to death may be even worse than brow-beating them.

AT NEXT November's Beit Sokolow event, Katsav might still - or again - be in the news. But at that point, it's doubtful his name will elicit laughter. If anything, it's liable to evoke a sneer... or even a snore.

ruthie@jpost.com

Graphic

Photo: FORMER PRESIDENT Moshe Katsav. His relationship with the press leaves something to be desired. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

BRITAIN BARS 'RACE HATE' EXTREMIST

DAILY MAIL (London)

February 12, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 Associated Newspapers Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Length: 1601 words

Byline: BY STEVE DOUGHTY SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

Body

AND AS HE THREATENS TO DEFY ORDER, FEARS OF MASS PROTEST BY MUSLIMS

A DIPLOMATIC row threatened to escalate into a religious and racial confrontation last night, after Jacqui Smith banned an extremist Dutch politician from entering Britain.

Geert Wilders, who is a far-Right political leader, had been invited to Westminster by Lord Pearson, of the UK Independence Party, to show an anti-Islamic film.

But using powers to ban foreigners thought likely to incite hatred, the Home Secretary forbade Mr Wilders from entering Britain.

On Tuesday her officials told the politician he would be excluded as his visit 'would threaten community harmony and therefore public security in the UK'.

Mr Wilders, 45, has spent the last four years under police protection in his own country. He is a little-noticed activist who usually has the backing of just a handful of Dutch MPs.

But Miss Smith's actions provoked an immediate complaint from the Dutch government. Mr Wilders is thought to be the first elected EU politician to be excluded since 1973, when Britain joined what was the Common Market.

Dutch Foreign minister Maxime Verhagen telephoned Foreign Secretary David Miliband to protest.

Yesterday the situation became more heated as Wilders tried to turn his exclusion into a demonstration. He said he will attempt to board his scheduled flight to Heathrow today and defy immigration officers to turn him back.

'I was very surprised and very saddened that the freedom of speech that I believe was a very strong point in UK society is being harassed today.

'I am seriously considering just trying it out and just getting on the plane. Then I'll see what happens. Let them handcuff me.'

There were reports of a mass protest by up to 10,000 Muslims if he does defy the ban.

Even if he fails to enter the UK, there are fears that protests may occur. Mr Wilders has the support of the peers who are his hosts, their supporters and the backing of freedom-of-speech campaigners.

BRITAIN BARS 'RACE HATE' EXTREMIST

The history of rows over perceived insults to Islam – such as the demonstrations in London about Danish cartoons published in newspapers three years ago, suggests there may be a risk of confrontation if he enters the country.

Mr Wilders was to present his 15-minute film *Fitna*, which means 'strife' in Arabic, in a committee room in the Palace of Westminster.

The footage cuts pictures of the September 11 terror attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001, with verses from the Koran. Mr Wilders has also compared the Islamic holy book the Koran, to *Mein Kampf* and has described Islam as 'retarded'. His Freedom Party calls for the Koran to be banned.

The politician's hosts, Lord Pearson and Baroness Cox, said: 'We do not agree with Geert Wilders that the Koran should be banned. We don't want it banned but discussed – particularly by the majority Muslim community. We are therefore promoting freedom of speech. Geert Wilder's *Fitna* film, which is available on the web, is not a threat to anyone.

'It merely suggests how the Koran has been used by militant Islamists to promote and justify their violence.' They said they would show the film 'with or without Mr Wilders'.

Liberal Democrats supported the ban. Home affairs spokesman Chris Huhne said: 'There is a line to be drawn even with freedom of speech, and that is where it is likely to incite violence or hatred.'

However, Labour peer Lord Ahmed, who is among leading opponents of Mr Wilders's visit, pointed out that the politician faces prosecution in Holland for inciting hatred against Muslims.

'We should be very careful when we are parliamentarians that we don't invite someone in who incites hatred.

'We need freedom of speech of course. But what about my freedom of speech, and what about my freedom of belief?'

Stephen Glover – Page 17

BOUFFANT HAired LIBERAL WHO TURNED HARDLINER

GEERT Wilders is the latest and most extreme face of anti-Islamic sentiment to claim leadership of the growing political far-Right in Holland.

The 45-year-old has based his appeal to voters on loathing of the Koran and the attempt to make a direct link between Islam and terrorism.

Previous populist anti-immigration leaders have been a little more ambiguous.

For instance, Pim Fortuyn, murdered by a leftist activist in 2002, was gay – and his liberal approach to sex tempered his hard line on Islam.

By contrast, Mr Wilders pumps out the simple message that the Koran is bad and that Muslims must abandon it.

Lawyer Gerard Spong, a friend of Fortuyn's, has persuaded Dutch appeal judges to prosecute Wilders for his film.

'Geert Wilders incites hatred against Muslims, and Pim did not do that: he had sex with Moroccan boys in dark rooms,' he said.

Mr Wilders, who is married to a Hungarian, was born to a middle-class Catholic family, the son of a printing company director in the town of Venlo.

Despite his regular pronouncements on the Judaeo-Christian heritage of his country, he is no longer a religious man.

BRITAIN BARS 'RACE HATE' EXTREMIST

He began working for a health insurance company before shifting into politics as a speechwriter for a liberal party.

Some say his experience of being mugged as a city councillor in Utrecht in the late 1990s may have made him more Right-wing.

In 2002, Mr Wilders broke with the liberals over their support for Turkish entry into the EU.

He formed his own Freedom Party following the 2004 murder film maker Theo van Gogh.

He was killed by an Islamic radical after making a film called Submission, showing an actress in see-through clothing with Islamic verses written on her body. In 2006, Mr Wilders campaigned for a ban on the burqa and secured nine seats in the Dutch parliament.

The message of the Freedom Party is that the Koran is akin to Hitler's Mein Kampf, that Islam is a 'fascist ideology' and that Dutch society is being engulfed in a tidal wave of Islamisation.

It calls for an end to immigration by Muslims and for payments to encourage Muslims to emigrate.

As part of this, Wilders has produced the 15-minute Fitna film, which contains footage of victims of the terror attacks on the World Trade Centre and the sound of those caught in the buildings calling emergency services for help and victims of the 2005 terror attacks in London.

The film ends with the sound of tearing pages and urges Muslims to do the same to the Islamic holy book, the Koran.

In some cities in Holland, Muslims make up a third of the population. Mr Wilders's call for less tolerance of immigrants is receiving a hearing among growing numbers who are becoming alarmed at the direction their country is taking.

There is also a sense of deepening unease in other European countries, where political leaders are only too aware of the potential for reactionary mass politics in a time of recession and unemployment.

AND JUST LOOK AT THOSE WE HAVE LET IN...

THE Home Secretary may consider Geert Wilders too much of a threat to public safety to be allowed into Britain. But by contrast, these are some of the characters who have been let in:

FIREBRAND CLERIC

YUSUF AL-QARADAWI, 82 VISITED London in 2004 at the invitation of Ken Livingstone, then the city's mayor, who considered him a 'progressive force for change'.

Egyptian-born spiritual leader of Muslim Brotherhood, which embraces the Hamas organisation that controls Gaza. Has justified suicide bombing, which he calls martyrdom, and the killing of Israeli women and children, on the grounds that they are 'militarised'.

HOMOPHOBIC SINGER

BOUNTY KILLER, real name Rodney Price, 36 PERFORMED in East London in November despite appeals to the Home Secretary from gay activists who wanted him banned from the country. The Jamaican reggae singer is accused by critics of glorifying gang violence and guns and of inciting murder against gays. One song, translated from the Jamaican patois, calls on listeners to 'burn a fire on poofs and faggots'. Another claims: 'We need no promo to rub out dem homo'.

BILLIONAIRE CULT LEADER

BRITAIN BARS 'RACE HATE' EXTREMIST

REVEREND SUN MYUNG MOON, 89 LABOUR Home Secretary Charles Clarke overturned a 27-year ban against the cult leader and allowed him 24 hours in Britain to address a rally in London, in 2005. The Korean-born billionaire declares himself to be the messiah. His movement, famous for its mass weddings of thousands of couples, is said to brainwash the young people it persuades to become followers. It has been a failure in Britain since 1981, when the Moonies lost a milestone libel case against the Daily Mail. The Mail had called Moon's Unification Church 'the church that breaks up families'.

SERIAL PAEDOPHILE

RAYMOND HORNE, 62 A SERIAL paedophile with a long jail history in Australia for offences against boys from 13. Horne, who emigrated to Australia with his parents in 1952, when he was five, has a criminal record in Queensland stretching back 43 years. He was released last year from a 12-year sentence for 14 offences against two homeless boys he met while posing as a charity volunteer. British ministers made no objection when Australian authorities deported him to this country after he finished his sentence, on the grounds that because he never took out Australian citizenship, he is British.

ANTI-SEMITIC AGITATOR

IBRAHIM MOUSSAWI, 43 Propagandist for Hezbollah cleared to enter the country by Jacqui Smith in November, despite fierce Tory objections. He is the head of a TV station that routinely describes suicide bombers as 'martyrs' and which has broadcast a 30-part series on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a an anti-semitic forgery produced in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century that pretends to present a Jewish conspiracy for world takeover. Moussawi is alleged to have said that Jews are 'a lesion on the forehead of history'.

Load-Date: February 11, 2009