

NONVIOLENT CHANGE

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an interorganizational project of the Organization Development Institute

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Nonviolent Change helps to network the peace community: providing dialoguing, exchanges of ideas, articles, reviews, reports and announcements of the activities of peace related groups and meetings, reviews of world developments relating to nonviolent change and resource information concerning the development of human relations on the basis of mutual respect.

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NONVIOLENT CHANGE JOURNAL (NCJ) ON THE WEB

Nonviolent Change is on the web at: <http://www.nonviolentchangejournal.org>, along with several years of back issues. To be notified by E-mail when new issues are posted, send a request to be added to the NCJ notification E-mail list to Steve Sachs at: ssachs@earthlink.net. Issues are usually posted: Fall, in September or early October; Winter, in January or early February; Spring in mid-March to end of April.

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EDITORS COMMENTS

Wishing you a fine fall. The world continues to go through many shifts producing a great many developments in areas of our concern. **WE WELCOME YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT ALL THAT IS IN PROGRESS.** These pages serve as a networking and dialoguing vehicle. We strongly encourage you to contribute articles (up to 2500 words), news, announcements, comments, queries, responses and art work. It would be very fine if we could develop ongoing discussion from issue to issue. **WE ESPECIALLY INVITE YOU TO SEND US A BRIEF NOTE ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING, YOUR CONCERNS AND QUERIES, RELATING TO NONVIOLENT CHANGE, FOR OUR "WHAT WE READERS ARE ABOUT" COLUMN.** Whenever possible, please make submissions on disk or via e-mail (ssachs@earthlink.net).

Please **SEND WRITINGS AND ART WORK FOR NONVIOLENT CHANGE electronically** to Steve Sachs (E-mail address top of p. 2). Steve puts together a draft of each issue and sends it to Marilee Niehoff and Bob Hotes for Editing. Steve then undertakes e-mailing, printing, snail mailing, while Ruby Quail posts the issue on the web. (Unsigned writings are Steve's). **We welcome additional editors and column writers to cover geographic or topic areas on an ongoing or one time basis. We would very much like to have additional people share in the compiling of information in each issue.**

COMMUNICATING ABOUT ANY OTHER RESEARCH/STUDY TEAM BUSINESS CAN BE DIRECTED TO ANY OF THE COCHAIRS (ADDRESS ON P. 1) or to OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE: DON COLE, ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE, 11234 Walnut Ridge Rd., Chesterland, OH 44026 (440)729-7419, DonWCole@aol.com, www.odinstitute.org, who is coordinating networking among organizations.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE IS DECEMBER 8

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Steve Sachs

"**Global Exchange** (<http://www.globalexchange.org>) **collaborating with dozens of peace and community groups**, including **Mainstreet Moms** (themmob@mail.democracyinaction.org, Stefanie@theMMOB.org: (415) 505-4669), **Goldstar Families for Peace** (<http://www.democracyinaction.org>) **True Majority** (<http://www.AmericaSaysNo.org>), **Code Pink** (<http://www.codepinkalert.org>), **United for Peace** (<http://www.unitedforpeace.org>), and **Move On** (<http://pol.moveon.org>) held demonstrations, marches and meetings over Mothers Day weekend, May 10-14 In Washington, D.C. (including a White House Vigil) and around the county protesting **President Bush's Veto of the funding bill with a time table for bringing the troops home for Iraq, demanding an end to the U.S. military presence in Iraq, and opposing militay action against Iran.** For details go to: www.mandateforpeace.org, and <http://www.democracyinaction.org> or <http://www.unitedforpeace.org>. **American's Against Escalation** undertook a major new organizing initiative to end the War in Iraq - **Iraq Summer** - deploying 110 organizers to key Congressional districts to try to stop "the disastrous war in Iraq," executing a national program to convince critical elements of the Republican base to stop their support for the war. For information contact demcampaigns@aol.com or kate@noiraqescalation.com. These organizations have also been engaged in a campaign for negotiations with Iran, not war. And have also been working for the impeachment of President Bush and Vice President Cheney.

Global Exchange responded to the violent clashes between Fatah and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, saying "The violence witnessed over the past two weeks are the results of months, even years, of pressure building in the Gaza Strip. We condemn the violence carried out by both Hamas and Fatah, recognizing that the U.S. and Israel bear responsibility for dictating internal Palestinian politics by using methods that aim to fuel a growing rift between Hamas and Fatah. These practices have served to jeopardize the Gazan population and move farther away from a just solution". The organization calls for Congress to stop fueling and funding civil war in the occupied territories and find a political solution to the conflict. For more, go to: http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?key=367789539&url_num=6&url=http%3A%2F%2

Concerning climate change, Global Exchange joined other organizations in the April 14th, national climate change day, calling on Congress to cut carbon 80% by 2050. Global Exchange **Reality tours** offer a number of Delegations to Latin, including to Oaxaca: Oct. 26 to Nov. 3, 2007, including the ceremonies of the Day of the Dead; to Nicaragua for the Fair Harvest Exchange Program, December 14; and in Mexico, to Chiapas concerning the Anniversary of NAFTA and the Zapatista Uprising, December 26 - January 04. For details contact Cristina at Global Exchange, (415)575-5523, cristina@globalexchange.org, <http://www.globalexchange.org/tours/704.html>. Global Exchange is also calling for, "Toward a Trade Policy that Works for the People: A Call for a Moratorium on Free Trade Agreements." For more go to: http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/gx/petition.jsp?petition_KEY=599>http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/gx/petition.jsp?petition_KEY=599.

No War, No warming: a National Intervention is scheduled to take place October 21-23, in Washington, DC. "The Iraq war and the threat of climate change are the twin global threats that millions of Americans said they wanted immediate action on after the U.S. mid-

term election. But as Iraq continues to devolve into violence and chaos, and as we hit another year of record warm temperatures, our legislators are failing to respond to the will of the people. We want a safe and healthy planet for years and years to come. Please join us in a series of actions in 2007 to fight climate change, not wars for oil! We need to take immediate action: To end the war in Iraq and all future oil wars; To halt the impending climate crisis; To end the US addiction to oil and other fossil fuels; To rebuild New Orleans and all impacted communities; To end racism and corporate greed; To promote green jobs in a clean energy economy.” Sponsoring organizations are: CODEPINK, Council of Canadians, Democracy Rising, Farms Not Arms, Friends of the Earth, Global Exchange, GlobalWarmingSolution.org, Green House Network, Hip Hop Caucus, Independent Progressive Politics Network, Labor/Community Strategy Center, Liberty Tree Foundation for the Democratic Revolution, Madre, Oil Change International, Organic Consumers Association, Pax Christi USA, Peace Action Progressive Democrats of America, Project South, Rainforest Action Network, Rising Tide North America, Sierra Youth Coalition, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Southern Energy Network, Student Environmental Action Coalition, Voters for Peace, West Harlem Environmental Action, and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. For more information go to: <http://www.nowarnowarming.org/>.

The **League of Conservation Voters** is joining other groups in **The Heat is on Campaign** is working to get congress to take action to take real action against global warming. For more information go to: http://action.lcv.org/campaign/redford_video/wsb8wxx2pxxb3wb?

On July 15th, **residents of six Mediterranean countries simultaneously jumped into their local rivers, joining its counterpart, the European bi-annual 'Big Jump' event, that calls on governments to clean up their local waterways.** The event took place at the Jordan River, which is severely polluted and drying up, the Alexandria River (Egypt), the Emilia-Romagna Adriatic Coastline (Italy), the Tanger (Morocco), Catalonia (Spain) and the Rhône River (France), according to Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME). Stress the importance of the Jordan River, under threat from excessive water diversion and pollution, for all the peoples in the region and for all three religions, a rabbi, a priest and an imam participated in the event, alongside Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian mayors from both sides of the Jordan Valley.

The Student Peace Action Network (SPAN) is a national, grassroots network of youth activists, young adults, high school, college and graduate students organizing for peace and justice and in opposition to war and militarism. Working to end the complex webs of corporate and military power that violate human rights, deprive people of basic needs, damage the environment and perpetuate racism and oppression, SPAN's current campaign to "Flunk the War Machine" highlights connections between U.S. militarism abroad and in schools. It empowers youth activists to take action on issues that directly affect their lives and their peers, while advocating for peace and justice in the world. It challenges the Bush Administration's disastrous and misguided policies of preventative military and nuclear aggression, especially as they concern our campuses by: Countering military recruiters' increasingly aggressive and deceptive tactics to enlist students to fight in Iraq, Demanding positive alternatives to military enlistment – opportunities for youth to go to school, not war; and other alternatives to build a peaceful society, including non-military service programs; Supporting the rights & resistance of a new generation of veterans returning from war to speak out for peace; Challenging nuclear weapons and defense contractors' ties to college campuses (including research & funding programs sponsored by these contractors); and, Promoting academic and experiential education for peace and justice, human rights and nuclear abolition. For more information contact Student Peace Action Network, (301)565-4050, ext 322, span@peace-action.org, www.StudentPeaceAction.org, www.myspace.com/StudentPeaceAction, or <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2234364246>.

The **“march for Israeli-Palestinian peace”** took place, June 5, on the 40th anniversary of the June 1967 war, in cities and towns throughout the world “in solidarity with the people of Israel and Palestine” who marched, demonstrated and organized for Israeli-Palestinian peace throughout Israel and Palestine. Main events were held in key cities such as Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ramallah, Nablus, Gaza, Washington, New York, Chicago, Athens, Paris, Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, London, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Moscow, Rome, Amman, Cairo, and Tokyo, among others for information contact: 2007initiative-for-israeli-palestinian-peace@googlegroups.com.

Frustrated with ongoing instability in the region, the recent crisis in Gaza and lack of progress, **the OneVoice Movement** announced, in early August, that nearly 500,000 Palestinian and Israeli citizens have united to demand immediate, ongoing, uninterrupted negotiations until a comprehensive two-state agreement is achieved. OneVoice has committed to recruit one million signatories to join the movement by October. On October 18, 2007, Israeli and Palestinian citizens – together with international supporters – will mobilize to call for a two-state solution and an end to the occupation and terror. OneVoice, a non-partisan mainstream nationalist movement working in Israel and Palestine for an end to the conflict, will organize separate, simultaneous public summits in Tel Aviv, Jericho and Jerusalem, with international "Echo" events in London, Washington D.C. and Ottawa. For details go to: www.onevoicemovement.org.

Israeli peace organizations including **Gush Shalom** (Gush Shalom, p.o.b. 3322 Tel Aviv 61033, Israel, info@gush-shalom.org, <http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en>) and the **Other Israel** (The Other Israel, p.o.b. 2542, Holon 58125, Israel, ph/fax: +972-3-5565804, otherisr@actcom.co.il, <http://otherisrael.home.igc.org/>), remained extremely active in working for peace and the rights of Palestinians seriously negatively affected by Israeli “security” actions. When Israel closed the crossings into Gaza, causing greatly worsened humanitarian conditions, following the Hamas takeover there, they stated, “Gush Shalom, the Israeli Peace Bloc, demands of the government to reopen immediately the border crossings to the Gaza strip, which are its vital lifeline. “It was the state of Israel which decided to keep in its hands all the keys for entry into and exit from the Gaza Strip, and deny to Gazans the right to have a direct contact with the outside world by land, sea and air. As long as this is the policy implemented by the Government of Israel, it is legally and morally obliged to keep open the border crossings, completely regardless of the identity of the government holding power in the Strip. Ehud Olmert and all his ministers, the old and the new, will bear the full responsibility for the grave humanitarian results of continuing to keep the passages closed. Those who refused to talk to the Palestinian National Unity Government, will now have to talk to two rival Palestinian government. Unlike the vain boastings of politicians and commentators who play games of “divide and rule”, this will be far more difficult and complicated, and all of us will have to endure unnecessary suffering – Israel and its citizens, as well as the Palestinians and the entire

region. Three months ago, we had the chance of talking to the Palestinian National Unity Government, and through it to all the factions and parties active in the Palestinian public, on the basis of the peace initiative adopted by the Arab League. A visible advance towards peace and an end to the occupation could have strengthened those Palestinians who seek a political solution – and there are such in both Fatah and Hamas. With a visible fruit for the political road, the military wings and armed militias would have been less eager for hasty acts of force. Both the suffering of the Israelis in Sderot and the death and destruction of the internal fighting in Gaza might have been avoided. Instead, the government of Israel has engaged in open and blunt efforts to foment civil war among the Palestinians. Ministers and senior military officers repeatedly spoke of sending arms to Muhammad Dahlan and his troops, presenting them to their people as despicable collaborators. Directly, the death and destruction in Gaza over the past week are the work of Palestinian factions which acted irresponsibly and caused great damage to their own people – but the government of Israel is not without blame. Those who push their neighbors to civil war cannot avoid responsibility even when the results are not as expected.”

Dror Zeevi - Yediot Aharonot – stated on the Other Israel Billboard, July 7, “Hamas is evidently in distress and its leaders are signaling that they would be prepared for a compromise in exchange for opening crossings and transferring supplies. Sources close to Hamas insist that there is a willingness among Hamas leaders to advance a long-term ceasefire. Israel is currently enjoying clear tactical superiority and it appears that it is holding the entire deck of cards. The easy solution is to lead the area to almost total collapse, or alternately, as army officers and Knesset members have been saying recently, “to allow them to keep their heads above water.” However, it would be a mistake to boycott Hamas. The rational mode of action would be to listen to what its leadership has to say and to try and reach an agreement with them (http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=21020).

During the week of June 9th, marking the **40th anniversary of the Israeli occupation** of Palestinian territories, the Israeli peace groups joined in a series of demonstrations calling for the government to quickly move toward a peace settlement that would justly end the occupation.

Occupation Magazine continues to report details and impacts of the occupation at: <http://www.kibush.co.il/datapage.asp?lang=1%20§ion=1>. In late March, Bil'in Village in the West Bank hosted a conference for all regions of the West Bank on nonviolent resistance, convened by the **People's Committee to Resist the Wall, and national and Islamic resistance movements** (for more go to: http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=18979). On July 27, “Around 5:30pm international Human Rights Workers and member of the Christian Peace-Making Team joined a Palestinian man on the land he owned to help him clean it from debris put there by settler vandals and protect him and his livestock while they feed. Settlers have erected a tent on his land and called it a synagogue seven years ago. This severely handicapped man and his family are normally told to leave the land they own when they try to farm it, or when they let their goats eat from it. The international volunteers showed up to help the family farm their land under the repression they face from soldiers and settlers. We started by removing wood that vandals had nailed to his trees. Settlers with guns saw us do this and called the military. When the military came they told us to stop and the land owner was told he had to prove the land was his. The owner produced Israeli court papers, which proved that the land was indisputably his. The officer reluctantly looked over the papers. However even then we were not allowed to remove the wood because we were told it would look like we were trying to steal it. We began then to cut and collect the grass to take to the goats so they could eat. The police soon showed up, followed later by border police. They kept a heavy presence near us but did nothing to stop the harassment of the settlers. This harassment of course escalated, starting with shouted insults. When international volunteers brought this to the attention of the police, they were told that unless this was caught on film there was nothing they could do. Even with this warning, the police still did nothing to deescalate the harassment from the settlers. The family then let their goats out to eat the grass that grows on the land they own and this proved to be the last straw for the settlers. An old, well dressed settler exited his settlement using a stick as a walking aid, and giving the impression of frailty asked one of the volunteers where they were from in an aggressive manner and suddenly without provocation attacked two international human rights workers with what proved to be a spiked stick. He first hit one female volunteer across the head, moving on to strike multiple blows to another this time male observer. His arm was left bleeding heavily, leaving blood on both he and the settler. The police had no choice, in the face of such obvious lawless aggression and knowing that of course this time it would be filmed, but to intervene. They ran up the stairs and prevented the old man from returning to his settlement, and arrested him. The two HRWs and the man who filmed them were taken to the police station, and the old man was arrested. The Palestinians and HRWs were told that the area had to be cleared because the situation was “heated”. The Palestinians and volunteers therefore left the land of the family only to watch Israeli settlers exit the settlement, walk freely through land and socialize with the military and police. After a few minutes spending at the police station the attacking settler was eventually released by the police with the explanation that they are not going to arrest Israelis during Shabbat” (<http://www.palsolidarity.org/main/2007/07/28/tel-rumeida-violent-settler-attacks-human-rights-workers/>).

At Bilin, on July 28, it was reported (<http://www.palsolidarity.org/main/2007/07/27/bilin-soldiers-show-no-restraint-towards-peaceful-demonstrators/>), “Approximately 300 international, Palestinian and Israeli non-violent demonstrators came together for the 129th Bilin demonstration against the illegal Apartheid wall. The demonstrators came from all backgrounds and included children as young as five through to women, men and elderly internationals, Israelis and Palestinians. The demonstration took a different route than usual and entered the olive groves from the far left hand side through a small road close to the wall. Upon entering the Olive groves, the soldiers almost immediately began firing tear gas canisters and sound grenades at the demonstrators who were peacefully walking towards the Apartheid wall. Despite demonstrators being hundreds of meters away from the Wall and not posing any threat to the soldiers or the Wall itself the soldiers used severe aggression without just cause. Demonstrators made significant attempts to avoid the tear gas however due to the direction of the wind, many of the demonstrators were severely affected by the gas, including one international male who required attention by the Palestinian Red Crescent. Despite initial attempts by the soldiers to disperse the demonstrators, the non-violent activists persevered in getting their message across that the Apartheid wall must fall and that the people of Bilin and the internationals say No to the Occupation...”

On August 17, Gush Shalom published the following ad in Harretz, “The boy Khalil Sha'er was waiting for a bus near Tekoa, when he was seized and beaten to death by five soldiers. **Almost every day in the West Bank and Gaza the army kills children, women and**

other unarmed people. A matter of routine. While Olmert babbles about peace, the occupation is getting more and more deadly, destructive and rapacious.”

Faculty For Israeli-Palestinian Peace (FFIPP-USA) reported, April 23, “On April 18, around midnight, the Israeli army attacked the home of peace activist Refai Fayed in the village of Zbabdeh near Jenin. The IDF terrorized the Fayed family with attack dogs, beat them, forced them out of their home, trashed their home, destroyed computers and personal property, and kidnapped Refai's brother Mohammad Abdulla Asaad Fayyad who is 17 years old high school student. The family has not received any information about the whereabouts Mohammad since that night. Three other students at Alzababdeh Secondary School were taken as well....”

Interfaith Peace-Builders (IFPB), based in Washington, DC, promotes delegation-based education and advocacy on Israel/Palestine. “IFPB’s delegations to Israel/Palestine emphasize listening to and learning from those immersed in the reality of the conflict, and advancing the work of Israelis and Palestinians committed to nonviolent struggle for peace with justice. We seek to empower delegation participants to educate their local communities and the media, counter inaccurate stereotypes, and advocate for a more just US foreign policy. IFPB has sent 22 delegations with 300 participants to the region since 2001.” Upcoming delegations are October 27 - November 10, March 22 - April 5, and May 24 - June 7. For details contact Interfaith Peace-Builders, 1326 9th St. NW, Washington, DC 20001 (202)244-0821, office@ifpbdel.org, www.ifpbdel.org.

Eliyahu McLean of the **Jerusalem Peacemakers** reports that the Sulha Peace Project hosted its third annual youth retreat, Feb. 27 - March 2, bringing more than ninety Jewish, Christian, Muslim (Israeli Arab and Palestinian from Gaza) and Druze teenagers together for three days of dialogue, prayer, workshops and celebration at the Shaharut desert retreat near Eilat, “striving for peace in our shared homeland”. “The feedback from parents after the retreat was enthusiastic. Many of them expressed how the experience at the Sulhita gathering changed their children’s lives and had a positive affect on the whole family. The parents asked how they too can take steps towards peace and reconciliation. A youth peace leadership program is being developed with twenty four participants to be trained as the next leaders of the Sulhita youth project”. Special thanks to Elad Vazana and Hetam Misat, the Jewish and Arab coordinators of the 2007 Sulhita youth gathering.

After weeks of preparation, and a preliminary gathering, close to 2000 people, Jews Arabs and Internationals, gathered to surround the walls of the Old City for the ‘The Big Hug’ of Jerusalem event, focusing on “Love for Jerusalem as the center of the world,” uniting people of all walks of life. The Big Hug included workshops and prayer circles, a walk of the whole city (that also picked up trash, en route), and drumming and singing circles, all calling for peace. For more go to: <http://www.loversofjerusalem.org/>,

The **Israel-Palestine Peace NGO Forum conference**, bringing together over 100 Israeli and Palestinian NGO leaders, and 60 European NGO leaders, was hosted by the Region of Tuscany, Italy, June 10-13, for the Israel-Palestine Peace NGO Forum conference. Among the VIP’s who addressed the meeting was Avraham Burg, Yasser Abed Rabbo, the VP of the EU Parliament and the foreign and prime ministers of Italy. The forum formed a number of working groups to work on practical issues for improving conditions and moving toward peace. On June 19 the **Abrahamic Reunion (AR)** hosted a gathering of 100 Arabs and Jews in the Druze city of Daliat al-Karmel in the Carmel mountains near Haifa, Israel, to re-affirm the path of building bridges for peace in the Holy Land through inter-religious cooperation. The gathering included top religious and political leaders from the Druze, Christian and Muslim and Ahmadiya communities of the Carmel mountains. June 19-29, Jerusalem Peacemakers co-director, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari and Eliyahu McLean journeyed to Northern Ireland to speak about their reconciliation work and learn from the situation in Northern Ireland. They stayed in the **Corrymeela Peace and Reconciliation Centre** in Ballycastle and spoke to various mixed Catholic-Protestant, and other, groups. McClean co-taught, with Ruth Broyde Sharone, a week long course, “Peacebuilding 101: the do’s and don’ts on interfaith peacebuilding,” at the bi-annual Jewish Renewal Kallah, in July. For more on Jerusalem Peacemakers go to: www.jerusalempeacemakers.org.

The **Abraham Path Initiative (API)** is working to inspire the opening of a route of cultural and religious tourism through the heart of the Middle East. The route will be centered on a new long-distance walking trail that follows the journey made by the Prophet Abraham - the common patriarch of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - some 4000 years ago. The purpose of the Abraham Path (Masar Sayyidna Ibrahim) is to inspire cross-cultural exchange and mutual understanding; to promote sustainable tourism and economic development; to help preserve the region’s historic sites and natural environment; and to generate positive media coverage that highlights the hospitable people of the Middle East and the shared heritage of Abraham’s children. The Abraham Path Initiative is an international affiliation of scholars and leaders, sponsored by, and based at, **Harvard University’s Global Negotiation Project** (<http://www.pon.harvard.edu/research/projects/ppw.php3>). The Initiative is non-political and non-partisan, affirming the dignity of all people. The project has received endorsements from Nobel Peace Prize winners Jimmy Carter and the Dalai Lama among others. For information contact info@abrahampath.org, or go to: <http://www.abrahampath.org/about.php?lang=en>.

The **Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) Health and Human Rights Project (HaHRP - formerly Jewish American Medical Project)** will send its fifth delegation to Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories, October 20- November 3, helping delegation members connect to their counterparts in Israel/Palestine so they can provide assistance while learning first-hand of the situation on the ground. Upon returning, delegation members are expected to use their experience to educate others. While HaHRP began as a medical aid project, it has broadened its focus to enable people with different skills and interests to contribute, including volunteers to help Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian Territories to harvest their olives. For more information please go to: http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/publish/article_877.shtml.

Network for Peace through Dialogue put on the first U.S. mainstream first time Mainstream Jewish community dialogue with Palestinians with a series of “dialogue circle” composed of regular New Yorkers - Jewish Americans, Israelis, Palestinian American Muslims and Christians, committed to conflict transformation - meeting in neighborhoods throughout the city on June 14. For details contact Marcia at The Dialogue Project (718)768-2175, marcia@thediologueproject.org, www.thediologueproject.org.

Amnesty International is undertaking the Restore "The America I Believe In" Campaign to reverse Bush Administration practices of detaining people indefinitely without charge or trial, and use evidence obtained by cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and restore traditional American values of justice, rule of law, and human dignity. For more information, go to: <http://believe.amnestyusa.org/site/c.igLQIUOckTf/b.2070843/k.BDE5/Home.htm>.

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) has begun the Child Soldiers Initiative "to prevent the recruitment and use of children as soldiers. It is estimated that 300,000 children are being used in thirty countries worldwide, as soldiers, human mine detectors, porters, spies, messengers, and as a part of suicide missions. Girls are subject to being used as sex slaves and may be taken as involuntary "wives." This is one of the moral tragedies of our time". To help solidify peace, and return to a culture of peace, in Nepal, emerging from a long armed conflict, SFCG has initiated a peace building radio soap opera in the Himalayan nation, *New Path – New Steps* particularly aimed at young people For information contact Search for Common Ground, 1601 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20009 (202)265-4300, search@sfcg.org, <http://www.sfcg.org>.

The Rebel Letters campaign "is a grassroots effort to support peacebuilding in Darfur, Sudan. Despite the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement in May 2006 and the presence of African Union peacekeepers on the ground, the crisis in Darfur remains one of the world's worst humanitarian emergencies. The recent splintering of the rebel movement in Darfur has become a major obstacle to the resumption of peace talks. Unless the rebel groups come together to unite and create a common platform to negotiate with the Sudanese government, a peace process will not be possible. You can help build sustainable peace in Darfur by sending a letter to the rebel group leaders through the campaign website at: <http://www.rebelletters.org>."

Amnesty International (AI) and the Human Rights Information & Training Center HRITC) in Yemen held their first workshop in Yemen for NGOs on economic, social and cultural rights, March 21st - 22nd The sessions focused on bring light to various human rights abuses and forms of violence by creating collaboration between local NGOs and International organization, such as Amnesty International, to tackle these critical issues. The Yemeni, Minister of Human Rights, Dr. Khadija Al-Haisami stated to the participants, "It's of crucial importance to pay closer attention to public rights and freedoms and it is important to reinforce a culture of human rights culture Yemenis and further social awareness by initiating a partnership between the ministry and civil society organizations in Yemen. To ensure the success of such an initiative the Ministry has signed an agreement with the European Union to initiate a joint project to develop the partnership between the Ministry and civil society organizations." For more information on the event or follow up, see the Yemen Times "Civil Society Organizations discusses economic, social and cultural rights" at <http://yementimes.com/article.shtml?i=1035&p=local&a=2>.

World Goodwill is a non-governmental organization affiliated with the United Nations Department of Public Information that works to strengthen recognition of the need for the energy of goodwill in solving human problems and in conduct of world affairs. World goodwill has identified 9 global foundations, initiatives, movements, as emerging evidence of group service: **The World Future Council; Worldchanging.com; The Web of Hope; Lawyers Without Borders; Globalisation for the Common Good; Gather the Women Global Matrix; La Via Campesina; The Shuttleworth Foundation; and EarthAction.** For more on the World Goodwill go to: http://www.lucistrust.org/en/service_activities/world_goodwill__1/newsletter/recent_issues/2007. **The World Future Council** "was set up to provide a body of expert opinion with a global point of view informed by ethics, experience and wisdom. It is comprised of fifty individuals, chosen after extensive consultation, to provide as broad a representation as possible by geography, expertise, gender and age. By raising key international challenges from the political-economic to the ethical level, it hopes to initiate change in the rules of global governance. It seeks to represent the shared ethical values of citizens worldwide and perceives its role as speaking up for community living based on the values of non-violence, sustainability, respect and justice. The World Future Council works to close those gaps that separate humanity from a sustainable and peaceful future and promotes long-term solutions". For details Contact:P.O. Box 11 01 53, D-20401 Hamburg, Germany; Tel. +49 40 30 70 91 40, info at worldfuturecouncil.org, or Trafalgar House, 11 Waterloo Place, London SW1Y 4AU, UK; Tel. +44 (0)20 7863 8833, info.uk at worldfuturecouncil.org, or 30 Cottage Street, Amherst, MA 01002, USA (413) 549-8118, info.usa at worldfuturecouncil.org, www.worldfuturecouncil.org.

WORLDCHANGING.com (WCC) "is a web-based NGO which provides links to (and analysis of) those ideas, tools and models which are needed to build a better and more sustainable future. WCC works on the simple premise that that there are many people in the world working for creative change, but the fields in which they work remain unconnected; WCC shows ways in which seemingly unconnected resources can be linked together to help create positive change. The focus of the website and its links is on creative solutions to problems rather than negative critiques. Also, special attention is given to those ideas which may have been overlooked in the mass media. While every link posted on the website is informed by technology, there is recognition of the need to "understand techniques as well as technologies, ideas as well as innovations", and also the importance of collaboration, building coalitions and movements, growing communities, and "how to make... businesses live up to their highest potential and how to make the promise of democracy into a reality". There are seven resource sections on the website: *Stuff*: Green design, sustainable food and farming, emerging technologies; *Shelter*: Green Building, Energy, Water, Refugees and Relief. *Cities*: Urban Design, Transportation ,Megacities, Leapfrogging. *Communities*: Health, Education, Empowering Women, Philanthropy, Social Entrepreneurship, Arts and Culture, *Business*: Transforming Business, Socially Responsible Investment, Bright Green Economy, Branding & Marketing. *Politics*: Communications, Networking & Activism, Citizen Media, Transparency and Human Rights, Nonviolence. *Planet*: Climate Change, Sustainable Development, Biodiversity and Ecosystems, New Science, Future. For information contact: Worldchanging, 1517 12th Ave., Seattle, Washington 98122, USA; Web: www.worldchanging.com.

The Web of Hope, "a UK registered Charity, is an online global resource which highlights initiatives that are helping to create a more sustainable existence between humanity and the planet. Through this website, a series of publications, and various educational roadshows, a dynamic and ever-expanding platform is provided for initiatives, projects, mechanisms and technologies which can lead to positive change whether it be at the family, community, business or governance level. *The Web of Hope* offers a positive approach to the ecological crisis because it celebrates solutions and offers them as guidance and inspiration to others – creating a widening virtuous circle of positive change. For example, under the section on the website headed 10 Things You Can Do, links are provided to those steps that

can be taken now to help people live more sustainable, on the premise that *every individual action counts and significant change is always propelled by a critical mass of informed decision*. The Things You can Do include: Transport: making the transition to pedal power; *Habitat* : ideas about energy saving and greening the home; Energy : advice about switching to green and renewable electricity schemes; Water; advice on water conservation; Economics : information on ethical investments; Biodiversity: planting herbs, wildflowers, trees and going carbon-neutral; Organization: campaigning on local issues; Food: a link to the Soil Association website; Health : the value of laughter and walking; Oceans: buying fish from sustainable sources; Peace: a link to the website of Peace One Day; Education: forwarding the web page to friends. For more information contact The Web of Hope, Suite 256, 3 Edgar Buildings, Bath BA1 2FJ, United Kingdom; wohadmin@thewebofhope.org, Web: www.thewebofhope.com.

Lawyers Without Borders (LWOB) “was founded in January 2000 by the American lawyer, Christina M. Storm ,to create a global association of lawyers dedicated to the promotion and protection of human justice through the provision of pro bono services around the world. LWOB links its members to non-profit and community-based organizations working with low-income, underserved, and disadvantaged communities in need of human rights protection. It relies exclusively on volunteer lawyers, students, and other law-related professionals to offer a wide array of legal services to non-profit organizations, thereby enabling these organizations to increase their programmatic capacity, strengthen their infrastructure and otherwise serve their communities more effectively and at a lower cost. Through the promotion and protection of human justice at the international level, LWOB has acted as a global ambassador for the legal profession. Advances in communication and technology have enabled LWOB to access geographical areas that were previously isolated from developed economies and directly service citizens in those areas. LWOB has now become a global organization, connecting regions of the world to highly skilled lawyers with a personal interest in international development and public welfare initiatives. Current projects are ongoing or planned in the following regions: Ethiopia, Liberia, Palestinian Territories (Israel), Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique. One interesting focus of its work is “CLEARs”. This connects Student/University teams to the human rights or international law research needs of non-profit organizations anywhere in the world. This linkage brings a resource to non-profits and also benefits the students by giving them “hands-on” experience with real international law questions, as opposed to the current framework which usually has students just working on hypothetical problems. LWOB is increasingly asked to aid lawyers at risk. This often involves a rapid response to urgent action requests or intervention in situations where a lawyer or judge – frequently representing a human rights activist in Court proceedings – is suddenly the target of criminal prosecution. This initiative aims to find innovative, “out of the box” and “under the radar” methods for addressing and protecting lawyers at risk around the world. As a result of LWOB’s strict adherence to its neutrality mandate, its activity in the ‘Lawyer At Risk’ field is frequently characterised by behind the scenes negotiation. LWOB’s team of New York based volunteer lawyers and law students has assumed much of the oversight of this project model. LWOB has had observers in Ethiopia for the last several months and has plans to dispatch lawyers to other regions for trial observations in the coming months. Regions currently being investigated include cases in The Gambia, Libya, Philippines and Vietnam. In 2003, LWOB was granted associative status with United Nations Department of Public Information, UN-DPI, and it was granted consultative status with ECOSOC in 2004. For more, contact: Lawyers Without Borders, Inc., 330 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06106, USA (860)541-2288, Web: www.lawyerswithoutborders.org.

Globalisation for the Common Good (GCG) came into being “in order to provide a better understanding of the role of religions in the age of globalization, in 2002,” in Oxford, England. “This movement is for “Rekindling the Human Spirit and Compassion in Globalization”. The aim is to have an alternative to the current dominant economic/free trade globalization and to make globalization good for all.” “The mission of Globalisation for the Common Good is to promote ethical, moral and spiritual values in the areas of economics, commerce, trade and international relations amongst others, to advance understanding and action on major global issues by civil society, private enterprise, the public sector, governments, and national and international institutions, leading to the promotion of collaborative policy solutions to the challenges posed by globalisation. GCG is committed to the idea that the marketplace is not just an economic sphere, ‘it is a region of the human spirit’ – thus, the problem and challenge of globalization should be seen not only from an economic point of view, but also from ethical, spiritual and theological perspectives. As it has been observed by many throughout history, religion has been both a source of blessing and curse. Religion has been, and is, a major factor in many conflicts and wars around the world. There is a real danger now that these unwelcome truths about the true meaning and function of religion, combined with political/economic injustice, human rights abuses, poverty, hatred, fear, ignorance, globalization, war as an instrument of imperial policy, and the failure to respect international legal or ethical principles, will aggravate conflicts, intolerance, and even anarchy around the world.” “GCG affirms the conviction that a genuine inter-faith dialogue and co-operation is a significant way of bringing the world together; leading to the creation of a harmonious environment needed to build a world of peace, justice and prosperity for all. The call for Globalisation for the Common Good is an appeal to our essential humanity to deal with some of the most pressing concerns of peoples the world over.” GCG publishes the *Journal of Globalization for the Common Good*, bi-annually (spring and fall), and each issue focuses on a particular theme, topic, or region of the world. It is available to interested individuals free of charge (open access), and is hosted by the Center for Global Studies, Purdue University Calumet, Hammond, Indiana, USA, at: <http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/jgcg/>.

Globalisation for the Common Good, at its 6th Annual International conference, in Istanbul, in July, undertook the Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative (GCGI), voicing three concrete commitments: 1) Creating an international network of organizations, whose aims and operations resonate with those of GCGI, to facilitate the sharing of ideas, information, and courses of constructive action, drawing upon the broad experience and expertise of the growing GCGI family of activists, scholars, religious and spiritual leaders, and committed individuals, to create a dynamic, interactive network for the active exchange of information, dates, and events; 2) Developing and maintaining a dynamic list of “what’s working”: initiatives, projects, and civil society organizations that are making a significant contribution to the common good on the GCGI web site and in the *Journal of Globalization for the Common Good*; and 3) Engaging young persons from around the world in the work of Globalisation for the Common Good, including participation in future conferences, international exchange programs, inter-religious and intercultural study and dialogue, and other initiatives. Interested people and organizations invited you to submit a brief resume or article of no more than 400 words about their work and how it aligns with the vision of GCGI. Selected offerings will be listed on our web site and in the *Journal of Globalization for the Common Good*. To read the entire Istanbul statement, go to: <http://www.globalisationforthecommongood.info/conferences/past-conferences/2007-istanbul-declaration>). To contact GCG, email Kamran Mofid at: k.mofid@btopenworld.com, www.globalisationforthecommongood.info.

Gather the Women Global Matrix (GTW) “is a new kind of organic, self-organizing grassroots initiative to awaken the leadership potential of the women of the world. Gather the Women (GTW) uses the new technology of the internet to magnify and mobilize the enormous potential of feminine wisdom; at the same time, GTW recognizes the ancient tradition of gathering in circles where one woman reaching out to connect with another woman can experience the power of shared intention. Over 6,000 women worldwide have experienced the core intention of Gather the Women: joyfully expressing the power of women's wisdom. GTW is a gathering place for women and women's organizations who share a belief that the time is now to activate the incredible power of women's wisdom on a planetary scale.” “One of the core values of Gather the Women is **balance** – to bring the world back into balance by practicing the discipline of keeping ourselves in balance. GTW encourages both women and men to seek balance between their masculine and feminine qualities, so that they can merge the masculine ability to accomplish with the feminine capacity for connection into a powerful new form of human action... While the Matrix itself is a place where women can gather to explore their own expression of that balance, GTW needs and welcomes the support of men who share this commitment to balance”. “GTW remains committed to building global participation in and recognition of International Women's Day, offering a clearinghouse for information about the diverse events being created that day. A list of resources has been developed on the website through a collaborative process and will be growing with time”. For details contact: Gather the Women Global Matrix, 25A Crescent Drive #268, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523, USA; info@gatherthewomen.org, www.gatherthewomen.org,

La Via Campesina “is an international movement which coordinates peasant organizations of small and medium sized producers, agricultural workers, rural women, and indigenous communities from Asia, America, and Europe. It is an autonomous, pluralistic movement, independent from all political, economic, or other denominations. It is integrated by national and regional organizations whose autonomy is jealously respected. Via Campesina is organized in seven regions as follows: Europe, Northeast and Southeast Asia, South Asia, North America, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Via Campesina is also collaborating with other organizations in Africa”. “The principal objective of Via Campesina is to develop solidarity and unity in the diversity among small farmer organizations, in order to promote economic relations of equality and social justice; the preservation of land; food sovereignty; sustainable agricultural production; and an equality based on small and medium-sized producers. In order to achieve these objectives, Via Campesina has defined its strategies among which are the following: The articulation and strengthening of its member organizations. Influencing power and decision-making centers within governments and multilateral organizations in order to redirect the economic and agricultural policies that affect small and middle-scale producers. The strengthening of women's participation in social, economic, political, and cultural matters. The formulation of proposals in relation to important issues such as: agrarian reform, food sovereignty, production, trade, research, genetic resources, biodiversity, environment and gender”. The international forum of Via Campesina took place in Mexico City August 1-2, with many of the 149 organizations from 56 countries discussing alternatives to neoliberal globalization. For information contact International Operative Secretariat, La Via Campesina, Jl. Mampang Prapatan XIV No. 5, Jakarta Selatan, DKI Jakarta, Indonesia, 12790; Tel: +62-21-7991890, <http://viacampesina.org/>.

The Shuttleworth Foundation's concern is, “If we are to lift Africa from her current circumstances, we will need a generation of learners that are gifted with curiosity about the world in which they live, and the tools to understand and shape that world.” These visionary words of Mark Shuttleworth embody the philosophy of the Shuttleworth Foundation, which he founded in 2000. The Foundation focuses on several broad themes in education and technology in order to offer creative solutions to the challenges faced by the developing world. Some of these initiatives include: leadership and management, communications and analysis, open source (Open source software embraces the philosophy of sharing), and telecommunications. “We live in a new age – technology is changing the way we do business, communicate, educate and entertain. It is not knowledge that drives society or economies, but the ability to gain knowledge, and critically, what we do with that knowledge – this has promoted education and technology as the new frontier.... Our goal is to invest in projects that offer unique and innovative solutions to educational challenges faced by the developing world.” For more information contact: Shuttleworth Foundation, PO Box 4163, Durbanville, Cape Town, 7551, South Africa; Tel: + 27 21 970 1200; info@shuttleworthfoundation.org, www.shuttleworthfoundation.org.

EarthAction “works to combine the internet, global civil society and celebrity involvement to empower people to protect the planet and defend their rights. It works from the premise that we have all the necessary knowledge and resources at our disposal and only need the will to solve our problems. Through the internet, ordinary people can help to create a more just, sustainable world by participating in EarthAction's global action alert network. This already includes thousands of citizens and over 1,900 citizen groups in 161 countries, two thirds of which are in the developing world. Current issues involving persistent campaigning include the prevention of dangerous climate change and the promotion of renewable energy by reaching people in developing countries with information about the problem and its likely impact on their lives. It has also launched a new coalition of citizen groups, called *Citizens Century*, who work for a more democratic and effective UN to help meet the needs of the world's poor. Other campaigns include control of the global AIDS epidemic by collaborating with UNAIDS and Population Fund, as well as combating the degradation of fertile land, the protection of forests, the elimination of nuclear weapons, controlling the weapons trade and banning landmines.

EarthAction has initiated Planet Postcards (electronic and printed) and several times a year participants in the network receive these action alerts. Each Planet Postcard focuses on a single issue and gives all the information needed for participants to send a timely, effective message to a government. Sometimes an issue is introduced via a well known celebrity e.g. Leonardo diCaprio in the case of the climate change campaign and the Brazilian footballer, Ronaldo, for the new AIDS campaign. EarthAction uses a wide range of media and its well-researched Action Kit containing the Planet Postcard is sent to its network in over 160 countries.” For information contact EarthAction, 30 Cottage Street, Amherst, MA 01002, USA (413)549-8118; EarthAction, Antonia López de Bello 80, Recoleta, Santiago, Chile; Tel: +56 9-826 1727, earthaction.org, www.earthaction.org.

The Sudan Divestment Task Force, which collaborates with Save Darfur coordinates local campaigns to pressure state governments to divest their holdings (usually pension funds) from businesses operating in Sudan. So far the states that have divested in whole or in part are: OR, CA, CO, IA, IL, IN, MD, NJ, CT, VT, ME. For more information go to <http://www.sudandivestment.org>.

Care 2 is concerned that tensions between Niger's government and the nomadic Tuareg peoples, that have been recurring

for many years, have taken a violent turn, as soldiers have been deployed to Niger's uranium-rich Tuareg lands. Care 2 urges the President of Niger to reconsider the military solution and open dialogue with the Tuareg Niger Movement for Justice, NMJ. For more, go to: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/peace-in-niger>.

East Timor and Indonesia Action Network & West Papua Advocacy Team sees "the presence in West Papua of Col. Burhanuddin Siagian, a senior Indonesian army officer indicted for crimes against humanity charges in East Timor (now called Timor-Leste) endangers human rights defenders and political activists. Recently Col. Siagian threatened to "destroy" peaceful dissidents in the contested region. Urge Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to withdraw Col. Siagian from Papua and suspend him from duty. Please let us know if you contact President Yudhoyono, and of any response you receive: <http://etan.org/action/fax/faxsby.htm>; fax President Yudhoyono via ETAN or write: President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono; Istana Merdeka, Jakarta10110, Indonesia; Fax: + 62 21 345 2685 / 526 8726"

This year the **Fourth Freedom Forum** celebrates its twenty-fifth year of promoting a more civilized world based on the force of law, rather than the law of force. The Forum's mission to achieve "freedom from fear" is supported by three distinct areas of program activity: 1) Security Council sanctions, 2) global cooperation against terror, and 3) the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. These areas of Fourth Freedom Forum activity can be accessed at: <http://kroc.nd.edu/research/econsanc-pub.shtml>, [The Sanctions and Security Project](http://www.globalct.org/); <http://www.globalct.org/>, [The Center for Global Counter-Terrorism Cooperation](http://www.fairplayforjustice.org/); and <http://www.fairplayforjustice.org/>. On 30 April 2007 the Fourth Freedom Forum cosponsored a [sanctions symposium at the United Nations](http://www.fairplayforjustice.org/) with the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations, tracing the evolution of Security Council sanctions in recent years from comprehensive and "stand alone" measures to combined "smart" or "targeted" measures that are aimed at decision-making elites and that seek to prevent conflict while avoiding harm to the general population. The conference report is available at: http://www.fairplayforjustice.org/pdf/4thfreedom_Sanctions_report_july13.pdf, and printed copies of prepared statements and reports can be obtained through Linda Gerber-Stellingwerf, lgerber@fourthfreedom.org. The forum's [Security Council Counter-Terrorism Review Project Workshops](http://www.fairplayforjustice.org/) were held, April 9, in New York, aimed at providing an independent, comprehensive assessment of the United Nations Security Council's overall counter-terrorism contributions since 2001. The workshops were producing a report to be released in the second half of 2007 that provides independent recommendations for improving the Security Council's counter-terrorism program. In its most recent report, the Fourth Freedom Forum's Center on Global Counter-Terrorism Cooperation looks at the [challenges and prospects for implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Southeast Asia](http://www.fairplayforjustice.org/), which can be obtained by going to: <http://www.globalct.org/pdf/07Mar28JapanReport.pdf>. On March 15 and 16, the Fourth Freedom Forum's Center on Global Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi convened a two-day workshop, "Security and Liberty," which examined the relationship between human rights and counter-terrorism. The [National Religious Partnership on the Nuclear Weapons Danger \(NRPN\)](http://www.fairplayforjustice.org/), a project of the Fourth Freedom Forum and the Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy, responded to the Bush administration's "Complex 2030" proposal to design and build new nuclear warheads, joining the Friends Committee on National Legislation in a statement against the Complex 2030 program, signed by seventy-four religious organizations and denominations. In February 2007, NRPN and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism co-hosted a two-day [consultation on the nuclear weapons danger for senior Jewish leaders](http://www.fairplayforjustice.org/). Conversation topics ranged from the Israeli nuclear program, the theological reasons why the Jewish community should be engaged in this issue, the Iranian nuclear standoff, and the administration's proposal to build up new nuclear warheads. NRPN and the Religious Action Center are continuing their partnership and have established a committee to focus on outreach to the Jewish community and follow-up from the consultation. For more information, contact the Fourth Freedom Forum, 803 North Main Street, Goshen, Indiana 46528 (800)233-6786, X10, info@fourthfreedom.org, <http://www.fairplayforjustice.org/pdf/4thfreedom>.

The ENOUGH Project to abolish genocide and mass atrocities, supported by the **International Crisis Group** primarily focuses on mass action, works with the activist constituency to promote a policy agenda based on the three Ps: peace, protection of civilians and punishment of the guilty, and to build greater consensus around the steps that must be taken to prevent mass atrocities and genocide in the future. The crises on which it is initially focusing are those in Darfur, the Congo and Uganda. For information and materials from ENOUGH in the future, please visit www.enoughproject.org.

The Elders, an alliance of an elite group of senior statesmen dedicated to solving thorny global problems, held its inaugural meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, on founding member Nelson Mandela's 89th birthday. The members include Desmond Tutu, South African archbishop emeritus of Capetown; former U.S. President Jimmy Carter; former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan; Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland and Mohammed Yunus, the Nobel laureate and founder of the Green Bank in Bangladesh. Others involved include Indian microfinance leader Ela Bhatt; former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland; former Chinese ambassador to the United States Li Zhaoxing. The Elders are addressing some of the world's most pressing problems -climate change, pandemics such as AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and violent conflicts. For more, go to: <http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2007/07/18/2612/>.

Friends Committee on National Legislation (245 Second St. NE, Washington, DC 20002), **PAX** (Promoting the Abrogation of Xenophobia) and **NetWorks Productions Inc.** (PO Box 9509, Santa Fe, NM 87504 (505) 989-4482, www.NetworkEarth.org) are [working to stop the bush Administration's Plans to develop new atomic weapons](http://www.fairplayforjustice.org/), which they see as promoting nuclear weapons proliferation and a nuclear arms race.

Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Center) put on a [retreat for African peace mediators](http://www.fairplayforjustice.org/), supported by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Zanzibar, April 23-25, focusing on specific examples in an attempt to improve the practice of mediating between warring factions on the continent. Participants included President Amani Abeid Karume, President of Zanzibar; President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Former President of Sri Lanka; President Benjamin William Mkapa, Former President of Tanzania; Dr Attala Bashir, Executive Secretary, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD); General Lamine Cisse, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General to the Central African Republic; Ambassador Said Djinnit, Commissioner for Peace and Security, African Union; Mr Luis Moreno-Ocampo, Chief Prosecutor, International Criminal Court (ICC). HD Center initiated the retreat out of a concern that, with all the immensely

deadly conflicts in Africa, which require negotiations to eventually end them, not enough attention has been paid to employing mediation to prevent them, and to bring them to early conclusions, nor to develop an understanding of how negotiated settlement can be most successful in African contexts. The Government of Norway cosponsored the annual Oslo Forum, with Humanitarian Dialogue the retreat takes place annually, June 29, bringing together senior conflict mediators and key peace process actors seeking to resolve conflict through dialogue to share practical experiences of mediating between warring factions all over the world as part of an ongoing effort to improve the global response to armed conflicts. HD Center "believes that the role of parliamentarians is critical in turning the tide of gun proliferation and violence. By strengthening or creating national laws, improving implementation and enforcement, stimulating and leading public debate, parliaments set new standards for reducing the societal impacts of gun violence," and has published a handbook for parliamentarians and legislators, around the world, with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Missing Pieces: A guide for reducing gun violence through parliamentary action*. The HD Centre has been active in mediating conflicts in Timor-Leste, (see "On going Developments", below, for more) Aceh; Nepal; The Philippines and Darfur among others. For information, contact Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 114 rue de lausanne, Geneva, Geneva 1202, Switzerland, andya@hdcentre.org, www.hdcentre.org.

The **International Relations Center (IRC)**, working to "make the United States a more responsible global leader and partner," has **closed down** after almost 30 years of operation, but **its programs have moved**. The **Americas Program and the Global Good Neighbor Initiative have moved to the Center for International Policy (CIP)**: <http://www.ciponline.org> in Washington, DC., with Laura Carlsen and Katie Kohlstedt, in Mexico City, Tom Barry in Silver City, New Mexico and network of contributors across the hemisphere. The Americas Program provides political analysis, North-South dialogues, and in-depth reports on important issues throughout the hemisphere, in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. For details go to: www.americaspolicy.org. Other programs the IRC created, **Right Web** (<http://rightweb.irc-online.org>) and **Foreign Policy In Focus** (<http://www.fpi.org/>) are continuing under former co-sponsor, the **Institute for Policy Studies** (<http://www.ips-dc.org/>).

The **Americas Program** and the **Global Good Neighbor Initiative**, programs of the New Mexico-based **International Relations Center**, which became programs of the **Center for International Policy** based in Washington, DC as of June 1, are concerned about the impacts of the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) initiative, secretly launched expansions of Nafta, initiated in March 2005 at a meeting of the three Heads of State from the U.S., Canada and Mexico, to impose "Deep Integration" on the people of these three North American countries. "The process of Deep Integration is not on the public's radar screen, further breaking down the border between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico for commerce and capital. Under the guise of 'harmonizing' national policies, the SPP's deep integration plan will lead to further job loss, reductions in social programs, and changes in the use of natural resources, environmental protections and national security policies" If you are interested in more about this issue, subscribe to our Trade and Integration listserve by emailing communications@irc-online.org with the message "Subscribe Trade and Integration". Also, see Laura Carlsen's article about the SPP at: <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/4276>><http://americas.irc-online.org/am/4276>, with printer-friendly pdf version at:<http://americas.irc-online.org/pdf/columns/0705spp.pdf>><http://americas.irc-online.org/pdf/columns/0705spp.pdf>. For more information about the U.S. Social Forum go to: <http://www.ussf2007.org>><http://www.ussf2007.org>.

The **West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)** is the leading organization in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, transformation and mitigation in Africa. WANEP holds an annual, three-week peacebuilding training course at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Accra, Ghana, which this year will be held at KAIPTC from September 3 to 21, 2007. Further information is available at: <https://tmail1.tc.columbia.edu/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.wanep.org/wapi>><http://www.wanep.org/wapi>.

Centre for Human Development and Social Transformation – Nigeria had its formal launching, with training on peace and civic education in the Niger Delta, March 29 - April 1 at Toki Hotels Port Harcourt, with the opening ceremony witnessed by members of civic society, government officials and members of the public. The full report is on the Centre's website: www.protectourfuture.org.

Peace Voice "is devoted to changing U.S. national conversation about the possibilities of peace and the inadvisability of war. Our main goal is to link professors and professionals of the field of Conflict Resolution/Peace Work to the mainstream media. We invite you to send us your peace and justice editorials which we will then work to place in newspapers within the US. Please join us in awakening people to the importance of making discussions of peace more a part of daily conversation and setting goals toward peace more of a reality. For submissions contact peacevoice.thais@gmail.com."

Dr. Saroj Pandey, working in the area of peace education and a member of the National Focus Group on Peace Education reports that the **National Council of Educational Research and Training – India** has taken leadership in extensive "efforts to integrate peace concerns in the school education curricula and teacher education programs [across India], both at the pre-service and in-service level and has recently brought out the National Curriculum Framework (2005) for school education in which major emphasis is given on integrating peace values across the entire school activities. This curriculum framework is based on the principles of a constructivist approach and provides ample opportunity for promoting peace through dialogue, experiential learning, active listening, and problem solving and conflict resolution. It aims at developing more mature and self-directed learners and emphasizes continuing and lifelong learning." For more information contact Dr. Saroj Pandey, pandey_saroj_@hotmail.com.

The **Peace, War, and Social Conflict Section (PWSC)** of the **American Sociological Association** meets annually at the ASA meeting in August. For information go to: <http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/Ismithe1/export/PWSC07fyer.pdf>.

The **Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace** sponsored a UN forum on interfaith dialogue during the General Assembly meeting, September 21, 2006. The **Baha'i community of Iceland has joined with 12 other faith groups and collaborating partners initiated the Iceland Forum for Interfaith Dialogue**, November 24, 2006. For more information on the interfaith forums, see

Earth Scouts is a new national program in the United States developed by **Earth Charter US** to inspire the qualities of appreciating one another's differences, having awe and a sense of wonder about nature and the cosmos, engaging in making their school and community better, valuing independence and cooperation, seeking peaceful solutions to problems, and welcoming new knowledge and experiences in boys and girls from 3 to 13 years of age and engages them in actions. Earth scouts is based on the Earth Charter: A Declaration of Interdependence, with badges centered on universal human rights, eliminating poverty (economic justice), participatory democracy, respect for nature and a culture of peace. For details go to: <http://www.earthscouts.org>, or contact Genie Skypek: <mailto:skypek@mindspring.com> or call Earth Charter US, (813) 254-8454, <http://www.earthcharterus.org>.

The Peace Company in collaboration with a Global Peace Exchange in partnership with **Voices of Eden** and **Sacred Peace Tours of Galilee** is offering tours to Israel, The Holy Land, October 21 - November 2 and March 30 to April 11. Sacred Peace Tours are an integral part of cultivating a Culture of Peace, becoming a Peace Ambassador, building bridges of compassion with our brothers and sisters in the Middle East. For information contact the Peace Company, 54 Maple Street, Bristol, VT 05443 (888)455-5355, (802)453-7191, info@thepeacecompany.com, www.ThePeaceCompany.com.

AA

WORLD DEVELOPMENTS

Steve Sachs

With the coming of fall, amidst a variety of ongoing crises, there are a number of important advancements and opportunities for moving to better situations, including concerning climate change, which is gaining increasing international concern. **U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, in February, that Climate change poses as much danger to the world as war**, as he urged the United States to take the lead in the fight against global warming, and prepared to urge strong action against global warming at the then upcoming G8 summit. In May, **Ki-moon appointed three well known international figures as climate change envoys**, to strengthen global action against global warming. The **final draft of the second report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** was completed by scientists and officials from more than 100 nations in Bangkok, Thailand, in May, along the lines of the preliminary draft (reported in the winter issue of *NCJ*). The **report called for immediate, substantial action across the world to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to 2000 levels, over the next 25 years. If current trends continue, the current levels, which have risen 70% since 1970, could increase by an additional 90% in that period. The report projected that to return to 2000 global carbon dioxide emission levels by 2030 would require a cost of \$50 to \$100 a released ton, equivalent to raising the price of gasoline \$.25 to \$.30 a gallon.** It was estimated that carbon dioxide reduction might cause a small reduction in global economic activity, of perhaps 0.1% a year. (At the same time – and not necessarily a contradiction - other experts find that developing alternative energy and conservation technology will create jobs). A UN report, in March, found that **poor nations will suffer the greatest injury from global warming, while wealthy nations focus primarily on their own risks** (for details, see "Poor Nations Bear Brunt As World Warms, While Rich focus on Own Risks," *The New York Times*, pp. 1 and 6).

As **recent signs of climate change appear in Brazil, including an unprecedented, severe draught in the Amazon region and the occurrence of a hurricane for the first time in the southern region of Brazil, the government is reconsidering its environmental policy, and for the first time is willing to consider measures in international negotiations that it previously rejected**, such as market based programs to curb carbon emissions resulting from massive deforestation in the Amazon. **Carbon dioxide emissions in the U.S. dropped 1.3% in 2006, over the record 2005 levels**, according to preliminary Department of Energy data, released in May. The DOE indicates that the primary reasons for the decline are a moderate winter and high energy prices. A New York Times/CBS poll, published April 27, found that **protecting the environment is a high priority for Americans, and in many instances were willing to pay more to improve it**. Asked, "When a trade off has to be made which is more important to you, 52% said protecting the environment, 36% said stimulating the economy, and 8% answered both. On which should be a higher energy priority, 68% favored conservation, while 21% chose increasing production. 92% favored and 6% opposed requiring manufacturers to produce more efficient vehicles to reduce fuel consumption. 75% were willing to pay more for electricity if it were generated renewably, and 20% were not. 64% were willing to pay higher gasoline taxes to fund renewable energy research, and 33% were not. In order to reduce dependence on foreign oil, 64% were willing to pay higher gas taxes, and 30% were not. On the other hand, 58% opposed raising gas taxes to reduce consumption, which 38% favored, and 76% opposed a gasoline tax of \$2, which 20% favored. On May 31, **President Bush, for the first time proposed that "a long term global goal" should be reducing greenhouse gas emission, and called for international negotiations to do that, but gave no details, except that, at least for the time being, each nation should set its own goals – so that there would be no international mandatory limits to greenhouse gas creation. European officials and environmental activists expressed skepticism about Bush's intentions.** Meanwhile, in June, **Maine became the third state to pass a law, signed by the governor, to cap carbon dioxide emissions.** Maine, which produces 3% of the nation's CO², will cap emissions at 5.9 million tons in 2009, and reduce them by 10% by 2019. **Congress is currently moving to increase funding for research in renewable energy and methods of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.** While there are complaints that some of this funding is "green pork," a number of promising projects appear likely to gain financing. One of the proposals being considered is producing electric power from coal – which is plentiful (but whose mining is usually quite polluting) - via transforming it into gas, and removing the carbon dioxide, on which the Senate Energy Committee held hearings in April. Among the other research to counter climate change are experiments to greatly increase carbon dioxide absorbing plankton in the ocean, primarily by dissolving large amounts of iron in the sea, which is a plankton nutrient. The U.S. **Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining, in a move intended to increase mining of coal, issued a regulation (subject to 90 day review) that approves, and allows to expand, the previously legally questionable removing of mountain tops to mine coal,** long used in the Appalachian Mountains, The main mining limitations in the regulation are vague, and already covered in existing law, requiring mining operations to minimize debris and cause the least environmental damage.

On August 17, **temperatures hit an all time record high in Japan** (105.6 degrees F. in the western city of Tajimi), as the death toll from the ongoing heat wave in the country reached 13, with almost 900 people hospitalized. **Extreme weather in the United States this summer** has killed dozens of people. Rescuers were looking for people swept away by flash floods from the remnants of tropical storm Erin, which dropped as much as 11 inches of rain in some locations along the Gulf Coast, August 17. The heat wave in the South and Midwest was blamed for at least 44 deaths, with more expected to be confirmed, as of August 22. At the **Browns Ferry nuclear plant, overheated water in the Tennessee River forced the shutdown of one reactor and slow down, with reduced power production, of two others.** So far, this is one of the few such cases, but there is concern that the reductions from overheated water may increase. David Lockbaum, a former Browns Ferry engineer, now with the Union of Concerned Scientists, stated, "This is an unforeseen impact of global warming. These plants do not do very well in extremely hot weather." In late August, several places in **the Midwest, including Ohio, suffered the worst flooding in almost a century.** The **Southeast has been suffering its most severe drought in over a century,** seriously reducing crop yields and forcing premature cattle sales in Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee. The **financial impact on many farmers has been severe.** The heat and drought has increased fires, while low waters have reduced navigation on some rivers, while also limiting some hydroelectric power production. **For gardeners,** climate change has some benefits, as subtropical plants are becoming viable further into what has been the temperate zone, and also moving to formerly colder areas on their own. But **milder winter and longer growing seasons are increasing and spreading insects that attack crops and carry diseases.** Some types of beetles have been doing immense damage to trees, including to pine forests (as reported earlier in these pages). In addition, the **emerald ash borer,** an immigrant to North America from Asia, is destroying the white ash trees used for making baseball bats and may strike out, or seriously shift, that industry. The beetles are blamed for **killing 25,000 white ash trees in Maryland, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Ohio in the last five years.** **Unwanted vegetation - weeds - are also growing faster and spreading, and some intrusive species do especially well with higher carbon dioxide levels.** For example, kudzu, the fast growing vine that has choked out whole forests in the south is growing faster, and spreading north. Poison ivy is not only growing faster, but is more potent, while some of the worst allergy causing plants, such as ragweed, are producing more pollen.

Some aspects of climate change are taking place considerably faster than previously believed. *Geophysical Research Letters* published a finding, in late April, that **Arctic sea ice is melting much faster than previously estimate, as a result of human induced global warming.** Melting has increased to the point where it is possible that there will be no floating ice in the summer in the Arctic by sometime between 2050 and the early years of the next century. Measures made regularly every September indicate that the rate of loss of sea ice per decade has increased from 2.5% in 1953 to 7.8% today. The **melting is also raising oceans and reducing land area.** **East Anglia, in Brittan has been losing land the sea from erosion for a century, but the rate of land loss has increased tremendously** in the last few years. One farmer's formerly 23 acre field, is now only 3 acres - too small to plant. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report indicates **that unless current trends are reversed, by 2080, 60 million people may be flooded out of their homes and jobs.** A similar problem is occurring as **deserts spread into fertile lands.** A United Nations University report, published June 27, warned that the **extensive desertification in parts of Africa and Asia, if not checked quickly, could create "an environmental crisis of global proportions,"** triggering massive migrations and potential social, economic and political instability.

China, whose rapidly expanding coal powered, and increasingly polluting, economy surpassed the United States as the worlds greatest producer of greenhouse gasses this summer, released its **first national strategy on climate change,** in June. The plan **rejects the imposition of mandatory caps on greenhouse emissions.** China is already suffering from a variety of types of pollution - not only global warming increasing emissions - (though it has tried to hide reports of human and environmental losses from ecological degradation, including suppressing reports of statistical models that indicate that **perhaps as many as 750,000 people die prematurely each year in China as a result of air and water pollution**), and has begun to take steps to improve the situation, including a **plan to reduce air and water pollution by 10% by 2010.** U.S. **Federal District Court Judge Sandra B. Armstrong,** in Oakland, CA, ruled, August 21, that the **United States government "unlawfully withheld action,"** by close to two years, in **not publishing a study, required by the Global Climate Change Research Act of 1990, on the impact of global warming, and ordered the government to publish a summary report by March.**

Beyond global warming, **negative effects of environmental change from pollution and overuse of resources continue.** A survey by the Audubon Society of **20 common bird species in the United States** shows that **in the last 40 years these species have declined by an average of 68%.** Bobwhites, for example, have declined from 31 million, 40 years ago, to 5.5 million today, while field sparrows are down from 18 million to 5.8 million. A study by Ransom A. Myers of Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, indicates **that over fishing of sharks is likely having the secondary effect of destroying bay scallop fisheries in some parts of the North American eastern seaboard,** as several species that feed on scallops, previously kept in check by sharks, have greatly expanded. **African Penguin are also in decline, down from 1.5 million in southern Africa a century ago, to about 30,000 in 2001, the numbers have plummeted by almost 60% to around 18,000,** the biggest recent cause being a migration of their main food, sardines, further north, whom they cannot follow. Meanwhile, the **Zika virus,** carried by Mosquitoes, which causes rash, joint pain, pink eye and fever in humans - and has no specific cure or preventive vaccine - has been **spreading from Uganda and South East Asia, where outbreaks are rare, into Micronesia,** where there were 42 confirmed, and 65 probable identified cases, as of the beginning of July.

On July 1, the International Crisis Group (ICG) (*CrisisWatch* N°47, 1 July 2007": <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4926>) found that **nine actual or potential conflict situations around the world deteriorated in June.** "Months of **escalating violence in the Palestinian Territories** culminated in the **14 June split of Hamas-ruled Gaza from Fatah-controlled West Bank.** In **Lebanon** MP Walid Eido became the **seventh anti-Syrian figure to be assassinated since 2005,** while six UN peacekeepers were killed in the south, and **fierce battles continued between the army and the Fatah al-Islam group.** **Popular discontent with Pakistan's President Musharraf increased further with demonstrations** in support of suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry attracting tens of thousands across the country. **Violence escalated in Somalia** with widespread attacks on Transitional Federal Government officials, troops and civilians. In Niger insecurity mounted in the northern region of Agadez with a surge of attacks by the recently formed Tuareg Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice. And the **United Kingdom raised its terror alert to maximum after two unexploded car bombs were found in central London and a burning car was crashed into Glasgow airport.**

The situation also deteriorated in Afghanistan, the Basque Country (Spain) and the Comoros Islands. Three situations showed improvement in June. After a nine-month deadlock, **Burundi's September 2006 peace deal was reactivated**. North Korea invited IAEA inspectors to visit Yongbyon nuclear reactor and agreed on a plan for verifying its shutdown. And in Yemen a ceasefire deal was agreed between the government and Al-Houthi rebels after months of violence in Saada province." *CrisisWatch* N°48, August 1, 2007 found that six actual or potential conflict situations around the world deteriorated in July: «In **Pakistan, the seizure of Islamabad's Red Mosque from militants by security forces resulted in over 70 deaths and sparked waves of retaliatory violence** across border regions killing a further 180. The **ceasefire between the Philippine government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front weakened as clashes escalated**. Police in **Sierra Leone reported an upward trend in violence related to political campaigns** for 11 August presidential and parliamentary elections. The situation in **Ethiopia's Ogaden region deteriorated with clashes between ONLF rebels and the military, and a worsening humanitarian situation**. Peace talks in **Burundi between Palipehutu-FNL and the government suffered a major setback** as the FNL delegation fled Bujumbura. And in **Zimbabwe, President Mugabe announced legislative plans to tighten his grip on political power, while Zimbabweans suffered acute food and gasoline shortages and SADC-backed mediation talks faltered**. The situation improved in Northern Ireland in July. The British army ended its 38-year operation on 31 July, leaving responsibility for security to the NI police. For August 2007, *CrisisWatch* identifies the **Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan as Conflict Risk Alerts**, or situations at particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict in the coming month». Identified as essentially unchanged were: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Basque Country (Spain), Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chechnya (Russia), Colombia, Comoros Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Georgia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India (non-Kashmir), Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Occupied Territories, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Macedonia, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Morocco, Myanmar/Burma, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Caucasus (non-Chechnya), North Korea, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, Somaliland (Somalia), Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Western Sahara, Yemen."

Iraq, over the past 4 months has experienced some political deterioration, and virtually no political gains toward stabilization, while violence and Iraqi casualties have continued to rise (with a record more than 250 people killed in a single multiple truck bombing, in August, while the number of internally displaced persons has been rising faster, since U.S. troop increases began in February), along with U.S. military casualties rising through June, which declined in July. While by July, the U.S. surge – increased military presence in Baghdad - finally did show some decrease in violence in some areas of the capital, the small gains appear to be merely a shift of some violent inter-group activity to other locations. Indeed, **violence has spread strongly to areas that were relatively peaceful**, particularly to the North, where Suni-Kurdish strife has arisen, and Zoroastrians have been targeted en masse, for the first time. Thus the “surge” appears to be essentially ineffective, while the political actions necessary for seriously reducing violence and moving toward harmony are increasingly less likely as political splintering increases. However, on August 16, Iraq's president and prime minister announced the formation of a new parliamentary alliance of moderates, which potentially could develop into a vehicle for political advancement, but only with great difficulty in the current, deteriorating situation. The portions of the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq, made public August 24, essentially agree with the above assessments, stating, on the political side, that it seems very unlikely that Iraqi politicians can bridge their growing differences to achieve any meaningful unity, by next spring. The report did project that violence would increase if U.S. troops left. That has not been the case in, mostly Suni Anwar, Province, where U.S. troops pulled out nine months ago, following an agreement that the local fighters would attack, and remove, al-Quaeda, which they have done. Many commentators believe that the main opening for al-Quaeda is the U.S. presence, and that in most instances Iraqis would turn against foreign fighters, if the U.S. left. The New York Times reported, August 18, that the **White House is planning to begin making small, gradual troop reductions in Iraq, beginning in 2008**.

According to Richard May of the Center for Defense Information (CDI), “The Mission-Organization Disconnect,” on April 18, (http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=3927&from_page=../index.cfm), **U.S. and allied forces are engaged in a new type of warfare in Iraq, a style that the U.S. armed forces had not seen nor been trained for until recently**. “The organizational structure of the military is still ill-prepared for dealing with this type of evolving conflict and thus, a gap has grown between the organization of the military and its current primary missions, creating a cleavage between mission and structure”. In addition, the current **rapid redeployment to Iraq of army, marine and national guard forces back to Iraq has not allowed sufficient time for training, and most of the equipment that U.S. forces will use in Iraq has not been available in the U.S., making what training there is inadequate**. Richard May, “Opportunity Missed,” *Armed Forces Journal*, on June 1, wrote that **poverty, unemployment, and dissolution of civil society and infrastructure are the main factors that have led to the chaos in Iraq. Yet, since the invasion, the United States has spent much on U.S. contractors, but little to get the Iraqi economy standing on its own two feet**. For more go to: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=3972&from_page=../index.cfm. Indeed, inspectors, reported in late April, that **even the reconstruction projects that the U.S. had completed are falling apart from lack of maintenance, electrical and plumbing failures, and looting**. On May 1, Michael Bell, former chairman of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, stated that, “Reconstruction is difficult enough in a pacific environment. In this environment, it is almost impossible, if not impossible”. In retrospect, he said that the focus on high cost, high profile projects, “was too much too soon.” Moreover, **many programs paid for directly by the U.S. went badly because American officials kept control of them. He said, “they go in and tell their guys how to do things. It's a microcosm of what the Bush administration has tried to do in intervention. But you can't impose mind-sets.”** Bell also criticized reconstruction plans for making private, rather than public, ownership “an overriding objective,” which has been undermined by **widespread instability**, indeed, the privatization of numerous businesses left them shut down, that could have put many thousands of Iraqis to work if left public and open, and thereby greatly fueled disorder. The **Bush administration insistence that the still not passed Iraqi oil law focus on privatizing petroleum facilities** is also a serious problem, for if the Iraqi government does approve it, the result may be primarily huge profits for American oil companies (and a few Iraqis) at the expense of the Iraqi people, over all., especially as the proposed law, drafted in the U.S., allows for joint ownership with foreign firms. For these reasons, the Iraqi oil workers unions strongly oppose the current proposal.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) found ("Where Is Iraq Heading? Lessons from Basra," June 25 2007: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4914&l=1>) that **"the British experience in Basra, far from being a model to be replicated in the rest of Iraq, is an example of what to avoid". "Coalition forces there already implemented a security plan in many ways similar to the current "surge" in the capital and its environs. As in Baghdad, one of the putative goals was to pave the way for a takeover by Iraqi forces. Today, however, Basra is controlled by militias which are even more powerful than before," as the city has spiraled increasingly into chaos.** Crisis Group Senior Analyst Peter Harling stated, "With renewed violence and instability, Basra illustrates the pitfalls of a transitional process that, instead of building legitimate institutions, has led to collapse of the state apparatus. Fierce intra-Shiite fighting also disproves the notion of an Iraq neatly partitioned between three homogenous communities". "Basra's political arena is in the hands of actors engaged in bloody competition for resources, undermining what is left of government institutions and coercively enforcing their rule. The local population has no choice but to seek protection from one of the dominant camps. Periods of stability do not reflect greater governing authority so much as they do a momentary -- and fragile -- balance of interests or of terror between rival militias. Inevitably, cycles of brutal retaliatory violence re-emerge. As the U.S. prosecutes its security plan in Baghdad and other parts of the country, the lessons from Basra are clear. First, the answer to Iraq's horrific violence cannot be a military surge that aims to bolster the existing political structure and treats the dominant political parties as partners. Secondly, violence is not solely the result of al-Qaeda-type terrorism or sectarian hostility, however costly both evidently are. Thirdly, violence has become a routine means of social interaction utilized by political actors doubling as militiamen who seek to increase their share of power and resources. **The Basra experience suggests the most likely outcome in Iraq is its untidy break-up into myriad fiefdoms, superficially held together by the presence of coalition forces. If this is to be avoided, the priority should be to confront the power structure whose establishment was supported in the wake of the 2003 invasion, as well as the parties that now dominate it, by insisting on genuine political compromises and a more inclusive system of governance".** "It is high time that Washington and London acknowledge that their so-called Iraqi partners, far from building a new state, are tirelessly working to tear it down", comments Robert Malley, Crisis Group's Middle East Program Director.

Winslow Wheeler, director of the Center for Defense Information's Straus Military Reform Project, "Grading on a Curve for the Wrong Test" (available at: http://app.brnto.com/public/?q=message_link&fn=Key&id=bchdkbacarpnredvfxulcsdjntbobpi&link=bwtakfntsstybudzvfynvcvivhxubae), in assessing the White House's "Initial Benchmark Assessment Report" on Iraq, states, that while it's not a pretty picture, the real issue is the "Benchmarks" themselves. "While the Iraqis are assessed in the White House's report to have achieved "satisfactory progress" on only eight of 18 "benchmarks" (six are rated "unsatisfactory"; two are given mixed ratings, and two are rated unable to be rated), it is painfully clear from reading the report that the "satisfactory" assessments are graded on a sharp curve. On political issues, any change - even a decision to delay a decision - is deemed "satisfactory. On military questions, characteristics that would mean a military unit is unfit to fight in the American Army (such as the three brigades the Iraqis barely managed to cobble together to deploy to Baghdad) are deemed "satisfactory" in this report. However, we are missing a far more fundamental and important point if all we take from this White House report is its transparent effort to make the situation in Iraq appear slightly less of a mess than others might perceive. What comes through even more clearly is the **imposition of alien benchmarks on the Iraqi society and its faltering government.** These benchmarks are not an effort to assist Iraq recover from the disaster of the American invasion and occupation, they are an effort to impose Western, if not American, values and methods on a society that has been resisting them, mostly violently, for the last four years. Perhaps even more to the point, **the benchmarks have every appearance of an effort to make American politicians, not Iraqi citizens, feel better about themselves."**

ICG reported, April 19 ("Iraq and the Kurds: Resolving the Kirkuk Crisis," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4782&l=1>) that, **"a new approach is urgently needed to settle the status of Kirkuk, where security is deteriorating and an explosion of ethnic tensions** could destroy any gains anticipated from the U.S. surge in Baghdad." ICG cites two factors for the growing tensions: Kurdistan Regional Government insistence on a status referendum by year's end, despite strong Arab and Turkoman community opposition; and exploitation by Jihadi fighters, who have found fertile ground for chaos by exacerbating communal tensions. While the Bush administration is focusing on security in Baghdad, it is paying little attention to the Kirkuk crisis. "Kurds consider Kirkuk a lost heirloom they are about to recover by following steps laid out in the Iraqi constitution. Arabs and Turkomans consider the process a rigged prelude to possible break-up of Iraq. Turkey fears both worsening of its own Kurdish problem if Iraqi Kurds gain Kirkuk and more chaos on its borders if Iraq breaks up. With all sides dug in, debate should move off outcomes to focus on a fair and acceptable process. The U.S. should recognize the risks of explosion and press Kurds, Baghdad and Turkey alike to adjust policies. A referendum conducted against the wishes of the other communities in 2007 could cause the civil war to spread to the Kurdish region, until now Iraq's only quiet area. A referendum postponed without a face-saving alternative could lead the Kurds to withdraw from the Maliki cabinet, producing political crisis. Washington, with UN help, should encourage the Kurds to forge an alternative Kirkuk strategy, which will need to incorporate progress on Iraq's hydrocarbons law (key elements of which are still to be negotiated) so as to cement the Kurdish region within Iraq; and address Turkey's concerns about the PKK, the Turkish-Kurd guerrillas. Fortunately all sides in Kirkuk seem to agree on need for dialogue. The Kurds recognise that the strategy they have followed might gain Kirkuk but will not enable them to hold it peacefully. Some appear ready for a new approach. The international community should encourage the Kurds gently but firmly to pull back from the referendum and implement confidence-building measures such as reallocating administrative posts to better reflect Kirkuk's ethnic balance. All sides should reduce rhetoric".

Center for Defense Information Scoville Fellow Rich May, "The Kurdish Tug of War" (Available at: http://app.brnto.com/public/?q=message_link&fn=Key&id=b) writes, that **as the Turkish military moves soldiers to the Iraqi border, the region moves precipitously closer to another challenge in its path to stability. The impact of a Turkish military invasion of northern Iraq will reverberate throughout the Middle East.** Worst of all, writes it will force Kurdish soldiers to choose between defending their 'homeland,' and defending Baghdad, with Baghdad likely losing.

The Bush administration, finally, has seen the necessity of including Iraq's neighbors in discussion of finding solutions for the Iraq situation in a regional setting. **Some discussions have taken place with Syria and Iran** (both in Baghdad and Egypt), **but so far have been rather limited. It is also difficult for the U.S. to negotiate effectively with Iran, while rhetorically attacking its leaders** – and

there are still **credible rumors that Bush may yet take military action against Iran, before his term ends** (and complaints that Fox news in the U.S. is propagandizing for such an attack – Go to: <http://foxattacks.com/iran>). One indication of the diplomatic difficulties that the Bush administration has created for the U.S. is that, on May 28, **Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah declared that the American occupation of Iraq was illegal, and that unless Arab governments settled their differences, powers foreign to the region, like the U.S., would continue to dictate the area's politics.** Meanwhile, Diplomats and other delegations from around the Middle East, came together in Amman, Jordan, July 26, in a follow up to a meeting in Egypt in May, to work on ways of assisting **more than two 2 million refugees who have fled Iraq to neighboring nations.** No concrete plans were decided upon. Meanwhile, in late August, **France, which has previously avoid direct involvement with Iraq, is offering itself as "an honest broker" to try and negotiate differences among Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurdish factions.**

The Iraq war has now spilled out into the region and beyond. Many militant fighters have, and continue, to return home from Iraq, working to carryout activities there. There were credible reports, by May, from Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Libya of Jihadist recruiting for local and international (outside of Iraq) violent activity, and there is indication that Jihadists have come to Iraq from many nations, including from Europe, to which it is expected that they will, and likely already are, returning. In April, **Algiers suffered its first bombing since the 1990s, killing 30 people, al Qaeda claimed responsibility** for the coordinated explosions.

A Congressional Research Service (CRS) update of the **financial costs to the U.S. government of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan**, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," published July 16, includes the following findings: **Assuming Congress' approval of President Bush's request of \$141.7 billion for war costs for fiscal year 2008 total appropriations related to the wars would reach \$758 billion, including \$567 billion for Iraq, \$157 billion for Afghanistan, \$29 billion for other security operations in the US and elsewhere, and \$5 billion which can be attributed to "unknown" due to the Defense Department's inability to track its own money.** Counting all war appropriations to date, including those for not just DOD but also the State Department and the Veterans Administration, costs per month have risen from about \$12 billion in FY 2006 to about \$14.4 billion in FY 2007. The 2007 costs totaled \$173 billion, \$135.2 billion is for Iraq, and \$36.9 billion is for Afghanistan. In addition to the additional costs of the "surge" of troops in Iraq, the growth in costs from 2006 to 2007 is marked by a dramatic increase in procurement spending to replace worn out equipment and to move acquisition costs for routine modernization (such as for V-22s and C-17s) from the regular annual budget to the separate budget for the war. Current White House plans, which assume a rapid termination of the surge in September, project a reduction of spending in 2008: down to a total of \$147.5 billion, of which \$116.3 billion would be for Iraq. Meanwhile, cost per deployed troop has increased from \$320,000 for each troop in 2003 to \$390,000 for each in 2006. However, CRS, CBO, and GAO each continue to find major discrepancies in the Defense Department's (DOD) reporting on annual expenditures, making it difficult to know the actual costs. GAO's Comptroller General reported that the continuing inability of DOD to account for its own spending "make it difficult to reliably know what the war is costing, to determine how appropriated funds are being spent, and to use historical data to predict future trends." There is concern that DOD may be "front loading" its budget requests for "reset" (repair and refurbishment of equipment and units) by requesting funds twice for both the Army and the Marine Corps for reset in 2007. While the Congressional Budget Office has estimated the future costs of the wars (ranging from \$393 billion to \$840 billion), the actual future costs are truly unknown, especially if one includes long term costs for the wars' veterans as paid out over decades by the VA. Beyond federal appropriations, there are also other costs, including to the economy, that have been measured by other studies. The CRS study is available by going to: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4018&from_page=../index.cfm.

Oxfam International released a report on conditions in Iraq, at the end of July, combining research from the United Nations, the Iraqi government and non-profit organizations, showing that **Poverty, hunger and public health continue to worsen in Iraq, requiring more humanitarian aid** from abroad and calling on the Iraqi government to immediately decentralize the distribution of food and medical supplies. The report describes a **deepening humanitarian crisis, describing as a slow-motion response from Iraq's government, the United States, the United Nations and the European Union, with as many as four million Iraqis in dire need of help getting food, many of them children; 70% of the country lacking access to adequate water supplies,** up from 50 percent in 2003, and 90% of the country's hospitals lacking basic medical and surgical supplies. A survey completed in May by the Iraqi Ministry of Planning, found that **43% of Iraqis live in "absolute poverty,"** on less than \$1 a day. **Unemployment and hunger are particularly acute among the estimated two million people displaced** from their homes by violence - those who "have no incomes and are running out of coping mechanisms."

Iran, in late March captured a British patrol boat with 15 Marines and sailors it claimed had come from Iraqi into Iranian waters, which the British denied. Iran threatened to try the marines and sailors, while Brittan cut commercial relations with Iran and moved to take the situation to the UN Security Council. Some commentators saw this as dangerous brinkmanship on Iran's part (go to: http://www.tompaine.com/articles/2007/03/29/unwise_brinkmanship_in_iran.php) and others see the incident as part of the rising war threat against Iran (go to: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17447.htm> and <http://ips-dc.org/comment/bennis/tp49opposingsupplemental.htm>). It seemed. However that Iran was acting to retaliate for U.S. capture of Iranian intelligence officials while in the Kurdish area of Iraq on an official Iraqi government invitation. The British Military personnel were eventually released. Meanwhile, there has been **no meaningful movement on Iran's Nuclear power program.** In April, the European Union approved a second phase of sanctions against Iran for continuing enriching Uranium – quite possibly to bomb grade – that included a ban on Iranian arms exports and the freezing of the assets of 28 additional organizations and individuals. In May, International Atomic Energy Agency concluded that Iran had made technical advances allowing it to increase the rate of its uranium enrichment, but by all reliable estimates, Iran is still at least five years away from being able to begin to able to build a nuclear bomb. Even if Iran did develop a bomb, there is doubt that it would be made available to a terrorist group. For an analysis of this issue see Straus Military Reform Project Adviser, Charles Pena, "Nuclear Fear Factor" on the Center for Defense Information web site: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4069&from_page=../index.cfm.

Brian Ross and Christopher Isham "The Secret War Against Iran," April 3, at: http://blogs.abcnews.com/theblotter/2007/04/abc_news_exclus.html and <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17480.htm>, states

that Jundullah, a **Pakistani tribal militant group responsible for a series of deadly guerrilla raids across the border, inside Iran, has been secretly encouraged and advised by American officials** since 2005, according to U.S. and Pakistani intelligence sources. Jundullah has taken responsibility for the deaths and kidnappings of more than a dozen Iranian soldiers and officials, including an attack in February that killed at least 11 members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard riding on a bus in the Iranian city of Zahedan. U.S. officials say the U.S. relationship with Jundullah is arranged so that the U.S. provides no funding to the group, which would require an official presidential order or "finding" as well as congressional oversight. Tribal sources told ABC News that money for Jundullah is funneled to its leader, Abd el Malik Regi, through Iranian exiles who have connections with European and Gulf states. Some former CIA officers say the arrangement is reminiscent of how the U.S. government used proxy armies, funded by other countries including Saudi Arabia, to destabilize the government of Nicaragua in the 1980s.

The struggle between the Taliban and NATO-Afghan government forces has continued to rage, while Afghani factions continue to conflict, sometimes violently. **The appearance in May of both deadly factional struggles, and a number of suicide bombings, in what has been the relatively peaceful part of the country are signs of deterioration.** One sign of progress of at least some post-Taliban recovery is the **18% drop in infant mortality (along with other indications of improving health care)** in Afghanistan, since 2001. Nick Grono, "How to Beat the Taliban," *The Australian* (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4762&l=1>), April 9, 2007, argues that **to succeed in Afghanistan, "Strategies must start with cutting off the staging posts and sanctuaries provided to the insurgent leadership in Pakistan.** Pakistan's tribal belt provides a safe haven for Taliban militants and a near endless source of jihadi recruits from fundamentalist madrassas. **Ultimately this conflict will only be won by addressing the legitimate grievances of the Afghan people,** not by negotiating with violent extremists. There **has to be a long-term effort to build effective, fair local institutions that provide real security to the population.** The international community must be prepared to provide the political cover and courage to the country's leadership to tackle corrupt and discredited powerbrokers rather than the present short-term strategy of simply drawing everyone, no matter how tainted, into the fold, creating a culture of impunity and corruption. This is foremost a struggle for hearts and minds. The insurgents understand this all too well. They are conducting an effective propaganda campaign, giving television and radio interviews and distributing pamphlets to make themselves appear far more powerful and pervasive than they really are... International forces must stay the distance - another decade at the very least - with increased emphasis on training and equipping Afghan security forces. While the international community can provide the security umbrella, it is ultimately local forces and institutions that will determine success against the insurgents. **Jobs are vital too, creating real occupations for local youths so they do not have to turn to the gun or poppies.** One widely praised initiative is a small vocational training project in Uruzgan, led by the Australians. It teaches locals skills such as bricklaying and carpentry, and then works with the Afghan Government to place them in jobs in an area where there are otherwise few lawful options." The New York Time reported April 6 (C.J. Chivers, "Dutch Soldiers Stress Restraint in Afghanistan," pp. A1, A12) that **Dutch troops have had success in countering the Taliban in Uruzgan Province by improving living conditions, engaging in reconstruction, mentoring and diplomacy, using military force, and more often the threat of resorting to it, to protect local development. U.S. commanders worry that if the Taliban are not kept under pressure, they will spread their insurgency. The Dutch counter that consistent social and political support will move the people away from the Taliban, allowing the central and provincial government to expand their authority in the longer term.** The Dutch are supported by findings, in May, that the **high civilian casualties from aggressive NATO offense, relying heavily on air strikes against the Taliban, have been undermining the allied war effort.** (The Center for Defense Information has two analyses of the Afghan Civilian casualties situation at: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4065&from_page=..index.cfm). It has long been reported in these pages that **effective anti-insurgency and peacekeeping require a peacebuilding strategy of local economic, social and political development working collaboratively with local people for their empowerment.** For example, see Stephen Sachs, "Los Angeles and Somalia: Community Service Policing and Community Empowerment," Vol. VIII, No. 2-3, Winter-Spring 1994 (reprinted in *The COPRED Peace Chronicle*, Vol VI. 1994.), "A Kosovo Unit's Success Shows the Value of a Community Policing Approach to Peace Keeping," Volume XIV. No. 1, Fall, 1999, and "Somalia, Bosnia,... and Kosovo: Peace Keepers Need to Understand the Particulars of the Crises they are Intervening in, and Act Appropriately for It," Vol. XIV, No. 3, Spring 2000.

Pakistan is experiencing increasing violence on two fronts. First, Intelligence reports, in June, indicated that the while Pakistani forces in the tribal areas near the Afghani border are outgunned by the Taliban, al Qaeda and their allies, **the Taliban are spreading their influence and violence to other parts of Pakistan, and the situation is likely to become serious if not countered.** Second, **the military government of President Pervez Musharraf is experiencing increasing opposition, particularly since its removal of the Chief Justice of the Pakistani Supreme Court, which has brought widespread protest, and which was overturned by the Supreme Court, July 20.** On July 31, ICG reported, in "Elections, Democracy and Stability in Pakistan," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4969&l=1>, that, **"Military rule in Pakistan is producing a failing state that will endanger its own and its region's security unless democracy and rule of law are restored through free and fair elections this year"**. "The end of the military regime is now a matter of time", says Samina Ahmed, Crisis Group's South Asia Project Director. "The manner in which elections are held, however, will determine if there is a peaceful, orderly democratic transition or a violent transition, with the attendant costs for a fragile state". "President Musharraf and the military have maintained power by suppressing democratic forces and rigging national and local elections. Empowerment of Islamist parties to counter moderate opposition has been significant and is now essential to the military government. But the growing pro-democracy movement is leaving Musharraf with few choices, and the judiciary can no longer be counted on to endorse unconstitutional acts. Another rigged or stolen election could possibly lead to a violent confrontation between the military and protestors. **The U.S. should understand its interests are best served by a democratically-governed Pakistan and not by military rule that excludes moderate parties and fans extremism. Its policy of relying solely on the military is largely responsible for growing anti-U.S. sentiment among pro-democracy Pakistanis, who view the support for an authoritarian regime as hypocritical and unjustifiable. Backing a deeply unpopular military regime is no way to fight terrorism and neutralize religious extremism.** The international community should support its natural civilian allies, including Pakistan's most popular national parties, Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party and Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League. Influential international actors should use their considerable influence to persuade the generals to give up power, offering political and material incentives if they do and sanctions if they choke democratic change. The Pakistani government must hold free and fair parliamentary elections, before presidential elections, so that the new president is selected by a legitimate electoral college, ensure independence of the election commission, release political prisoners and

allowing return of political leaders in exile". (See also ICG, "Pakistan Crisis Alert: Emergency Rule or Return to Democracy?" June 6, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4884&l=1>). In mid August, the **U.S. was quietly pressuring President Musharraf to broaden his government, appointing rival Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister**. Musharraf and Bhutto met privately on July 27. In early August Musharraf had considered declaring a state of emergency, but did not then do so in the face of domestic and international opposition. **Musharraf is campaigning for election to another five year term as President, but there is considerable expert opinion that the Supreme Court is likely to block his candidacy, on a number of grounds**, even if he were to resign from the military, which he says he does not intend to do. The **Pakistan Supreme Court, overturned the exile of former Prime Minister Sharif, ousted by Musharraf's Coup**, in 1999, on August 23, allowing Sharif and his wife to return to India. The former prime minister intends to run against Musharraf.

One internally destabilizing, and internationally dangerous, aspect of Pakistani President Musharraf's policy has been its allowing the continuing operation of a network of extremist religious schools, "madrasas", supporting violent jihadi groups. ICG, "Pakistan: Karachi's Madrasas and Violent Extremism," March 29, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4742&l=1>, holds that the schools pose "a significant threat to domestic, regional and international security". "Deplorable public schools, the sectarian tilt of state institutions, the marginalisation of moderate voices and military government's reliance on religious parties for political survival have led to the growth of madrasas at an explosive rate over the past two decades. They are either unregistered or registered under laws that have no effective implementation". "Karachi's madrasas have trained and dispatched jihadi fighters to Afghanistan and Indian-administered Kashmir, contributing to a climate of lawlessness and bitter sectarianism. In 2006, the city was rocked by high-profile acts of political violence: in three separate attacks, suicide bombers killed a U.S. diplomat, assassinated the head of the most prominent Shia political group and wiped out the entire leadership of a Sunni militant group locked in a struggle for control over mosques with its Sunni rivals. The international community needs to press President Musharraf to fulfil his commitments, in particular to enforce genuine controls on the madrasas and allow free and fair national elections in 2007. It should also shift the focus of its donor aid from helping the government's ineffectual efforts to reform the religious schools to improving the very weak public school sector. Robert Templer, Crisis Group's Asia Program Director states, "So long as the military continues to rely on the mullahs to retain power, madrasas and the violent extremism they encourage will become ever more powerful in Pakistani society, undermining the security of the state and its citizens. Real reform will only be possible through the strengthening of the country's moderate parties and forces, with free and fair national elections in 2007 an essential first step." Meanwhile, concerning the growing violence in Northern Pakistan, ICG reported, April 2, "Pakistan: Discord in the Northern Areas," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4748&l=1>, that, "**unless Pakistan takes steps to provide meaningful autonomy and basic political rights to the Northern Areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, sectarian radicalism will increase**".

The newly renamed **organization of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)** -- formerly the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) -- **killed approximately 30 people and wounded more than 220 in two suicide attacks in Algiers** on April 11. The attack sparked fears of resurgence in terrorist violence reminiscent of the 1992 insurgency in Algeria, which started after the government canceled elections that the Islamic Salvation Front was expected to win. Meanwhile, the organization's re-branding as an al-Qaida affiliate is an attempt to transform it from a primarily domestic terrorist group to one with a stronger militant presence in both Africa and Europe. AQIM had made earlier deadly attacks in February. For more information go to: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=3938&from_page=../index.cfm.

The International Crisis Group reported, April 10, "**Restarting Israeli-Syrian Negotiations,**" <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4758&l=1>, that, "**Israel should seize the opportunity to renew peace negotiations with Syria while there is a real chance of success, or risk further destabilizing the Middle East**". "Within weeks of the Lebanon war, Damascus signalled it would resume talks without any precondition and indicated that its regional posture and relationships would change following a peace deal. Israel, however, has conditioned any dialogue on a broad change in Syria's policy: cutting ties to Hamas, halting assistance to Hizbollah and fundamentally altering its relationship with Iran. What Israel demands could potentially be achieved, but only as part of a final deal, not as a precondition for it. "Rejecting Syria's overtures is a mistake which is fast on its way to becoming a missed opportunity, warns Peter Harling, Crisis Group's Senior Analyst in Damascus. "The mood in Damascus is turning decidedly skeptical, and the regime is reverting to its more cautious habits. Mirroring Israeli doubts on Syria's seriousness, officials here are deeply disillusioned with Israel, questioning its ability and readiness to negotiate in earnest." "If there is scant justification for Israel to put off peace talks, there is even less for the U.S. to oppose them. Quartet members should press for renewed Syrian-Israeli negotiations. While the U.S. and Israel may prefer to give precedence to the Palestinian over the Syrian track, lack of movement on the latter will inevitably hamper the former." Crisis Group's Middle East Program Director, Robert Malley, states, "Israel-Syria peace negotiations would profoundly alter regional atmospherics. A peace deal would fundamentally transform them. This opportunity may not last forever. It should not be wasted." **Israel**, on July 7, **was concerned that Syria's removing military checkpoints on the road to Kuneitra on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights could be a preparation for war**, the Arab newspaper Al-Hiyat al-Jedidia reported (http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=21024).

Lebanon remains in danger of exploding into a civil war, as a result of the U.S. causing Iraq to collapse, giving Iran and its international affiliates in Lebanon new status, while Syria and its Lebanese allies remain unhappy with the pro western government. Beginning in May, **heavy fighting broke out in the Nahr al Bared Palestinian Refugee Camp when a police raid set off a conflict between the Lebanese Army and the militant Palestinian group, Fatah el Islam, initially pinning down up to 40,000 Palestinian civilians without water or electricity, and meager food supplies.** The conflict has continued at a lower level. By June 18, after a month of battling, a reported 150 lives were lost. In late August, the Palestinian **Clerics Association mediated a truce for the 100 or so remaining family members of armed militants in the camp (the rest fled earlier) to leave.** Meanwhile, in Mid June, the **UN Security Council approved a request from Lebanon's prime minister to help investigate the similar car bomb murders of former Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri**, in 2005, and of legislator Walid Eido, in June. This followed the May 30 **Security Council decision establishing a special court to prosecute Hariri's killing.**

The **June 14 take over of Gaza by Hamas (strengthened by guns smuggled in from Egypt), and the formation of an emergency Fatah government in the West Bank by President Mahmoud Abbas**, have brought a major shift in the Palestinian-

Israeli situation, but only modest adjustments in Israeli policy. The Olmert government continues to build the security fence along the West Bank. Israeli defense forces remain engaged in raids and assassinations in Palestinian lands aimed at militants, that regularly kill and injure innocent Palestinians. Despite some removal of checkpoints and minor adjustments, the occupation in the West Bank remains repressive, and perhaps because of frustration by some security personnel, appears to be becoming more brutal. The Palestinians experienced a violent Hamas takeover in Gaza, with at least 90 people killed in the first five days. A partial power vacuum, accelerated by the takeover, and spin off from the clashes in Palestinian Refugee camps in Lebanon, and other aspects of the shift in power in the Middle East with the destruction of Iraq, has given rise to numerous Jihadist groups in Gaza believing violence to be a practical tactic. In response, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas declared a state of emergency and disbanded the Hamas-led unity government in the West Bank. Fearful that Hamas might attack in the West Bank, Fatah went on the offensive there, rounding up three dozen Hamas fighters, while angry militants threw office furniture out a third-story window of the Palestinian parliament building in Ramallah, then set fire to the office of three Hamas lawmakers. During the several days of deadly violence in Gaza, one Hamas activist was shot and killed in Nablus, on the West Bank, the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, a violent Fatah faction, claiming responsibility. The Olmert government response was to be tough on Hamas in Gaza, while taking some steps to support Abbas and Fatah in the West Bank (a strategy that most knowledgeable independent observers believe will not work – as is exemplified below), including releasing 256 Palestinian prisoners and turning over some of the Palestinian taxes Israel has collected, but for some time impounded. (The United States supported Olmert's policy, unfreezing millions of dollars in aid to the Palestians, via the Abbas govern=ment). Israel closed the checkpoints into Gaza, completely for some time, worsening an already difficult humanitarian situation. Similarly, for several weeks, the closing of the Rafah border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip left a group of Palestinians stranded at the border, until Israel allowed most of them to return to homes in Gaza by a round about route. The long term, often sporadic, exchange of fire across the Gaza-Israel border has continued.

ICG recommended, August 2 ("After Gaza," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2745&l=1>), "Fatah and Hamas must cease hostile action against each other, begin to reverse steps that are entrenching separation between Gaza and the West Bank, and negotiate a new power sharing arrangement". "Some in the international community have viewed the result positively, seeing the new government as one with which Israel can make peace and hoping stagnation in Gaza will discredit Hamas to the point of surrender. They are mistaken. Security and a credible peace process depend on minimal intra-Palestinian consensus. The events in Gaza were predictable. The Mecca Agreement's collapse reflected Fatah's inability to come to terms with the loss of its political hegemony and Hamas's inability to come to terms with the limits of its own power. But it would be disingenuous to minimize the role of outside actors who refused to deal with the unity government". Nicolas Pelham, Crisis Group Senior Analyst, finds that, "Gaza's separation will become ever more entrenched without a reasonable plan to end it. And the more successful the strategy of choking off Gaza and rewarding the West Bank, the greater will be Hamas's motivation to sabotage it." "Despite big obstacles, a new power-sharing arrangement is needed, including: a clearer political platform, explicitly endorsing a two-state settlement; a commitment to a reciprocal and comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire; reform of the security services and the PLO, expanding the latter to include Hamas and Islamic Jihad; formation of a new unified government approved by the parliament; and consideration of early presidential and legislative elections. To facilitate this, Arab states and other third parties should offer to mediate and to monitor an agreement. If one is reached, the Quartet (U.S., EU, Russia, UN) should engage the new government politically and economically." "A diplomatic agreement reached by one faction to outmanoeuvre its rivals is an illusion. No Palestinian state can be built without Gaza," says Mouin Rabbani, Crisis Group Senior Analyst. "Palestinians cannot end the occupation if they are at war with themselves".

A parallel view is expressed by Akram Atallah, "Early elections is a national necessity," *Ma'an News*, 30 July 2007 www.maannews.net, also distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews): www.commongroundnews.org) states that a July 2-12 poll by the Norwegian FAFO organization shows that splits between Palestinian factions have never been as deep or as sharp as they are now, and asserts that new elections are necessary to begin to overcome the rifts and begin to create legitimate Palestinian government. The poll shows that only 31% believe that Fayyad's government is legitimate, while 28% believe that Haniyeh's government is the legitimate government, and 35% believe that both governments are illegal. 32% percent of Palestinians do not trust the PLC, 38% do not trust the security bodies, 53% do not trust the Executive Force either, while 42% do not trust the political factions. In addition, the poll indicates that 73% percent of Palestinians are concerned that the country will be divided into two parts, with one in the West Bank and the other in the Gaza Strip, while 14% percent of Palestinians believe in the necessity of the separation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Given its political meaning, this percentage is very high. It also represents an important part of Palestinian society, which was shocked, not only by the violent method of the attainment of power, but also by the daily scenes of internal fighting, which lasted for over a year and a half in the Gaza Strip. The study shows that 49% of Palestinians were not satisfied with their lives, and only 3% said they were "very satisfied" by their lives. 23% of Palestinians believe that solving the current crisis could be achieved through dissolving the entire Palestinian Authority (PA). Concerning the economic situation in Palestine, the study shows 38% percent of Palestinian families will not be able to secure the basic needs for the coming three months, if the economic conditions remain as they are, with the percentage a little higher in the strip. 86% of Gazans did not pay their electricity bill for the month before the study was made and 87% percent did not pay their water bill, indicating a possible pending collapse of the two vital sectors due to accumulated debts, and the subsequent harm which will occur to the establishments which supply this service. Second is that the Palestinian individual may become unable to cover the necessary expenses of food and clothes.

A July 2-12 poll by FAFO finds Palestinians seeing national reconciliation as more important than peace talks with Israel. Eighty-five percent of those polled would like to see negotiations between Fatah and Hamas. Although a higher proportion of Hamas voters (91%) are in favour of such talks, reconciliation between the two parties also attracts strong support among Fatah followers (73%). 58% say they want peace negotiations with Israel, which is a decline by 20 percentage points from December 2006. People in Gaza and those who vote for Hamas are less likely to support talks with Israel than others. Meanwhile, Ghassan Bannoura (IMEMC), "Abbas and Hamas respond positively to unity call by Arab leadership in Israel," July 28 (available at: <http://www.imemc.org/article/49652>) reported that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and leaders of the Hamas movement responded positively to an initiative by the leadership of the Palestinians living in Israel to form a unified body that would strive to overcome internal fighting. For more go to: http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=21394.

Meanwhile, the growing instability across the region, following the U.S. destabilization of Iraq, makes more important a settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A **public opinion poll of Israelis** conducted by "New Wave Research" finds: **49.2% are for simultaneous negotiations with Mahmoud Abbas and Syria. 66.0% for negotiations with Mahmoud Abbas. 57.4% for contacts with Hamas. 50.1% for almost complete withdrawal to the Green Line. 52.0% for a demilitarized Palestinian state. 62.7% do not believe Olmert can do it.** For more information contact Gush Shalom, P.O. Box 3322, Tel-Aviv 61033, Israel, tel. 972-3-5221732, info@gush-shalom.org, www.gush-shalom.org. The **nations of the Arab league have continued to press Israel to accept their peace proposal, initiated by Saudi Arabia.** In late July, a meeting did take place between the prime ministers of Israel, and Egypt and Jordan – for the first time acting as envoys of the Arab league. At that time, aside from that important precedent, **little was accomplished** (see commentary below). **Many observers believe that the event opened a door that could lead toward genuine peace movement, but only if Israel follows up reasonably soon with negotiable counter proposals** – which its current government does not seem ready to undertake, while the U.S. does not seem to be willing to apply the pressure which might bring Olmert to undertake meaningful negotiations.

One of the difficulties that will have to be overcome in moving to peace is the continued expansion of Israeli settlements. A report by Peace Now, using Israeli government figures, published in *Occupation Magazine* (http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=21025) finds that **Israeli West Bank settlements build on just 9% of state-allocated land, and use only 12% of their territory, although 90% of the settlements exceed their territory, and about one-third of the territory they do use lies outside their jurisdiction, on Palestinian legally owned land.** Amnesty International published a 45-page report, on June 4, *Enduring Occupation: Palestinian under Siege in the West Bank*, documenting the devastating impact of four decades of Israeli military occupation, including the relentless expansion of unlawful settlements on occupied land that deprives the Palestinian population of crucial resources and a plethora of measures that confine Palestinians to fragmented enclaves and hinder their access to work, health and education facilities. A full copy of the report is available at: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde150332007>. A new restraint for settlement expansion has now arisen. Peace Now's warning, earlier this year, when West Bank settlers launched a campaign in the U.S. to sell homes in settlements, that investing in real estate across the Green Line was not only politically and morally wrong, but also financially risky, has resulted in Heftzibah Construction, one of Israel's largest contractors and a chief builder of West Bank settlements, falling to the brink of bankruptcy. A key aspect of the development is that Peace Now, with some landowners, appealed illegal building to the Israeli Supreme Court, which ordered the work stopped. The court also ordered the government to open a criminal investigation to determine how the illegal building permits were issued and explain why it would not demolish the illegally constructed homes. This the first instance of the Supreme Court holding companies and people accountable for illegal conduct concerning land and construction, that has become common practice in the West Bank.

The foreign ministers of Japan, Israel and Jordan met with Senior Palestinian Authority (PA) officials in Jericho on the West Bank, in mid August, to discuss developing a joint agricultural-industrial park, as Japan announced resuming aid to the PA.

North Korea shut down its bomb grade uranium producing nuclear reactor, inviting in International Atomic Energy Agency as witnesses, completing its part in the deal for the first step in Pyongyang's denuclearization, after a long delay in the U.S. getting bank funds cleared, which were part of the arrangement. As ICG pointed out April 30 ("After the North Korea Nuclear Breakthrough: Compliance or Confrontation?", <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4795&l=1>), the U.S. and the other countries must follow with a detailed development plan, and negotiations need to be completed for North Korea to rid itself of any atomic bombs that it may have. North and South Korea restarted rail service, across their border, on May 17, for the first time in 56 years.

In late July, President Bush announced plans for the U.S. to give additional U.S. assistance with civilian nuclear development to India, in part of an arrangement that includes increased trade. However, this and the earlier agreement along the same lines still require congressional action. India continues to experience violence in several states, including a May 29, clash in Jaipur, Rajasthan that became deadly when police opened fire on ethnic Gujjars, who are demanding special status under affirmative action laws. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan, who earlier announced that he will abdicate the throne, has called for elections to a parliament next year, for which a practice, mock election, was held in April. The calm months in Bangladesh since the military imposed a caretaker government, in the midst of political instability, was broken with widespread clashes between demonstrating students and police, August 22, bringing the government to impose a curfew in six of the nation's largest cities.

The Red Cross, in a rare finding, in late June, denounced the Myanmar military government for causing "immense suffering," including making thousands of detainees serve as porters for the military, exposing them to risks, and committing acts of violence against civilians along the Thai-Myanmar border, including the large scale destruction of food supplies. In May, the Myanmar ruling military junta extended the house arrest of pro democracy leader and 1991 Nobel Prize winner Daw Aung San Suu for another year, while in August the government broke up peaceful marches protesting fuel price increases.

While advances have been made, over the last few years, in settling conflicts in Indonesia, with the settlements of the Aceh conflict and the independence of Timor-Leste, several Indonesian conflicts remain. First, with more than 900 members, the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), South East Asia's largest jihad organization, continues to be a serious security threat. ICG reported, May 3 ("Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's Current Status," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4792&l=1>) that JI appears to be in a building and consolidation phase toward its long run goal of establishing an Islamic state. It seems unlikely that JI is currently interested in large, expensive operations, as previous large scale attacks, which inflicted many casualties upon Muslims weakened its support base. "Targeted assassinations of police, prosecutors, and others may be both more cost-effective and more in line with organizational objectives. Recently, Indonesian police have been effective in detaining JI members responsible for violence. ICG Asia Program Director Robert Templer, states that, "Now the Indonesian government needs to pay much more attention to prisons, including what goes on inside, visitors and the materials they bring, and pre- and post-release programs."

Second, The International Crisis Group stated, May 22, ("Indonesia: Power Struggles in Maluku," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4849&l=1>) that **to avoid conflict, Indonesia needs to be careful in how it undertakes proposed division of the South East Maluku, in order to properly deal with latent communal tensions, while making equitable distribution of development funds and even-handed prosecution of corruption.** "The original idea was that smaller units would bring better service delivery and more representative government, but too often the process is driven by local elites eager for power and wealth. In former conflict areas like Maluku, administrative disputes that arise as a result, whether over boundaries, civil service appointments or choice of district capital, can quickly become magnified". "The geography of Indonesia's more than 13,000 islands clearly makes decentralization essential," says Robert Templer, ICG Asia Program Director. "But in South East Maluku, as in other former conflict areas, the question is whether the process will build bridges or foster distrust. Everything depends on implementation." "South East Maluku erupted in conflict for three months in 1999 shortly after Christian-Muslim fighting broke out in Ambon. Most people point to local customary law that bridged the religious divide as the main reason why it was quickly brought under control, but tensions remain, and the proposed division will leave the new municipality predominantly Muslim and the rump predominantly Christian. Land and economic development are bigger issues, but both could take on a communal cast. Depending on how the borders are drawn, Tual could end up with most of the public facilities, leaving the rump district with nothing. Opponents of the split say this will bankrupt the latter. Proponents say it will be a stimulus to growth." **A similar situation exists in the third area, Indonesian Papua, where moves for decentralization need to take into account the complex of local interests in order to insure that new arrangements foster harmony, rather than fueling existing conflicts,** as detailed in ICG, "Indonesian Papua: A Local Perspective on the Conflict, July 19, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4945&l=1>.

Timor-Leste continues to suffer political turmoil, with no party winning a majority in the June 30 elections. Consistently with the Constitution, and accepted by the UN, **following the failure of the former ruling party, Fretilin, and a coalition led by Alexandre "Xanana" Gusmão's National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT) to form a combined administration, President José Ramos-Horta appointed Mr. Gusmão, a charismatic former president and resistance hero, prime minister, on August 6th.** However, the **appointment has been rejected by Fretilin, whose supporters have staged violent protests in the capital of Dili.** There is some danger that Fretilin's reaction will lead to prolonged political deadlock and instability. Fretilin considers the appointment of the new administration illegal and is threatening not to participate in the political process. Prior to the elections, on June 13, ICG expressed concern ("Timor-Leste's Parliamentary Elections," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4895&l=1>), that "Inflammatory rhetoric during the current parliamentary election campaign could reignite violent tensions in Timor-Leste." More important, the key issues underlying the 2006 violence remaining unresolved. If CNRT led a government coalition, "it would be more consultative and transparent than FRETILIN and thus better equipped to deal with the social-political rifts that revealed themselves in 2006. The expected coalition's openness to advice on institution-strengthening and awareness of the needs of vulnerable groups bodes well for Timor-Leste's future but its lack of technocratic skills and contradictory statements regarding appointments and policies emphasizes the potential pitfalls of such a newly-formed political grouping. There is real concern over the fiscal management competencies of a CNRT coalition given its proposals to distribute money quickly to alleviate poverty. Such a program could squander the Petroleum Fund and thus jeopardize the country's economic future. Also, there has been virtually no discussion of proposed names or policies for the all-important ministries of the interior and defense raising further anxieties." The Geneva based mediation organization the **Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) facilitated a meeting between the President of East Timor José Ramos Horta and fugitive military police officer Major Alfredo Alves Reinado in Ermera District, South West of the capital Dili on Sunday August 19.** HD reports, "The meeting was a **positive move towards the start of a genuine dialogue process between the Government and Major Reinado who left the army in May 2006 with a group of armed followers.** At the meeting both sides expressed support for a dialogue process with the aim of settling their differences peacefully and ending the armed confrontation. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue has since been formally requested by both sides to continue to act as mediator and facilitator along with Movimentu Unidade Nacional ba Justiça (MUNJ)." For more information go to: <http://m1e.net/c?50573564-ApQtqNk9yIKfg%402697487-3aBpv14vus0hY>.

The military government of Thailand, which has been frustrated to find that, at least in the short run, its conciliatory policy toward its Muslim minority has not ended the insurgency, signaled a tougher policy against insurgents, in May, with the appointment of a new security chief. Known for his harsh tactics. Analysis of the August 19 **referendum on the New Constitution in Thailand** (Seth Mydans, "Thai Vote Shows Division Among Classes Is Simmering," *The New York Times*, August 21, 2007, p. A10) **brought to light a deep social rift that is likely to impact future politics and elections. While close to 58% of voters approved the new constitution, in poorer districts, which gave very strong support to the prime minister ousted by the current military government, 63% voted against the new constitution.** Human Rights Watch reported, July 30, that the **Philippines has taken the highest toll in the region in Jihadist attacks since 2000, with 1700 civilians killed.**

ICG reported, June 14, ("Sri Lanka's Human Rights Crisis Deepens the Conflict," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4896&l=1>), **"The international community must press the warring sides for urgent action to address wide-spread human rights abuses in Sri Lanka as a first step to restoring a climate in which the long conflict can ultimately be resolved"**. Both the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have been deliberately committing human rights abuses, in renewing the civil war, that fuel the fighting. "While the LTTE has continued its deliberately provocative attacks on the military and Sinhalese civilians as well as its violent repression of Tamil dissenters and forced recruitment of adults and children, the government is using extra-judicial killings and disappearances as part of a brutal and counter-productive counter-insurgency campaign." "The abuses on both sides will only fuel further violence, and the new generation of embittered youth being created will only prolong the war. Moreover, while the government faces a severe security threat, which it has a legitimate right to address, "its policies are doing little to improve security and are fuelling antagonism among moderate Tamils and other minorities towards the state. Limitations on human rights are having a significant impact on Sri Lanka's institutions, including parliament, the media, law enforcement agencies and the judiciary. As the state decays, corruption and criminal influence on the political system have increased. While attacking moderates who are critical of the government's approach, the administration has given space to nationalist extremists, who provoke further inter-communal strife. **The international community should support a resolution in the UN Human Rights Council, reassess aid policies and support more international involvement in monitoring abuses.** The government must pursue and support genuine investigations into abuses, repeal

aspects of the Emergency Regulations inconsistent with international human rights norms and assert effective control over government-aligned Tamil paramilitary groups.” In addition, ICG asserted, May 29, (“Sri Lanka,s Muslims: Caught in the Crossfire,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4868&l=1>) that the government badly needs “to ensure the security and political involvement of Sri Lanka’s Muslims, whose views must be taken into account if a lasting peace settlement is to be achieved”. To date, both sides have “largely ignored Muslim community, who have been victims of massacres, ethnic cleansing and forced displacement over the past two decades, largely by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and have been sidelined at successive peace talks. The growing disillusionment among a new generation must be adequately addressed through an equitable settlement between the country’s Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities.” “One third of Sri Lanka’s nearly two million Muslims live in the conflict-affected north and east and thus have a significant interest in any future settlement. The resumption of large-scale military action in 2006 saw more killings and displacement of Muslims in the east, as well as conflict with the pro-government Tamil paramilitary group, the Karuna faction. Muslims are also concerned about government plans for the eastern province, which so far do not show any willingness to devolve powers to local communities. While the Muslim community has largely refrained from resorting to violence in the past, some frustrated youth are showing increasing interest in more radical versions of Islam. All parties to future peace talks must support the Muslim community,s demand for a separate delegation. In any final peace settlement, the parties must ensure the right of return of displaced Muslims. The government should also assert effective control over pro-government Tamil paramilitary groups such as the Karuna faction and end their involvement in kidnapping, extortion and other criminal activity. Any new interim government for the Eastern province must include equitable power-sharing for Muslims as well as Tamils, along with the enhancement of local government structures. In parallel, Tamil militant groups should make a public commitment to Muslim representation and their return to their original properties.”

ICG warned, July 9, “Nepal,s Troubled Tarai Region,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4941&l=1>, “**Violent unrest in Nepal,s Tarai plains could generate a new conflict if weaknesses in the country’s peace process are not addressed.**” **Currently, Madhesis, plainspeople, comprising a third of the national population, who are largely excluded from political processes and otherwise discriminated against, are becoming politically assertive in demanding equal rights.** “The national political process must be made more inclusive and responsive, and constituent assembly elections later this year must be free and fair if a new conflict is to be avoided.”

Tibetans, in mid August, turned a festival in Gyegu, Tibet into a muted protest against China. China, this year, pledge \$20 billion over the next three years to finance trade an infrastructure development in Africa. While the investment has helped economic development, there are also reported costs. Textile mills in Zambia, for example, have suffered, in some instances closed, reducing much needed employment, as the result of the influx of low cost Chinese goods. There are safety and environmental issues as well, illustrated by an explosion at a Chinese owned explosive factory, in Zambia, killed 46 people in 2005. **The problems of free trade (and sometimes international dumping), and lack of regulation in China, that have been evident in the U.S., recently, are also a concern in China’s African economic relations,**

ICG warned, June 7, (“Georgia’s South Ossetia Conflict: Make Haste Slowly,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4887&l=1>) that “**Frequent security incidents in Georgia’s breakaway region of South Ossetia could degenerate into greater violence unless all sides resume substantive dialogue and avoid pressing unilateral efforts to end the stalemate.**” The Georgian government, showing resentment for Russia’s role in the resolution process has been pressing to change the peacekeeping and negotiation format, as well as the status quo on the ground. “In November 2006, Tbilisi launched a bid to change the South Ossetian stalemate peacefully by supporting a new alternative South Ossetian administration led by Dmitri Sanakoev. Though Sanakoev is an ethnic Ossetian and fought against Georgia in the 1990-1992 conflict, a majority of South Ossetians perceive Georgia,s strategy as a way of forcing a settlement upon them under Tbilisi,s terms and now see him as a traitor. Sanakoev controls mainly Georgian populated villages in the conflict zone. For a real transformation of the status quo, he would need to gain credibility with Ossetians. Tbilisi risks pushing for change too fast. Its steps are non-violent and development-oriented but implementation is unilateral and so assertive they contribute to a dangerous rise in tensions. **The Georgian government needs to work on changing perceptions, through bilateral efforts and by embarking on a substantive dialogue with the de facto authorities in Tskhinvali, South Ossetia. Tbilisi should also emphasize gradual confidence building through transitional justice initiatives, implementation of the Law on Property Restitution and Compensation and allocation of more economic aid to the programs led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the conflict zone.** At the same time, **Moscow should recognize its mutual interest in ending a dangerous stalemate and agree with Georgia on changes to the negotiation format to emphasize direct Georgian-Ossetian dialogue and give the EU a role on a par with its own and the OSCE’s. It should encourage Tskhinvali to do the same and both sides to implement verifiable demilitarization. All parties should work to further inter-ethnic cooperation and confidence by implementing economic development and rehabilitation through joint efforts, rather than competing unilateral projects, as now. The US, EU and Russia should set up an informal consultative group to assist the parties in renewed dialogue.**”

Western election observers stated that Armenia’s May elections were the first, since it gained independence in 1991, to be largely in compliance with international standards. A coalition of pro-government parties took a sizable majority in the National Assembly, a victory for the prime minister. The observers found that the opposition voters were heard, even if they did not win over a majority of voters. In **Kyrgyzstan**, in late March, **President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, yielded to strong political pressure to appoint one of his leading critics Alman Atambahev, as prime minister,** in what has been a uniform one party government. In contrast, the **party of Kazakhstan’s authoritarian President Nursultan a. Nazarbayev took all 98 contested parliamentary seats in elections,** in late August, that the main opposition said it would contest, while **election monitors from the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe found flaws in vote counting in 40% of the polling places they visited.** Never-the-less, the leader of the monitoring team, Consiglio Di Nino said that the elections offered some progress. Earlier, **Nazarbayev signed a constitutional amendment exempting him from the limit of two terms as President,** making it legal for him to effectively serve as president for life.

ICG is concerned (“Uzbekistan: Stagnation and Uncertainty,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5027&l=1>) that “**The international community must brace for civil conflict in Uzbekistan when the dictatorial president, Islom Karimov, leaves office.**”

“Two years after the Andijon massacre, the country remains a serious risk to itself and the region. The 69-year-old Karimov’s term ended formally in January but he shows no sign of stepping down. There is no clear successor or succession process, so an eventual power struggle could well be violent. **The human rights situation is grave; a tightly controlled economy drives off investors and exacerbates grinding poverty. The regime cites the ‘war on terror’ to justify authoritarian policies but its repression may instead be radicalizing opponents and creating greater future danger.**” “In May 2005 the government killed hundreds of civilians while suppressing an uprising and demonstrations in Andijon. The EU imposed limited sanctions but these have not achieved the international investigation they sought or otherwise moderated government policies. The regime has made only token gestures to appease Western critics, while continuing to persecute human rights activists, journalists and the political opposition. Hundreds have sought refuge abroad, where they risk forced repatriation by Uzbek security services. Some in the EU, notably Germany, favor scrapping sanctions and resuming „engagement% with the regime. Instead, the EU should make clear that for sanctions to be lifted, the government should meet specific benchmarks, such as allowing re-registration of NGOs closed down after Andijon and ending harassment of journalists and human rights activists. The International Committee of the Red Cross should get unrestricted access to all detention facilities and an independent rapporteur - backed by the UN or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) - should be allowed to carry out an Andijon investigation. The international community should also work at opening the Uzbek economy and improving the flow of information into and out of the country. Uzbek refugees and labor migrants should be helped so as not to become easy recruitment targets for Islamic radicals. Education abroad should be sustained, and the country,s neighbors helped to build up their ability to withstand the shocks likely to result from turmoil inside Uzbekistan. The international community should also tackle the criminal nature of the regime by targeting its assets abroad.”

ICG expressed its concern, May 24, (“Central Asia Cannot Solve Europe’s Energy Problem,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4866&l=1>) in saying, **“Central Asia’s oil and gas cannot solve the European Union’s energy dependence on Russia, but these resources can destabilize the producing region unless governments use the revenues to promote good governance and rule of law.”** In examining the resources of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and the dangers of mishandling them, ICG “argues that a trans-Caspian gas pipeline cannot largely write Russia out of the European energy equation, as Brussels hopes. But it also disputes the common view that the May12 Russian-Central Asian gas agreement prevents that pipeline from being built. ‘Central Asia can make a contribution - a modest one - to helping resolve Europe’s energy security concerns’, says Charles Esser, Crisis Group Energy Analyst, ‘but only if outside investment is tied to the good governance that is needed to improve regional and human security. If Western governments turn their eyes away from mismanagement and human rights abuses in expectation of short-term gains, they risk stimulating instability in Central Asia that will only add to their energy and other security problems’. The three countries present different challenges, but all three are suffering from the ‘resource curse’. Kazakhstan has used its money best and is impressive compared to its neighbors but should aim for a higher standard now. It is at a point where enormous oil revenues need to be translated into commensurate outcomes that benefit its citizens. Corruption, an undiversified economy, improper management of state funds and a lack of the legal guarantees that are part of a true democracy hold it back. All these problems are more extreme in Turkmenistan, a major gas exporter that was pillaged by the eccentric and brutal dictator Saparmurat Niyazov until his death in December 2006. Despite a relatively high per capita income on paper, most Turkmen live in poverty. Investment in energy production has faltered. It remains to be seen if anything fundamental will change under the new leader, a close protégé of Niyazov’s who came to power in a rigged election. He may not have much time before revenues fall, as gas production will decline without substantial new investment. Uzbekistan has the least oil and gas of the three producers. It is a net importer of oil, and much of its declining gas output has been sold to Russia. Despite wishful thinking in some European capitals, it will never be a part of EU energy security arrangements. The gas also perpetuates a system that impoverishes and represses its people. Domestic supplies are often cut in winter, for example, so the gas can be sold abroad, leaving cities unheated in freezing weather, provoking protests and serious unrest. ‘The hard fact is there is no substitute for arrangements with Russia that stress mutual dependence on commercial oil and gas delivery,’ says Michael Hall, Crisis Group Central Asia Project Director. **‘The international community needs to pay more attention to Central Asia as a security risk, without expecting it to solve its outside energy needs’.**

Progress on settling Kosovo’s status remains blocked, with Russia refusing to allow the “supervised independence” in the plan proposed by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, which has significant backing from other Security Council members. Russia refuses to allow any arrangement opposed by Serbia, and Beograd rejects any arrangement that could lead to Kosovo independence (though privately, the Serbian government admits it would accept a division of Kosovo, with the area north of Mitrovica remaining part of Serbia, and the rest capable of leaving Serbia). A major problem is that **many Kosovo Albanians are becoming increasingly impatient at the delay in achieving a settlement that leads to independence, so that as delay in reaching agreement goes on, the danger of new violence in Kosovo increases. Should a new civil war begin in Kosovo, it could spread to Macedonia, which has a large Albanian minority, and this in turn could threaten a wider instability in the Balkans,** as warned by ICG, May 14, (“Kosovo: No Good Alternatives to the Ahtisaari Plan,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4830&l=1>). The report finds that “the recommendation of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari for ‘supervised independence’ and his detailed implementation proposals are the best that can be achieved. It explains why Serbia,s private preference for partitioning the province north of Mitrovica would be immensely damaging, not least for most of the 7 per cent Serb minority.” Sabine Freizer, Crisis Group’s Europe Program Director., warns, “The choice is now between an imposed international solution and no solution at all for the foreseeable future. Any delay in coming to a decision on Kosovo,s status will seriously complicate an already fragile situation, and partition would benefit only the extremists.” On August 21, ICG, stated (“Europe Must Break the Kosovo Stalemate,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5018&l=1>), **“Europe risks a new bloody and destabilizing conflict unless the EU and its member states now accept the primary responsibility for bringing Kosovo to supervised independence by April/May 2008.”** “The preferred strategy of bringing Kosovo to supervised independence through the United Nations Security Council has failed, following Russia’s declared intention to veto, and a new round of negotiations between Pristina and Belgrade will most likely lead nowhere. This leaves the EU - with the most to lose from renewed violent conflict in the Balkans - before crucial decisions.” “Pristina and Belgrade have recently started four months of talks mandated by the six-nation Contact Group (France, Germany, Italy, Russia, UK, U.S.). But Serbia will not accept independence, seeks to delay indefinitely and is laying the foundation for what would be destabilising partition. **The EU and U.S. should maintain the integrity of the Ahtisaari plan ^ the blueprint for supervised independence crafted by the UN Secretary-General,s special envoy, former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, after a year of**

painstaking negotiations. By 10 December - if, as is overwhelmingly likely, no agreed solution emerges from those talks - the EU, U.S. and NATO need to be ready to start coordinated action with the Kosovo government to implement the essence of the Ahtisaari plan, including the 120-day transition it envisages. That period should be used to accumulate recognitions of the conditionally independent state from many governments; to adopt and set in place the state-forming legislation and related institutions foreseen by the Ahtisaari plan; for the Kosovo government to invite the EU and NATO to take up new responsibilities and for those organisations to do so; and for the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to withdraw in an orderly fashion. In April/May 2008, Kosovo would be conditionally independent, under EU and NATO supervision."

Meanwhile, ICG reported, May 31, ("Serbia's New Government: Turning from Europe," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4878>) that **the new Serbian government is deeply divided between anti-Western, ultra-nationalists in Premier Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and pro-Western members of the government. ICG recommends that, "The European Union should support pro-Western forces inside Serbia by holding firm on its demand for the arrest of key war criminals before starting talks over closer ties". "The EU and US should now resist the temptation of further appeasing Serbia in a misguided effort to gain acceptance of Kosovo's independence. The EU's strategy of using the prospect of integration and accession to soften Serbia's stance simply will not work while the nationalists retain so much power."** On May 31, the **Serbian government arrested General Zdravko Tolimir, the third most wanted Bosnian war crimes suspect, and extradited the two primary suspects, General Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadic to the Hague for trial, on June 1. This led the European Union's Enlargement Commissioner, Oli Rehn to announce that suspended preentry talks between the EU and Serbia could be restarted – as they had been suspended, last year, over Serbia's failure to arrest and extradite the top Bosnian war crime fugitives.**

A U.S Government Accountability Office (GAO) study evaluating the improvements in security at Russian nuclear material and warhead sites overseen by Department of Energy's (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), under The Material Protection, Control and Accounting (MPC&A) program, established by DOD under Cooperative Threat Reduction initiative (CTR) in order to ensure the sustained effectiveness of U.S. funding for security upgrades, **notable improvement to security at Russian nuclear sites, but saw funding by the United States as uncertain in the long-term, while accountability concerns persist.** See, "Room for Improvement in Russian Nuclear Sites," (http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=3946&from_page=../index.cfm). At the end of May, the **United States and Russia agreed to speed expansion of a program to detect radioactive materials along Russia's borders, with detection equipment stationed at all border crossings by 2011.** The program involves collaboration between the U.S. Department of Energy and the Russian federal custom service. Through the end of 2006 the U.S. had spent about \$40 billion on the effort, and it anticipates spending an additional \$100 million through 2011. At a, July 3, meeting between Presidents Bush and Putin, the **United States and Russia pledged to reduce their stockpiles of long range nuclear weapons "to their lowest possible levels consistent with their national security requirements and alliance commitments."** The two Presidents stated that the two nations would work **"to provide continuity and predictability about their atomic arsenals, as they work to complete an early extension of the 1991 nuclear arms limitation treaty, which expires in 2009. Russia's continued unhappiness with the expansion of NATO eastward and the U.S. proposal to place antiballistic missiles (which, in fact, do not work) in former Warsaw Pact nations, has brought President Vladimir Putin, in April, to suspend its compliance with its treaty with NATO limiting conventional arms in Europe.** Putin said that he would use compliance as a bargaining chip in future disagreements with the U.S. In an indication of Russia's increased international assertiveness, President Putin announced, August 17, that the **Russian air force was beginning to patrol the world's oceans with nuclear capable aircraft, in a renewal of a USSR Cold War practice, discontinued 15 years ago.**

Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution', going on three years ago, promised a free and more democratic government, The country and its governance became mired in on going conflict and crisis, when President Viktor F. Yushchenko signed a disputed order dissolving parliament, in April, which, amid much protest, charges and counter charges, did not occur. A May 25 compromise ended the constitutional crisis. Parliament adjourned in June looking for new elections September 30.

The Turkish Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, March 28, **reaffirmed a Turkish offer to Armenia to establish a joint commission of historians, opened to third parties, to examine the contentious events of 1915, sometimes called the 'Armenian Masacre' Turkey, May 22, suffered its worst terrorist act in months, when a bomb, set of in a shopping district in Ankara, killed six people and wounded eight.**

The **Basque separatist group ETA declared their previously announced "permanent" ceasefire with the Spanish government to be over, on June 5. saying the action was taken because of the Spanish government's mishandling of the truce, including ongoing arrests, torture and persecution. In this updated analysis, CDI Research Assistant Monica Czwarno details the politics surrounding ETA's often-bloody history, including their strategies and funding, and what the future might hold for ETA and their quest for independence for the Basque Country. However, ETA had effectively ended its cease fire, in December, with an airport bombing. For more, see, "In the Spotlight: Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)," at: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4061&from_page=../index.cfm. To develop a culture of peace, the Basque provincial government has launched the **Basque Plan of Action for Human Rights and Peace Education (2008-2009), "as an outcome of the creation in 2006 of an Interdepartmental Commission on Peace and Human Rights. The plan is supported by the belief that human rights and peace education are essential tools for strengthening social and ethical consciousness in the defense of the dignity of each person, of life in the first place, and of all Human Rights. The Basque Plan is justified as a public response for a society that has lived for a long period with violence and terrorism. Terrorism is a phenomenon that has been present in recent Basque history and a big concern again after the end of ETA's ceasefire. Terrorism, apart from its dramatic immediate effects, contaminates relationships in groups and in society in general creates many non-desired effects and disrupts possibilities for co-existence. The persistence of violence has created deep fractures in Basque society. The Plan of Action for Peace and Human Rights Education was formulated to redress and heal these fractures, offer particular attention to victims of violence, and further necessary processes toward reconciliation in all social levels from a human rights foundation. The plan seeks to create and support an active education fabric for the promotion of a Human Rights and Peace Culture. Actions are being designed to reach these goals without leaving anyone aside. The plan aims at making society in general aware****

of the need to see this kind of education as a complex, global and permanent process. At the same time it attempts to create the structures that respond to this educative demand. For this, we need coordination and good understanding between different political structures at different levels: local, provincial and autonomous government.” “Civil society institutions and organizations are also considered critical partners.” “The Basque Government is pleased to share this plan with you and is happy to receive your feedback.” To receive a copy of the complete plan please e-mail: derechos-humanos@ej-gv.es”

Indications were clear, this spring and summer, that **Northern Ireland has begun a new stage in building peace**. On May 8, the Northern Ireland power sharing authority was reestablished with the swearing in of two former enemies, Protestant Rev. Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Union party, and Catholic Martin McGuinness of the Sinn Fein party as leader and deputy leader of the Northern Ireland executive government. Five days earlier, the **Ulster Volunteer Force**, the oldest pro-British paramilitary group renounced violence, stopping military training and putting its arms “beyond reach.” This July 12, the **annual Irish Protestant Parades**, celebrating the victory of the Protestant forces of English King William of Orange over Catholic King James the Second, for many years accompanied by interfaith violence, were completely peaceful. Irish President Mary McAleese invited hundreds of Protestant leaders to a “Twelfth” (as the anniversary celebrations are known) party in their honor. As a result of these advances, Great Britain has declared an end to its military intervention in Northern Ireland.

Fearing that Germany may soon become a major target for Islamic terrorist acts, the German government’s top security official was proposing measures, in July, allowing for surreptitious government on line searches of the computers of people suspected of terrorist activity, and authorization for the shooting down of hijacked aircraft. He also calls for considering detaining potential terrorists and approving killing terrorist leaders abroad. The proposals have created great controversy in a country with a deep aversion to intrusive and harsh enforcement tactics, as a result of nazi and communist brutality.

A retreat of eminent mediators on conflict mediation in Zanzibar, April 23-25, agreed that **“The international community must speak with one voice to achieve peace in Darfur.”** Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the United Nations for Darfur said: “There will be no quick fix for Darfur but we need to do all we can to mobilize the political energy towards a solution. Therefore we are working for a unified position by the international community and trying to intensify the political process.” Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, African Union Special Envoy on the Darfur Conflict since 2004 commented, **“The fragmentation of the Darfur Movements renders mediation efforts extremely difficult.** It is very important that the movements are able to present unified positions for talks to move forward.” The Africa Mediators’ Retreat was co-hosted by the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation (<http://www.nyererefoundation.or.tz>) and the Geneva based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (<http://www.hdcentre.org>). Participants in the retreat included representatives of the African Union (AU), the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as analysts and representatives of nongovernmental organizations. In addition to Darfur, several other current mediation processes were examined, including Somalia. The implementation of peace agreements in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi were discussed. Africa’s capacity to support mediation processes, including within institutions such as the African Union and IGAD were a major theme throughout. For more information contact: Andy Andrea, Tel: +41 (0)22 908 11 47, Mobile: +41 (0)79 257 9974, andya@hdcentre.org, www.hdcentre.org.

Zoe Alsop and Nick Wadhams, “Ethiopia: Tainted Ally” (<http://www.pulitzercenter.org/showproject.cfm?id=29>), reported that while **U.S.-backed Ethiopian forces made headlines when they invaded Somalia** to root out Islamic extremists, less known is the **Ethiopian government’s massive persecution of its own people** committed by the regime of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, and the potential repercussions of making the country a key U.S. ally. Ethiopia suffered one of its worst rebel attacks in years, when forces of the Ogaden National Liberation Front – fighting for control of Eastern Ethiopia – raided a Chinese-run oil field, killing 70, including 9 Chinese oil workers, in mid-August, the **Bush Administration** stated that it is **considering adding Eritrea to its list of nations sponsoring state terrorism, accusing it of supplying arms to Islamic insurgents in Somalia**, a charge supported by a July 20 report to the Security Council by UN monitors.

ICG warns (“A Strategy for Comprehensive Peace in Sudan,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4961&l=1>) that **“a new and worse civil war in Sudan is possible unless the international community presses for a fundamental shift in the way the country is governed”**. “The **Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)**, which ended Africa’s longest-running civil war in 2005, **is being extensively undermined**, primarily by the ruling National Congress Party (NCP). **While international attention has focused on Darfur, albeit without much success, Sudan’s other brewing conflicts and the crucial implementation of the CPA are being largely ignored.** Crisis Group says a more balanced approach is urgently needed, also in the interest of peace in Darfur.” **“The CPA contains the detailed provisions and schedule for governmental reforms and a democratization process leading to national elections in 2009 which can be the building blocks for peacemaking in Darfur and elsewhere.** However, it is in danger of collapse due primarily to NCP sabotage and international neglect. The NCP views democratic transformation as a threat to regime survival and so undermined the CPA’s critical reforms. International efforts over the last several years have lacked leadership, and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), which fought the government for a generation until it signed the CPA, has focused on internal southern issues at the expense of the national agenda. Meanwhile the **risk of new conflict is rising in Kordofan in central Sudan, in the far North and in the East.** **Consistent international engagement and vigilance is needed to ensure the CPA is implemented. The UN Secretary-General must immediately appoint a chief for the peacekeeping mission (UNMIS), which has been leaderless for more than half a year, so it can refocus on its primary mandate of monitoring the CPA. The international community should lay out a roadmap for peace which includes the African Union/United Nations plan for reviving the Darfur political process, benchmarks for CPA implementation, and consensus on diplomatic and economic rewards for those who cooperate, and punitive measures for spoilers.”** The government of Sudan finally agreed to have UN peacekeepers in Darfur, provided African troops are part of the force, but they will not deploy until next year, finding a more complex situation than at the war’s beginning, including a fracturing of rebel groups fighting each other, with no cease fire. Judges at the **International Criminal Court charged two top Sudanese officials with helping plan atrocities in Darfur**, in May, Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-al-Rahaman, accused of being a former leader of a janjaweed militia, and Ahmad Muhammad Harun, a former security officer.

The International Crisis Group stated, June 11 (“The Western Sahara Conflict: The Costs and the Solution,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4893&l=1>, and “Western Sahara: Out of the Impasse,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4892&l=1>) that, the **UN Security Council needs to take a new approach to resolving the costly, stalemated, 30 year conflict in Western Sahara amongst Morocco, the Polisario Front and Algeria.** Crisis Group President Gareth Evans finds that, “There are vested interests in the status quo, and most of the leading actors have underestimated or ignored its costs. But when they are understood, the case for finally resolving this conflict becomes overwhelming”. “The combination of Morocco’s recent proposal of a „Sahara autonomous region%, the Polisario Front’s counter-proposal of independence with guarantees for Moroccan interests and the Security Council’s 30 April resolution calling for negotiations between the parties, has been hailed as a promising breakthrough. However, the underlying dynamics of the conflict have not changed, and the formal positions of Morocco and the Polisario Front are still far apart. The UN has unfortunately been part of the problem: it has insisted, understandably, on treating the conflict as a case of decolonization entitling the Sahrawi people to self-determination, but at the same time it has not insisted on the necessary referendum, thus allowing Morocco to block the proper exercise of this right. The Security Council has just two choices. It must discharge in full the responsibility it assumed to secure the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. Or it must accept that it cannot and encourage Morocco, the Polisario Front and Algeria to resolve matters among themselves on whatever basis they can.” Crisis Group,s Middle East and North Africa Director, Robert Malley, says, **“The Security Council should not keep fudging this issue. Either it must find the political will to persuade Morocco to agree to a referendum including the option of independence. Or it should let the three main parties negotiate the terms of a settlement for themselves, without prejudicing its outcome in any manner.”**

ICG reported April 26 (“Northern Uganda: Seizing the Opportunity for Peace,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4791&l=1>) that **in order for the peace talks, which began in Juba, Sudan, April 26, to succeed in ending the brutal twenty-year insurrection in northern Uganda by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), they need to be supported more strongly by international actors.** “Both sides have agreed to renew their cessation of hostilities agreement and restart the Juba negotiation that stalled early this year. However, to achieve lasting peace, a more comprehensive strategy is needed both to address the conditions that have created a cycle of conflict in northern Uganda and guard against destabilization in neighboring Congo and Sudan.” “The peace talks have improved security and begun to allow a few of the 1.4 million internally-displaced northern Ugandans to return home”, according to Adam O’Brien, Crisis Group analyst, “but some of the wrong issues are on the table, the wrong LRA negotiators are present, and UN Special Envoy and ex-Mozambique President Joaquim Chissano does not yet have sufficient leverage to overcome the mutual mistrust.” **“A solution to one of Africa,s longest and most brutal conflicts requires two-tracks. The first, the Juba talks, should focus on ending the LRA security threat. Chissano needs more help, especially from the U.S. and UK, and he needs to be empowered to present a package of security and livelihood guarantees directly to the reclusive LRA leader, Joseph Kony. The second track should focus on a follow-up national reconciliation forum, with much wider participation, that addresses the north’s political, economic and social alienation and includes a plan for northern Ugandans to redevelop their communities and reintegrate returning rebels.** The investigation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has increased pressure on the LRA,s indicted leaders to negotiate and should continue. Finally, contingency planning on a regional security strategy for use against the LRA if Juba fails should begin now and include military and political cooperation between Uganda, the Government of Southern Sudan, Congo and the UN missions in Sudan and Congo.”

ICG is concerned (“Congo: Consolidating the Peace,” July 5, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=4933>) that **“An unimpressive first half-year of Congo’s elected government has left the peace process in danger, especially in the volatile East, and democracy fragile.”** President Joseph Kabila’s new government has made real gains that have at serious risk. **“While the transition helped unify the divided country and improved security in much of it, governing institutions remain weak, abusive or non-existent, and the national army is still the country’s worst human rights abuser, while another crisis is looming in the East.** ‘Despite Kabila,s strong mandate, the last months have seen the rapid paralysis of the state machinery, increased authoritarian tendencies and no decisive progress in the restoration of peace in the Kivus,’ says David Mugnier, Crisis Groups Central Africa Project Director. ‘Kabila and Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga need to acknowledge the shortcomings of the last months and make a fresh start by promoting a culture of dialogue and accountability and strengthening cooperation with the UN mission (MONUC) and the wider international community.’ The Government must make good on promises to respect opposition rights and stop using repressive violence in the West, which strongly supported the opposition in the election. Jean-Pierre Bemba, the runner-up in that election, must have his security guaranteed so he can return promptly from the exile into which he was driven after the government used excessive force to disarm his guard in the capital in March. Parliament, courts and media must be free to serve as checks against a worrying authoritarian drift. **A comprehensive peace initiative for the Kivus, emphasizing diplomacy and dialogue, is also urgently needed. Much remains to be done to turn the army and police into competent, confidence-inspiring forces that can provide stability and tackle lawlessness, especially in the militia-dominated East. In order to avoid tensions during implementation of the decentralization program and preparation of local elections, the permanent consultation process between the central government and the provinces must be strengthened.** To improve the management of natural resources and aid economic recovery, the findings and recommendations of the mining contracts review must be made public and illegal contracts cancelled. **Donors must stay engaged and condition their aid on acceptance of a political framework in which the security and governance challenges can be addressed jointly. They should press for a comprehensive peace initiative in the East and increased cooperation with MONUC, especially in the Kivus, where renewed war threatens.”** François Grignon, Crisis Group’s Africa Program Director observes. “If the new government does not live up its own promises to build a different Congo, it is likely to continue being perceived more as a nuisance than a legitimate authority. Without clear signs of improvement before year,s end, donor support will start shifting to other post-conflict theatres, and Congo could lose the peace-building gains of the past five years.”

Nigeria continues to miss its great potential, and to compound its many problems. These include endemic, though somewhat lessened, corruption, which fuels other problems, including a variety of growing inter group conflicts. This includes insurrection and ethnic conflict in the petroleum producing delta, that regularly experiences attacks on foreigners, and oil workers of whatever nationality, with frequent interruptions of oil production, and some times deadly and environmentally

destructive oil spills and fires. ICG reported, May 30, "Nigeria: Failed Elections, Failing State?" <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4876>, that "after deeply flawed elections, Nigeria's new President must act urgently to pull the nation back from the brink of chaos". The widely perceived unfairness of the April elections, with resulting considerable inequities, threatens to magnify Nigeria's existing problems, while degrading its status as an international peace broker and peacekeeper in Africa. "The report calls on President Umaru Yar, Adua to reach out to the opposition to form an inclusive government of national unity, in which all major parties are represented. 'Nigeria's democracy has derailed, says Crisis Group Senior Analyst Nnamdi Obasi. 'Yar, Adua has to understand that no number of overtures will satisfy the opposition unless and until his administration seriously confronts all the institutional failures that must be redressed if Nigeria is to escape collapse and widespread violence.' The outgoing administration of Olusegun Obasanjo declared the 2007 elections as a success, constituting the first-ever civilian-to-civilian transfer of power in Nigeria's history. In reality the transition to a hand-picked successor through a flawed election was more like a dynastic succession, and it has been denounced not only by opposition leaders but even by members of the triumphant People's Democratic Party. Yar, Adua assumed the presidency on 29 May with less legitimacy than any previous president and thus has less capacity to moderate and resolve Nigeria's violent domestic conflicts. Pre-existing tensions in the Niger Delta and demands in the south east for Biafran separatism have been exacerbated over recent months due to diminished civilian confidence in governing institutions. **Resolving these issues requires a government that enjoys legitimacy and respect in the eyes of its people and can enlist their cooperation. To stave off this brewing crisis, Yar, Adua must work with the opposition to form an inclusive government of national unity and not by co-opting individuals but rather by accepting their own official nominees. His administration must also establish an independent inquiry to identify responsibility for fraudulent electoral practices. The Senate should launch a judicial inquiry into election commission's financial management, and the UN, US and the EU should give material and technical aid to future election tribunals adjudicating transparency.'**"

A peace agreement was signed, in March, between ex-rebels and the transitional government in Côte d'Ivoire, providing for power sharing for a period of transition. In June, the terms of the peace agreement were being carried out, including militias turning in arms and the commander of the rebel army becoming prime minister, but national integration was barely beginning. As in other African settlements it is difficult to get many weapons turned in, and with many immigrants – many former agricultural workers who contributed to the Ivory Coast's once booming agricultural sector - to determine who is a citizen. Interstate travelers and truckers still have to pay off rebel militias and government soldiers to move on the roads. On June 27, ICG expressed concern ("**Côte d'Ivoire after the Ouagadougou Agreement,**" <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4916&l=1>) that "**the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement [concluded in March] could pave the way to Cote d'Ivoires reunification, but the political crisis is yet to be resolved and continues to threaten stability in West Africa.**" "The agreement is a major turning point, but for the time being, it is merely a compromise between two armed leaders: President Laurent Gbagbo, who is concerned with remaining in power, and Guillaume Soro, the head of the rebel Forces Nouvelles and the current prime minister, who is anxious to secure his political future in a reunified country. The agreement is also the result of the re-engagement of Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaoré, supporter of the Forces Nouvelles, who is weary of an extended Ivorian crisis." Olakounlé Gilles Yabi, Crisis Group Analyst, states. "The Ouagadougou agreement is still unstable since it is yet to be implemented. Care must be taken to avoid the accord becoming a mere pause between two periods of conflict. Even if optimism remains high, the delays in the execution of the accord are already worrying. The 2002 attempt by the Forces Nouvelles rebels to topple President Gbagbo plunged the country into civil war, which international military intervention and diplomacy ended. But the armed conflict was the result of political tensions, manipulation of the definition of national identity and the spread of violence, all factors which have come to the fore since the struggle for succession following President Félix Houphouët-Boigny's death in 1993. **The potential end to the crisis offered by the power-sharing agreement between Gbagbo and Soro is only a first step. The government should seek UN and other international support to institute mobile courts for issuing identification documents and carrying out the electoral census, disarmament and security sector reform. The international community must remain engaged with all parties and support stability and a clean electoral process.** In order to guarantee the credibility of elections, the mandate of the UN High Representative for Elections must be renewed - against the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General. **Ivorian civil society should promote debate on the lessons to be learned from the conflict and necessary reforms.** 'The future of the country cannot be dependant on the thirst for power of a handful of figures, adds François Grignon, Crisis Group's Africa Program Director. 'If we try to build peace on a foundation of vested interests alone, the country risks falling back into violence'."

Initial reports (August 14) indicate that Sierra Leone's election has come off fairly well, with the main opposition party claiming to have won a majority in parliament, and a run off likely in the Presidential race. ICG had warned, July 12 ("Sierra Leone: The Election Opportunity," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4942&l=1>) that. "Heightened political tensions could lead to Sierra Leone's destabilization if elections next month are not free and fair". "Sierra Leone is still a fragile state in which peace will not be consolidated unless the new authorities tackle sources of popular discontent such as corruption, chiefs, abuse of power and youth unemployment". "While Sierra Leone is no longer a failed state, youth unemployment and disillusionment are serious threats, and core institutions remain untested. A customary law system in parallel to statutory law and the details of the electoral system leave traditional "Paramount Chiefs" with powers that are frequently abused in the countryside. Corruption in public services is extensive, and the security and justice sectors still require several years of external oversight in order to become self-sustaining. The new National Electoral Commission has started well and broadly inspires confidence, but allegations of fraud or malpractice must be adjudicated promptly and fairly. Coordination with the national police is needed to allow prompt reaction to security incidents. All political parties should instruct their officials that violence, and calls to violence, will be investigated and appropriately punished, and they should commit to a comprehensive post-election reform program. International partners, including the UK and the UN Peacebuilding Commission, will have to engage immediately with the new administration to make clear that tackling corruption is a prerequisite to long-term support".

Talks between the Burundi government and the country's last rebel group, the Forces for National Liberation, achieved a breakthrough, in mid-June, with an agreement to release prisoners. Initially, a peace agreement had been reached last year, but talks broke down in haggling over details. Later in June, the **2006 peace agreement was reinstated. The Zimbabwe government opened its first talks with the opposition, in June, to discuss plans for a Presidential election in March 2008. The meeting took place in Pretoria, South Africa, under the pressure of the South African government.** It is the first sign of softening, by President Mugaby, who

has been staunchly holding on to power with repressive policies that have escalated a descending economic collapse with huge social consequences. In **Senegal, President Abdoulaye Wade won reelection in largely peaceful voting**, in April, but opposition parties said they would boycott the June Parliamentary elections.

Global Exchange reports in, **"New escalation of police repression against the popular movement in Oaxaca!"** (available at: http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?key=382863656&url_num=6&url=http%3A%2F%2F, or contact: www.globalexchange.org), that on July 16th, members of the Oaxaca municipal and state police provoked members of the Oaxaca Peoples' Popular Assembly (APPO) and teachers from Section 22 of the National Union of Education Workers with tear gas and stones as they held a march in Oaxaca City, Killing one and injuring between 50 and 100 people". Police also raided the Red Cross, arresting injured people there who were seeking medical attention. Later, several hundred police and the Mexican Army barricaded an outdoor auditorium, known as the Cerro del Fortin, in an attempt to prevent the APPO and the teachers' union from boycotting this years' Guelaguetza, an internationally famous arts festival, for the second year in a row to protest the impunity of the state government's human rights violations. Meanwhile, U.S. Indymedia reporter Brad Will reports state that the Army has been setting up roadblocks and making rounds in Oaxaca City, while police continue to detain APPO organizers, who took over the city for five months, in 2006. "There is a great risk that the Oaxaca state and Mexican federal security forces will escalate the use of violence in Oaxaca, leading to more injuries, illegal detentions and possible deaths, in addition to the overall militarization of the region's of social conflict."

Luis Hernández Navarro, "The New Tortilla War" (available at: <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/4205>) comments that **the price of the tortilla, a staple for poor and modest income people, has risen significantly in Mexico, causing much hardship**. He reports that the price rise has occurred for three reasons, hoarding and speculation by the agro-industrial monopolies; the rising cost of gasoline, diesel, and electricity, which has affected production, transport, and processing costs; and, the increase in the international price of corn due to its use in ethanol production. Meanwhile, the **bloody drug war between the government and drug dealers continues**. For example, in early May, alleged members of a drug cartel attacked army personnel during an anti narcotics operation, In efforts to counter drug related corruption, Mexico purged 284 top commanders from the national police force, in late June.

Costa Rica, in the face of a growing popular anti free trade movement, is the only one of the five participating Central American Nations (plus the Dominican Republic) that has not ratified the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), passed by Congress in 2006 at the initiation of the Bush administration. For more information see **"Costa Rica Protests U.S. Free Trade Agreement"** at: <http://americas.irc-online.org/apt/4104>. Umberto Mazzei, **"Guatemala and Costa Rica: In and Out of CAFTA"** (available at: <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/4408>), states "After nearly a year in CAFTA's orbit, the same traditional exports as always are growing, outside of the Central American Free Trade Agreement. The message is overwhelming: the country "sacrificed" itself to the Free Trade Agreement with the United States for nothing. The CAFTA model, pushing the Central American economy toward the export of non-traditional goods to the United States, has been a pretext for imposing expensive foreign pharmaceuticals as opposed to cheap, national generic drugs, overwhelming the peasant farmer with subsidized imports, and granting extra-territorial jurisdiction to foreign companies. All indicates that the privileged share in an FTA with the United States is more a hindrance than a help". **In Guatemala. Mayan indigenous rights activist, and Nobel Prize winner, Rigoberta Menchu Tum, is running for President**. She is considered a long shot to make the Presidential run of election, but it is a sign, that despite growing corruption and other problems, conditions are more peaceful now than in the 1980s, when Menchu had to flee to Mexico and France, with the military having put a price on her head.

ICG warned, May 4, ("Haiti: Prison Reform and the Rule of Law," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4809&l=1>) that **Haiti's, critical, but to date modest, efforts to reform the police and judiciary "cannot succeed unless the overcrowded, insecure prison system is also overhauled."** "The prisons are powder kegs that could erupt and further destabilize the country unless immediate steps are taken to alleviate overcrowding and prevent violence or mass escape." Despite promises by donors in the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF) of 2004, there have been no significant steps to rehabilitate prisons and none at all to build them." Crisis Group Senior Vice President Mark Schneider said, "Donors should urgently put in place a plan to finance and build secure prisons, hire more guards and put the most dangerous offenders in maximum security cells. Otherwise, the progress President René Préval,s government has made in its first year on police and justice reform will be threatened." In addition, "Haiti's justice ministry and donors must ensure the newly-created detention commission moves quickly on the most urgent and longest pending cases and identify prisoners who should be released if they are not a threat to society. Dangerous offenders should be moved to more secure areas while a maximum security prison is built, and existing prisons need to be modernized and expanded. An emergency donors conference should be held to meet immediate prison construction and correction staff needs and plan for long-term reforms."

Amnesty International (AI) reports, this spring (<http://www.amnestyusa.org/Colombia>), that **"since 2003, paramilitary groups, responsible for the vast majority of human rights violations in Colombia for over a decade, have been involved in a government-sponsored "demobilization" process. More than 25,000 paramilitaries have supposedly demobilized under a process** which has been criticized by AI and other Colombian and international human rights groups, as well as by the OHCHR and the IACHR. **The process is lacking in effective mechanisms for justice and in its inability to ensure that paramilitary members actually cease violent activities."** "For more than two decades Colombia has suffered from a human rights crisis. The Colombian government of President Alvaro Uribe has recently argued that there are less killings and that it is taking action against paramilitary forces. Amnesty International has documented that **there has been no substantive improvement in the human rights situation, that human rights conditions have worsened in several conflict zones, and that collusion between the armed forces and illegal paramilitary groups continues**. Colombians suffer a dire human rights situation because the country has been embroiled in a civil conflict that has lasted for over 40 years. In Colombia leftist guerrillas fight the state and illegal right-wing paramilitary organizations, which often collaborate with sectors of the Colombian armed forces. All of the parties to the conflict are responsible for human rights violations. Armed opposition groups, including the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and the ELN (National Liberation Army) have committed numerous violations of international humanitarian law, including high-profile kidnappings. Paramilitary forces carry out massacres, often with the acquiescence of the armed forces. The Colombian government routinely fails to bring to justice military officials who have collaborated with these illegal paramilitary groups as they carry out atrocities. Civilians caught in the crossfire between these armed groups suffer the

majority of the casualties. Human rights defenders, women, farmers, unionists, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities among others face constant threats to their security. In rural communities, these individuals are often terrorized by guerillas and paramilitaries alike. They are forced to choose between supporting one of the armed groups for protection, or fleeing to the relative safety of urban areas where they add to the mass of urban unemployed and under-employed, swelling the ranks of the desplazados (displaced persons). As a result, an estimated 2.7 million Colombians live as internal refugees.” “Despite this grave situation, Colombia has a host of active community leaders, peace activists and human rights defenders who are bravely working toward a peaceful end to the conflict. These individuals face constant threats and have been subject to torture and murder, and many have been forced to leave the country.” **Amnesty International USA has been calling for a complete cutoff of US military aid to Colombia for over a decade due to the continued collaboration between the Colombian Armed Forces and their paramilitary allies as well the failure of the Colombian government to improve human rights conditions.**

ICG agrees with AI's assessment of the situation in Columbia (“Colombia's New Armed Groups,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4824&l=1>) adding that new armed groups are emerging in several parts of Colombia threatening the success of the government's demobilization strategy, and that the new groups are deeply involved in drug trafficking and other criminal activities. Some even have established drug business ties with the insurgent Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN), which continue to fight the government. There is the risk that they also continue links to regional politicians, which could lead to the writing of a new chapter in the “para-politica scandal” that has reached into Colombia's highest political and security elite and is now being investigated by the independent attorney general and the supreme court. **“Sustaining security in the regions where the new groups are emerging will require the government to design and implement an integrated strategy to confront the emerging groups, including solid intelligence, more effective law enforcement and military cooperation, as well as making reintegration of former combatants work and implementing a national rural infrastructure program.”**

Kelly Hearn, “Peru's Petroleum Play: Amazon Oil and Politics,” Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting (<http://www.pulitzercenter.org/showproject.cfm?id=32>) reports that **The hydrocarbon industry is making a major push into the Tropical Andes, with “recent oil and gas finds turning the eastern slopes of the Andes Mountains and the adjacent Amazonian lowlands of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia into a hydrocarbon hotspot,”** “In Peru and Ecuador, where biodiversity levels peak and activists say Big Oil has penetrated public institutions, the problem is especially acute: Over half of Peru's pristine rainforests is now zoned for oil and gas, while 80 percent of the Ecuadorian Amazon is on the auction block”. This is **very destructive of the environment, causing major harm to indigenous peoples.**

ICG reported, August 7 (“Ecuador: Overcoming Instability?,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index>) **“Ecuador is poised for another round of instability unless the new president pays more attention to upholding the rule of law and building a consensus for fundamental reforms.”** President Rafael Correa has been taking the first steps to bring about political and socio-economic change, primarily through a Constituent Assembly (CA) to prepare a new constitution. “However, history shows the country's problems cannot be solved solely by constitutional engineering and that elites and traditional parties will do everything in their power to protect their privileges. To truly bury the ills of the old system and restore stability, Correa will need to ensure a level playing field for the CA, concentrate on the rule of law and develop wide-spread consent for his reforms.” Mark Schneider, Crisis Group's Senior Vice President and Special Adviser on Latin America states, “Correa and his left-wing administration portray themselves as catalysts for change to end the vicious cycle of chronic instability and provide a more just future for citizens. But past presidents have made similar claims, only to fall quickly into the same corrupt habits.” “Since 1996, Ecuador has had eight presidents, three of whom have been ousted by Congress and street protest. The rule of law has been progressively weakened and despite reform efforts, the political system has become largely dysfunctional. The country has also endured one of the continent's worst economic crises. Correa's “shock therapy” during his first six months in office has resulted in government domination of Congress, the Electoral Court, parts of the judiciary and other state institutions and the banking sector. He has also denounced critical media and engaged in reckless social spending. Real change is only possible if Correa acts more decisively against corruption and reinforces the rule of law as part of an effort to generate investment and guard against a major drop in oil prices that could further destabilize the country. He must democratise and institutionalise his Alianza País movement, and ensure a transparent and fair CA process by seeking consensus on key constitutional points and elaborating an economically sustainable development plan with broad citizen participation. Correa enjoys a record-high approval rating, but the 30 September election to the Constituent Assembly may prove difficult, as the political opposition has regrouped. ‘Correa has shown his talent for communicating with the poor and working class, but Ecuador will quickly return to instability if he fails to take the rest of the country with him on the path to democratic change,’ says Markus Schultze-Kraft, Director of Crisis Group's Latin America Program.”

The **Venezuelan government, in early May, furthered efforts to control the economy by regulating operations of a large Argentine owned steel maker and threatened to take over foreign owned banks if they did not offer low cost financing to domestic industry.** These moves are **part of a larger project to strengthen state enterprises and worker-led cooperatives, while developing regional financing alternatives to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.** This Spring, Venezuela was engaged in the **largest forced land redistribution program in the nations history, taking land from the small elite who own most of the rich farm land, and making it available to poor squatters and cooperatives.** There has been **violence in the process,** with some casualties on both sides, including **more than 160 peasants killed by gunmen hired by land owners, and eight land owners.**

The United Nations Population fund projected, in June, that by **next year 3.3 billion people, more than half the world's population, will live in cities and towns. And is anticipated to reach 5 billion by 2010,** with the swiftest urban growth in Africa requiring governments to develop adequate services in urban areas. The UN Office of Drugs and Crime, reported in late June, that **global drug use and production has declined, at least slightly** since last year, and is less than the peak of the last five years, prior to last year, so that there is at least **stability in global consumption,** with variation according to specific location. The **largest supplier of heroin is the heavily conflicted south of Afghanistan, where opium production has been increasing sharply.** For details, Warren Hogure, “Drug Use and Production Slowing, U,N, Finds,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 2007, p. A3.

The **G-8 meeting**, in June, pledged **\$60 billion for treating AIDS and other diseases in developing nations**.

Blacklist.com news (<http://www.blacklistednews.com/view.asp?ID=3111>) reported a BBC report (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6607757.stm>), of April 30, "**The United States and the European Union have signed up to a new transatlantic economic partnership at a summit in Washington**. The pact is **designed to boost trade and investment by harmonizing regulatory standards**, laying the basis for a US-EU single market. The two sides also signed an Open Skies deal, designed to reduce fares and boost traffic on transatlantic flights. But **little of substance was agreed on climate change**.

The Child Soldiers Protection Act of 2007 (S. 1175), that would bar the U.S. from sending military aid to nations that use child soldiers, was introduced into the U.S. Senate on April 19, 2007. **House Resolution 213 calling for the formation of the new UN Peace Keeping force, named the UN Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) that would help stop armed conflicts in the world before they turn into a Darfur-like humanitarian catastrophe**, had strong support in a letter, in June, from as many as 37 humanitarian and peace organizations. The letter noted with concern that, in recent years, despite repeated calls for rapid and effective action, the world community has failed to move against emerging crises.

"The U.S. Missile Defense System in Eastern Europe: An incomplete system that will leave the continent less secure," a presentation given by Victoria Samson, CDI research analyst at the GUE/NGL hearing: "The U.S. missile shield," European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium, June 12, 2007 found, "**This whole discussion of other countries partnering up with the U.S. missile defense system overlooks one very crucial detail: the system doesn't work, it has never proven it will work, and it is being rushed through its development to meet a political deadline and thus guaranteeing that it never will work the way in which supporters claim. But this discussion does ignore one very crucial consequence of collaborating on the U.S. missile defense system: that this will eventually lead to collaborating on the weaponization of space.**" The whole statement is available on the Center for Defense Institute web site: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=3983&from_page=../index.cfm. CDI has been raising the question, "**With the United States now contemplating space-based weapons as part of its high-priority missile defense architecture, the future of space is nearing a crossroads: will the 50-year tradition of international cooperation and space sanctuary prevail; or, will the fear of military and/or economic domination drive nations to compete aggressively for primacy in the ultimate 'high ground'?**" Discussion of this and related issues is at: <http://www.cdi.org/program/index.cfm?programid=68>. This includes analyzing the issue of **whether the Chinese launch of an anti-satellite missile will bring dangerous Sino-American competition, or lead to cooperation**. Meanwhile, **as the Bush administration has completed new rules allowing harsher interrogation methods (that were relied upon unofficially during Bush's tenure), experts advising the U.S. intelligence community find that the harsh techniques used since 2001 are outmoded, amateurish and un reliable – often producing false information (while undermining the moral standing and diplomatic power of the U.S., and helping anti American organizations that use terror, recruit). At the same time, the specialists complain that the U.S. has yet to develop an elite corps of interrogators trained to gain secrets from terror suspects (which requires using humane methods).**

The **U.S. aid organization CARE has begun turning down some U.S. government food assistance, holding that sending U.S farm commodities as foreign aid in many cases hurts the poor, and the economy in the receiving nation**. Earlier this year, the **U.S. government** heeded such international and domestic criticism, and **began a policy of purchasing 25% of its international food assistance locally**.

Violent crime rose in the U.S. last year, with a surge in homicides in Eastern Cities. For the second year in a row, the FBI reported a nation wide rise in violent crime, increasing by 1.3% in 2006 Over 2005. Cities with high increase murder rates include Newark, going from 23.3 per 100,000 in 2005, to 37.5 in 2006; Boston rising from 10.1 to 13.3; Philadelphia from 18.9 to 27.7; Jacksonville from 11.7 to 13.8; and Baltimore from 38.0 to 43.3. Interestingly, murder rates were highest, and rose the fastest, in place with relatively few immigrants (leading some law enforcement people to say of those places, "not enough immigrants").

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DIALOGUING

MINISTRY OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN NEPAL

Manish Thapa, Coordinator, Nepal Peace Initiative Alliance

Dear Friends & Colleagues

Namaste

I like to share you exciting news from Nepal and especially one of my initiatives that I launched in Nepal.

As most of you know that, I was lobbying for a state level Ministry/Department of Peace in Nepal since 2005. I formed a coalition known as "Nepal Peace Initiative Alliance" of 13 organizations which turned my initiative as a truly civil society movement as this coalition consists of NGOs, Academic Institutions, Media Organizations, Faith Based Organizations and Students Organizations including almost all sectors in Nepal. One of our basic objective was lobbying with the Government as well as with Maoists Insurgents at that time to start a dialogue for resolution of the conflict in Nepal and creation of state level Department of Peace (we thought at that point that creation of whole Ministry would be impossible so we demanded at least a Department within a Ministry of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs).

during the Reagan and Bush I years when Saddam was savaging the Iranians as well as the Iraqi Kurds. If tens of thousands of Kurds dieing in chemical attacks in those times didn't turn off our Big Hard Boys, then why should the present carnage?

My view is that the key objective of Bush et al in attacking Iraq was to establish a US-controlled "ally" or client state adjacent to Iran and Syria and, of course, to open up Iraqi oil reserves to multinational oil giants and supporting exploration companies, et cetera. ("Democracy" is a term used both by the former Soviets and by the Bush people to refer to a compliant client state, not to a truly democratic society).

If we are to bring an end to the bloodbath in Iraq and to the use of our national treasure to enrich the war profiteers, we must (1) disavow any future interest in controlling Iraq's oil, and (2) abandon our current plans for a series of major military bases there.

The Iraqis torpedoed Britain's plans for a British-controlled Iraq after World War I. Why should they allow the USA to set up a client state there now? Thus the first thing that we must do is to have Congress cancel all plans for military bases and to pass a resolution guaranteeing that Iraq will have sole control over its petroleum reserves.

We must also overturn the Bush opposition to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court over crimes committed by USCITS (US citizens and subjects). Congress must ratify the treaty establishing the ICC or at least proclaim our willingness to allow any of us who have been charged with criminal acts to be placed on trial according to international law. We now have evidence as to why the Bush people were opposed to the ICC, since it is clear that the torture and abuse of prisoners in violation of both our constitution and international law have been a part of Bush-Cheney behavior, approved at the highest levels.

Many Native American nations, especially in northern California, required an exchange of goods and wealth in order to settle grievances and to bring about peace between warring parties. The United States should be willing to pay large sums of money to individual Iraqis who have suffered because of our acts. Such a position should be established by Congress as a preliminary to negotiations with Iraqi groups. We will also have to calculate the damage done to Iraqi infrastructure during the bombings of Iraq and during our invasion and to be prepared to pay for that (preferably by means of a war profits tax on war-related industries and firms).

These are steps that should precede a ceasefire and negotiations for withdrawal, in my judgment.

Jack D. Forbes is the author of many books including the recent *AMERICAN DISCOVERY OF EUROPE*. His Native American perspectives on world issues provide unique insights, as in his classic work, *COLUMBUS AND OTHER CANNIBALS*, to be republished in 2007. He can be reached at Native American Studies Department, University of California, Davis, One Shields Ave., Davis California 95616 (530)752-3626, jdforbes@ucdavis.edu, <http://nas.ucdavis.edu/nasforbes.htm>. ndn = natives defending nations.

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IRAQ: THE WAY OUT

Alon Ben-Meir,* August 3, 2007

As Congress debates when and how to withdraw American troops from Iraq, the most critical question for every single member to answer is: What sort of Iraq will the United States leave behind? Having torn the country to pieces, destroyed its social order and brought millions of Iraqis to the point of utter despair through the Bush administration's tragic misadventure, America has a moral obligation to help the Iraqi people reconstitute their civil society and restore their shattered lives.

It is only in this context that the debate in Congress ought to be conducted. Its focus should not be on whether U.S. troops need to withdraw from Iraq in three, six, or nine months, or even in a year or two, but what must America do to help end the horrific civil war in a way that prevents a total disintegration of Iraqi society, thereby averting a further escalation of violence between the Sunnis and the Shiites that could rapidly plunge the entire Middle East into bloody turmoil. Those Democrats - and the several Republicans joining them - supporting a quick withdrawal are dead wrong in their assessment of what would be its effects. The likeliest scenario is that it will lead to anarchy in Iraq and usher in regional war of catastrophic proportions. Meanwhile, Republican members of Congress who support the president's policy still do not grasp, or cannot admit so, that nearly five years into the war, it has been a dismal failure.

Regardless of any signs of progress, there is no military solution because no troop surge can permanently quell the insurgency and end the sectarian violence. If there is a reduction of violence in and around Baghdad, which is debatable and in the number of American soldiers killed, it is temporary at best. The Sunni insurgents and the Shiite militias know only too well when to lie low and how and when to resume and intensify their bloody campaign against each other. Neither side is exhausted: each in fact is certain it can improve its position dramatically. Specifically, while the Sunnis continue to believe that they can regain power once the Americans leave, the Shiites want to consolidate their hold on power at any cost.

It would be only another great folly if the intent of the surge is to give U.S. commanders and the Maliki government more time to train and better prepare Iraqi internal security forces and the military to take over from the Americans. To begin with, both institutions are Shiite dominated, and the Shiite militias have effectively penetrated their ranks. Tribal and religious loyalties remain the driving forces behind their conduct and the administration can do very little to change socially, culturally, and politically ingrained behavior. On many occasions, members of the Iraqi security forces have directly participated in violent attacks against Sunni civilians. There is absolutely no evidence that the hatred and the deadly rivalry between the two sects that fuel the conflict will abate, especially when the outcome of their power struggle is undecided and existential fear of each other is omnipresent.

This brings us to the third fallacy of the administration. The president's propensity, supported by the vice president, to adopt a strategy

based on wishful thinking. This tendency is currently most apparent in Mr. Bush's efforts to push the Maliki government to enact laws and take concrete steps toward political reconciliation with the Sunnis. Meanwhile, just about everyone else of any influence--Congressional leaders, the American commanders on the ground in Iraq, and even members of the administration itself--has concluded that the Maliki government has not delivered. It has failed mainly because the Shiite political parties, especially the Dawa and the Sciri, are unwilling to relinquish any of their power that they have captured after decades of persecution by Saddam Hussein. Maliki is not Nelson Mandela. Forgetting and forgiving is not in the prime minister's dictionary. Besides, even if Mr. Maliki decides to take some steps toward political reconciliation, his efforts will be stymied by hardliners in his party. In his testimony on July 31 before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Admiral Michael G. Mullen, the nominee for chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that without political reconciliation, "no amount of troops in no amount of time will make much of difference." Meanwhile Iraq's largest Sunni political party resigned from the government dealing another serious blow to any prospect of reconciliation. Knowing what we now know about Mr. Maliki and the rivalries between the Shiite political parties and their militias, one might then ask where the administration's optimism comes from.

Given this situation, what course is open to Congress? A new strategy is needed, and at its center is the creation of a self-ruled Sunni entity, which I advocated here more than four years ago. The United States must persuade the Sunnis to establish self-rule in their three Sunni dominated provinces, and Congress must provide them with the initial economic assistance and military means and equipment for self-protection. In the interim, the United States must bring all the necessary pressure to bear on the Maliki government (including the threat to remove him from power) to pass the oil law, which is necessary for the long-term economic viability of any Sunni entity.

In time, perhaps 10 to 15 years, as the three separate entities--Kurdish, Sunni, and Shiite--each run their lives as they see fit, with somewhat loose federal ties, they will, of necessity, gravitate toward one another and begin to reconcile their differences and grievances. The sooner the administration and Congress adopt policies encouraging this end, the sooner the carnage in Iraq will end. With it, the potential for regional conflagration will diminish, and U.S. troops can then withdraw with some dignity. That much America owes the Iraqi people.

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HAMAS' BITTERSWEET VICTORY

Alon Ben-Meir - June 18, 2007

Thanks to Fatah's ineptitude and corruption, Israel's shortsightedness, and the Bush administration's misguided policies, Hamas is now in control of the Gaza strip, setting the stage for potentially ominous developments.

Specifically, it was Israel, seeking a counterbalance to the PLO, that gave Hamas's early organizers a helping hand in the mid-1980s; it was Fatah's unscrupulous ways of governance combined with endemic corruption under Arafat that promoted discontent and militancy; it was the Bush administration's naiveté and zealousness in pushing for Palestinian elections in January of 2006 against the advice of Abbas and Olmert without considering the consequences, and finally, it was the blind eye Egypt turned to the smuggling of weapons and explosives into Gaza during the past ten years, that have largely brought about this sorry state of affairs.

This conclusion is not the result of hindsight. The effects of such policies have been foreseen and written about on these pages and by many other commentators over the years. Decades of occupation, however explicable or necessitated by circumstances, have created two generations of embittered and disillusioned Palestinians with no hope of escape from intolerable conditions to a better future. And with no Palestinian Authority that cared, but an Authority that thrived on squandering resources and abusing power, an Authority infected to the core with nepotism, Hamas seized the opportunity to fill the vacuum, to offer meaning to otherwise shattered lives, to give the young a reason to live or die for a cause they could understand.

None of this, of course, justifies Hamas' extremism and militancy, not to speak of its avowal to seek the destruction of Israel. Indeed, while Hamas may have brought the hope of salvation to its followers, its determination to destroy Israel, should its leadership stick to this elusive goal, will bring about its own demise. And, because this too is a predictable end, now may be the moment that Hamas's leaders may well ask themselves: Where do we go from here? It is one thing to take over Gaza; it is an entirely different matter to make it a governable and economically viable entity where people can live in peace and security. Although for humanitarian reasons Israel will allow basic necessities to continue to flow to Gaza, it can still choke off the territory and destroy Hamas' leaders one by one. Another looming problem for Hamas is that, to protect its own interests and under increased pressure from the United States and Israel, Egypt may feel more compelled to prevent future smuggling of weapons into Gaza.

For obvious reasons, Hamas will now try to move quickly to consolidate its power. Thus, the last thing its leaders would want to do is to provoke the Israelis. In full control of Gaza, they must choose between demonstrating moderation or pressing on by committing violent acts against Israel. The period of indecision, however brief, will certainly intensify the conflict between the organizations' moderate and extremist wings. The moderates are likely to seek, at least temporarily, accommodation with Israel, and they have already put out some feelers, by ending the firing of rockets and perhaps negotiating the release of Shalit. The extremists, drunk with victory, and swept forward by the momentum of events, are equally likely to press on by challenging the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, thereby inviting Israel's military wrath.

For Israel the choices are somewhat clearer. Now that the so-called Palestinian unity government has been dissolved, Israel can focus on the West Bank and work with Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority's president. Israel's narrowed focus will not only prevent Hamas from expanding its presence and strength in the West Bank; it should greatly bolster Mr. Abbas, ensuring his hold on power through

direct economic assistance. To the same end, Israel should feel considerably freer in initiating extra measures to ease the life of Palestinians in the West Bank, even at the cost of taking certain risks, to create a most transparent contrast between the two areas. If this happens, the creation of two Palestinian entities allows the Fatah camp to demonstrate how moderation brings peace, progress, and prosperity and continued violent resistance brings nothing but more despair.

It is possible to see a silver lining in these developments, but then again they may represent another sad chapter in the ongoing tragedy of the Middle East. Which is the more likely outcome? I am not sure if the main players in the region, especially the United States, Israel, Egypt, and the Palestinians, have learned any lesson from the past or their own experiences. The new landscape in the Palestinian territories contains the potential for ominous developments and an opportunity to positively change the dynamic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But to widen any opening that Hamas's takeover of Gaza might have produced, Israel and the United States must come up with a new construct. The present situation allows Israel not only the chance to move the peace process forward with Fatah but to turn North and begin a dialogue with Syria and so isolate Hamas completely.

As for Hamas, left to its own devices, it may not withstand the temptation to provoke Israel, destroying its victory before tasting its fruits. The answer will come soon. For the sake of the Palestinians living in Gaza, I hope the moderates win the day.

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MID-EAST PEACE CONFERENCE UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE IRAQ WAR

Alon Ben-Meir, August 20, 2007

It appears that the Bush administration's proposed Mid-East peace conference may not be held before November 2007 -- a relatively long time from now considering the volatility of the region, especially the ever deteriorating situation in Iraq and the deepening Fatah-Hamas conflict. Holding such a conference during the current turmoil would seem to jeopardize any prospects of achieving even a modest success, that is, unless the administration abandons failed policies, embraces the Arab Initiative, and has all participants commit in advance to a negotiated set of principles.

Everyone knows that Saudi Arabia's participation is of paramount importance if only because it is a leading Sunni state. But Saudi participation is far more significant as it would signal a break with the past (the Saudis have never officially sat down with the Israelis) as well as lend greater credence to the conference and to any commitments made there. Even more significantly, Saudi Arabia is the author of the Arab Initiative, which calls on Israel to return the territories captured in 1967 in exchange for a comprehensive peace. The Arab Initiative is critical because it is exactly that: an Arab, not an American Road Map, not a Clinton plan, and not any other peace proposal from outside the Middle East. Because they are the authors of the Initiative, the Saudis' presence at the conference will likely engender wider Arab public support than the conference would otherwise attract. This is why the administration must officially embrace the Arab Initiative, thereby not just giving the Saudis a compelling reason to be at the conference but by this, providing an opening for them to assume a leading role in the peace process. The Saudi presence is also necessary since without a collective Arab will, as enunciated by the Initiative and the cover it provides, no effort will be successful in overcoming Islamic Arab militancy and no negotiation will lead anywhere. For any positive outcome to be possible, the Arab states need to work in concert, which makes the Initiative indispensable.

Although the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be the conference's focus, the administration must also make sure that countries in conflict with Israel, Syria and Lebanon in particular, are both present and solicited to present their positions and demands. The administration's policy toward Syria is a failed policy because it has impeded rather than helped move the peace process forward. Syria is the key to a peaceful Middle East, and it is high time for the administration to shift from a policy of regime change in Damascus to one of constructive engagement with Syria. Only at the negotiating table will the administration be able to determine the seriousness of Syria's repeated peace overtures. It is not entirely implausible that Damascus and Jerusalem could agree on a joint declaration accepting the principle of exchanging territories for a normal peace in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 242 and commit to a political solution to their conflict. But before any of this can occur, the administration must give Israel the green light to pursue the Syrian track. Without Syria's full participation, the conference is doomed from the outset.

As things now stand, Hamas will not participate in the conference, and while it may be useful in the short run for the administration to demonstrate that moderation pays by rewarding and empowering Mahmoud Abbas, Hamas cannot be wished away. Whereas it is a given that the envisioned Palestinian state must comprise the West Bank and Gaza, any negotiated declaration of principles between Israel and the Palestinians needs also to have a wide Palestinian appeal. Since Hamas is not expected to reform itself anytime soon, is unlikely to die a natural death, or be forcefully dismembered, it can be made to lose popular support only if the declaration of principles deals with fundamentals such as, borders, a general outline of a resolution to the refugee problem, and solid plans for Palestinian economic progress. In sum, in order to erode Hamas' position the Palestinians need to see a very real and compelling vision of a two-state solution. The Arab Initiative can play a significant role here by making it abundantly clear to Hamas that peace with Israel is the only real option. If Saudi Arabia, along with Egypt and Jordan and other moderate Arab states are joined by Syria, Hamas will be largely isolated politically and increasingly lose public support. To hammer this point home to Hamas, the administration should insist that any declaration of principles be put to a national Palestinian referendum in the West bank and Gaza and then provide the means, including gathering international support, to conduct such a referendum whatever the circumstances. If the leaders of Hamas resist, they will have to be faced down. Hamas must understand its options in advance, but a referendum could also give Hamas a face-saving way out.

After nearly five years of war in Iraq, one would hope that the administration has finally moved beyond the futility of having believed that the Arab-Israeli conflict could be resolved by removing Saddam Hussein from power. It would also be helpful if the President has understood that the conference he has called will produce nothing if he continues to rely on policies that have not moved the peace

process forward. The next couple of months will show whether Mr. Bush is serious about advancing the Arab-Israeli peace process or is merely using the conference to distract public attention here and in the Middle East from a disastrous war that has cast such an ominous cloud over the entire region.

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CROCODILE TEARS

Uri Avnery, 6/16/07

What happens when one and a half million human beings are imprisoned in a tiny, arid territory, cut off from their compatriots and from any contact with the outside world, starved by an economic blockade and unable to feed their families? Some months ago, I described this situation as a sociological experiment set up by Israel, the United States and the European Union. The population of the Gaza Strip as guinea pigs.

This week, the experiment showed results. They proved that human beings react exactly like other animals: when too many of them are crowded into a small area in miserable conditions, they become aggressive, and even murderous. The organizers of the experiment in Jerusalem, Washington, Berlin, Oslo, Ottawa and other capitals could rub their hands in satisfaction. The subjects of the experiment reacted as foreseen. Many of them even died in the interests of science. But the experiment is not yet over. The scientists want to know what happens if the blockade is tightened still further.

What has caused the present explosion in the Gaza Strip? The timing of Hamas' decision to take over the Strip by force was not accidental. Hamas had many good reasons to avoid it. The organization is unable to feed the population. It has no interest in provoking the Egyptian regime, which is busy fighting the Muslim Brotherhood, the mother-organization of Hamas. Also, the organization has no interest in providing Israel with a pretext for tightening the blockade.

But the Hamas leaders decided that they had no alternative but to destroy the armed organizations that are tied to Fatah and take their orders from President Mahmoud Abbas. The US has ordered Israel to supply these organizations with large quantities of weapons, in order to enable them to fight Hamas. The Israeli army chiefs did not like the idea, fearing that the arms might end up in the hands of Hamas (as is actually happening now). But our government obeyed American orders, as usual.

The American aim is clear. President Bush has chosen a local leader for every Muslim country, who will rule it under American protection and follow American orders. In Iraq, in Lebanon, in Afghanistan, and also in Palestine.

Hamas believes that the man marked for this job in Gaza is Mohammed Dahlan. For years it has looked as if he was being groomed for this position. The American and Israeli media have been singing his praises, describing him as a strong, determined leader, "moderate" (i.e. obedient to American orders) and "pragmatic" (i.e. obedient to Israeli orders). And the more the Americans and Israelis lauded Dahlan, the more they undermined his standing among the Palestinians. Especially as Dahlan was away in Cairo, as if waiting for his men to receive the promised arms. In the eyes of Hamas, the attack on the Fatah strongholds in the Gaza Strip is a preventive war. The organizations of Abbas and Dahlan melted like snow in the Palestinian sun. Hamas has easily taken over the whole Gaza Strip.

How could the American and Israeli generals miscalculate so badly? They are able to think only in strictly military terms: so-and-so many soldiers, so-and-so many machine guns. But in interior struggles in particular, quantitative calculations are secondary. The morale of the fighters and public sentiment are far more important. The members of the Fatah organizations do not know what they are fighting for. The Gaza population supports Hamas, because they believe that it is fighting the Israeli occupier. Their opponents look like collaborators of the occupation. The American statements about their intention of arming them with Israeli weapons have finally condemned them. That is not a matter of Islamic fundamentalism. In this respect all nations are the same: they hate collaborators of a foreign occupier, whether they are Norwegian (Quisling), French (Petain) or Palestinian.

In Washington and Jerusalem, politicians are bemoaning the "weakness of Mahmoud Abbas". They see now that the only person who could prevent anarchy in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank was Yasser Arafat. He had a natural authority. The masses adored him. Even his adversaries, like Hamas, respected him. He created several security apparatuses that competed with each other, in order to prevent any single apparatus from carrying out a coup-d'etat. Arafat was able to negotiate, sign a peace agreement and get his people to accept it.

But Arafat was pilloried by Israel as a monster, imprisoned in the Mukata'ah and, in the end, murdered. The Palestinian public elected Mahmoud Abbas as his successor, hoping that he would get from the Americans and the Israelis what they had refused to give to Arafat. If the leaders in Washington and Jerusalem had indeed been interested in peace, they would have hastened to sign a peace agreement with Abbas, who had declared that he was ready to accept the same far-reaching compromise as Arafat. The Americans and the Israelis heaped on him all conceivable praise and rebuffed him on every concrete issue.

They did not allow Abbas even the slightest and most miserable achievement. Ariel Sharon plucked his feathers and then sneered at him as "a featherless chicken". After the Palestinian public had patiently waited in vain for Bush to move, it voted for Hamas, in the desperate hope of achieving by violence what Abbas has been unable to achieve by diplomacy.

The Israeli leaders, both military and political, were overjoyed. They were interested in undermining Abbas, because he enjoyed Bush's confidence and because his stated position made it harder to justify their refusal to enter substantive negotiations.

They did everything to demolish Fatah. To ensure this, they arrested Marwan Barghouti, the only person capable of keeping Fatah together.

The victory of Hamas suited their aims completely. With Hamas one does not have to talk, to offer withdrawal from the occupied territories and the dismantling of settlements. Hamas is that contemporary monster, a "terrorist" organization, and with terrorists there is nothing to discuss.

So why were people in Jerusalem not satisfied this week? And why did they decide "not to interfere"? True, the media and the politicians, who have helped for years to incite the Palestinian organizations against each other, showed their satisfaction and boasted "we told you so". Look how the Arabs kill each other. Ehud Barak was right, when he said years ago that our country is "a villa in the jungle".

But behind the scenes, voices of embarrassment, even anxiety, could be heard. The turning of the Gaza Strip into Hamastan has created a situation for which our leaders were not ready. What to do now? To cut off Gaza altogether and let the people there starve to death? To establish contacts with Hamas? To occupy Gaza again, now that it has become one big tank trap? To ask the UN to station international troops there - and if so, how many countries would be crazy enough to risk their soldiers in this hell?

Our government has worked for years to destroy Fatah, in order to avoid the need to negotiate an agreement that would inevitably lead to the withdrawal from the occupied territories and the settlements there. Now, when it seems that this aim has been achieved, they have no idea what to do about the Hamas victory. They comfort themselves with the thought that it cannot happen in the West Bank. There, Fatah reigns. There Hamas has no foothold. There our army has already arrested most of Hamas' political leaders. There Abbas is still in power.

Thus speak the generals, with the generals' logic. But in the West Bank, too, Hamas did win a majority in the last elections. There, too, it is only a matter of time before the population loses its patience. They see the expansion of the settlements, the Wall, the incursions of our army, the targeted assassinations, the nightly arrests. They will explode. Successive Israeli governments have destroyed Fatah systematically, cut off the feet of Abbas and prepared the way for Hamas. They can't pretend to be surprised.

What to do? To go on boycotting Abbas or to provide him with arms, to enable him to fight for us against Hamas? To go on depriving him of any political achievement or to throw him some crumbs at long last? And anyway, isn't it too late? (And on the Syrian front: to go on paying lip service to peace while sabotaging all the efforts of Bashar Assad to start negotiations? To negotiate secretly, despite American objections? Or continue doing nothing at all?) At present, there is no policy, and no government which could determine a policy.

So who will save us? Ehud Barak? Barak's victory in this week's Labor Party leadership run-off has turned him almost automatically into the next Minister of Defense. His strong personality and his experience as Chief of Staff and Prime Minister assure him of a dominant position in the restructured government. Olmert will deal with the area in which he is an unmatched master - party machinations. But Barak will have a decisive influence on policy.

In the government of the two Ehuds, Ehud Barak will decide on matters of war and peace. Until now, practically all his actions have had negative results. He came very close to an agreement with Assad the father and escaped at the last moment. He withdrew the Israeli army from South Lebanon, but without speaking with Hizbullah, which took over. He compelled Arafat to come to Camp David, insulted him there and declared that we have no partner for peace. This dealt a death blow to the chances of peace, a blow which still paralyzes the Israeli public. He has boasted that his real intention was to "unmask" Arafat. He was more of a failed Napoleon than an Israeli de Gaulle. Will the Ethiopian change his skin, the leopard his spots? Hard to believe.

In the dramas of William Shakespeare, there is frequently a comic interlude at tense moments. And not only there. Shimon Peres, the person who in 55 years of political activity had never won an election, did the impossible this week: he got elected President of Israel.

Many years ago, I entitled an article about him "Mr. Sisyphus", because again and again he had almost reached the threshold of success, and success had evaded him. Now he might feel like thumbing his nose at the gods after reaching the summit, but - alas - without the boulder. The office of the president is devoid of content and jurisdiction. A hollow politician in a hollow position. Now everybody expects a flurry of activity at the president's palace. There will certainly be peace conferences, meetings of personalities, high-sounding declarations and illustrious plans. In short - much ado about nothing.

The practical result is that Olmert's position has been strengthened. He has succeeded in installing Peres in the President's office and Barak in the Ministry of Defense. In the short term, Olmert's position is assured. And in the meantime, the experiment in Gaza continues, Hamas is taking over and the trio - Ehud 1, Ehud 2 and Shimon Peres are shedding crocodile tears.

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A SMARTER HAMAS STRATEGY

David Drelinger and IPF Staff*

Source: *Israel Policy Forum Focus* (<http://www.israelpolicyforum.org>), July 11, 2007. Distributed by Common Ground News Service (www.commongroundnews.org) with permission to republish.

Israel and the Bush administration appear to have settled on a strategy to deal with the new situation in Gaza: build up Fatah in the West Bank as an alternative to Hamas, while isolating the new regime - politically and economically - in Gaza. In time, they suggest, a strengthened and reorganized Fatah will be able to take over Gaza as Hamas' popularity plummets.

At the same time, many observers of Israeli-Palestinian relations and the dynamics of internal Palestinian politics are coming to the opposite conclusion: they argue that Hamas as a political force is here to stay, and that they will eventually have to be brought into the political process if any progress is to be made. Many claim that a strategy based on strangling the Hamas government in Gaza in the hopes that its residents will demand a more moderate regime is fantastical at best.

Stacie L. Pettyjohn, a Research Fellow at the Brookings Institution, argued in a Daily Star op-ed that "In order to find a lasting solution to intra-Palestinian violence, not to mention the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the United States and Israel must accept that Hamas is a significant force in Palestinian politics, one which cannot be left out of the political process."

Jackson Diehl of the Washington Post wrote incredulously of an Israeli official's assertion that isolating Palestinians in Gaza would impel them to embrace moderates: "In other words, Israeli policy is counting on Gaza's impoverished... population to stage the first popular revolution against a domestic government in the modern history of the Arab Middle East. It also assumes that people suffering from extreme privation will respond by demanding a more moderate government."

Diehl's point is instructive: when Israel and the Quartet slapped sanctions on the PA after Hamas won legislative elections in 2006, Palestinians - who bore the brunt of the suffering - did not blame Hamas for their troubles, but rather the outside forces who they perceived to be orchestrating their economic collapse. Today, as Steven Erlanger reported in the New York Times, the renewed isolation of Gaza is drying up even more international aid and hundreds of thousands of jobs and salaries. Is there any reason to believe that this policy will lead to a better result than last time?

Instead, these analysts argue that the international community should lower its blanket isolation of Gaza to give moderates - be they members of Hamas or not - a chance to emerge. According to these observers, the international community would do well to give Hamas a chance to govern, which would force its leaders to make difficult choices, while at the same time not standing in the way of a power-sharing deal with Fatah, something they believe is inevitable anyway.

Of course, this isn't a perfect arrangement either. Giving Hamas control over Gaza's border with Egypt - the source of arms smuggling - is one obvious issue. Similarly, there is no way to be certain that Hamas is even capable of governing, and that Gaza will not devolve into a strip of territory run by warlords or clan-based mafias.

That is why the policy of strengthening Abbas and Fatah is not a bad idea. Abbas is still the President of the PA and is a partner for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations - it makes sense for Israel to build relationships and coordinate actions with him. Furthermore rebuilding the social and political institutions of the PA in the West Bank, while providing Fatah with the political space to reform itself and eliminate some of the corruption in its ranks, is in Israel's long-term interest. But this will require major initiatives beyond what the Israeli government seems capable of taking; it is highly unlikely that the release of 250 (out of a total of about 13,000) Palestinian prisoners will turn the tide in his favour and weaken the appeal of Islamist elements.

Strengthening Abbas is important but it is not enough, and that's the reason the United States needs to think beyond short-term tactics and develop a long-range strategy. As Washington prepares for what looks to be an inevitable redeployment of most US troops out of Iraq, efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will become a central front in the United States' effort to regain influence and respectability in the Middle East.

Building up Abbas with major prisoner releases, a settlement freeze, the removal of roadblocks, and negotiations must be part of this strategy, but it certainly can't be everything. A carrot and stick approach - perhaps one that offers Hamas some form of international engagement in exchange for a comprehensive ceasefire with Israel and the release of the captive soldier Gilad Shalit - could force Hamas to make difficult choices about the movement's direction and is probably the least-bad way to deal with the unfortunate situation created by Hamas' election victory last year and recent take-over of Gaza.

Hopefully working on a constructive and long-term strategy to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is what Secretary Rice's upcoming visit to Israel and the West Bank next week is all about. And the tools to make a difference are available. Tony Blair, the Quartet's Special Envoy, is beginning his efforts to reform the PA and, though it's not explicitly stated in his mandate, he has declared his interest in mediating political dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis.

The Secretary's effort might also get a boost from the Arab League, which sent its first official emissaries - the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Jordan - to Israel to discuss the Arab League Initiative on Wednesday. This is a positive development, though it may not be the grand symbolic gesture (i.e. Saudi King Abdullah holding a photo-op with Prime Minister Olmert) that Israeli politicians feel they need to get public backing to move forward on the initiative.

The Arab countries are unlikely to make any large gestures without feeling confident of a wholehearted US commitment to the process. So far in the Bush administration, that commitment has been absent, but Secretary Rice, perhaps with a push from Tony Blair, can start to change that. The logic of engagement may have become too compelling to ignore.

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RECAPTURING LEGITIMACY IN PALESTINE

Michael Meyer-Resende and Michel Paternotre*

Source: *Daily Star* (<http://www.dailystar.com.lb>), July 11 2007. Distributed by Common Ground News service with permission to republish.

The West got it wrong, when it believed it was right to promote democratic elections in the Palestinian territories last year, but that Hamas could not win those elections. Western leaders are getting it wrong again, when they suggest that President Abbas is the only Palestinian player with democratic legitimacy and that he won elections with a 'landslide', in the words of the UN's Roed-Larsen.

This is not supported by the facts. Abbas was elected in 2005 with some 60% of the votes but those elections were not contested by Hamas. He received 500,000 votes in an electorate of some 1,2 million. A year later, in more competitive elections, Hamas gained 44% of the votes, amounting to 440,000 votes. Both elections were considered to have been genuinely democratic by a myriad of international observers.

The latest opinion poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research indicates that a meagre 13% of respondents declared themselves satisfied with President Abbas' handling of the crisis and his overall approval rating fell to 36%. Of course Abbas remains the legitimate President, but not more than Hamas was the legitimate government party. Contrary to perceptions that the West Bank is 'Fatahland', last year Hamas won a higher proportion of seats there than in the Gaza strip.

Legitimacy and the perception of legitimacy is important: It is the only bastion against a complete breakdown of government in a context where 'state' security forces have degenerated into partisan actors. It is therefore vital to look for solutions to the crisis that are based on Palestinians' sense of legitimacy, not that imagined in some Western capitals.

President Abbas' legitimacy will wear thin if he cannot deliver stability fast. Legally the authority of the emergency government appears to expire after 30 days. According to the basic law, 2/3 of the Legislative Council would have to confirm the emergency, but that will not happen, given that Hamas dominates the council and many law-makers are in Israeli prisons. The expiry of the 30 days may be a legal problem for donors, who need transparent and lawful accounting mechanisms, but all this is widely considered to be a political rather than a legal issue.

Some 75% of Palestinians want fresh Presidential and legislative elections, which would overcome the legitimacy issue. This may look tempting for Fatah, as opinion polls point at a slump in support for Hamas (33%) and a lead of Abbas against Hamas' Hanyieh if there were Presidential elections. However, elections would be a risky gamble for Fatah, because it created an election system that favours disciplined candidates and voters, not a Fatah strength. More importantly, it appears impossible that proper elections could be held in the current conditions. The independent election commission did an admirable job in the last elections, but who could guarantee their independence in the current situation? And how could Fatah campaign in the Gaza strip or Hamas in parts of the West Bank?

How then can further civil war be avoided and where should legitimacy flow from? One opinion poll result that is often drowned out by crisis reporting on Palestine is that 70% of Palestinian favour negotiations with Israel on a Palestinian state in Gaza and most parts of the West Bank. Rapid negotiations on a final status could possibly keep Abbas' legitimacy up, but this is an unlikely prospect. It may therefore be necessary to legitimise such negotiations upfront. Last year President Abbas played with the idea of holding a referendum on the "prisoners' document", a declaration by Palestinians held in Israeli prisons, including the popular Fatah-leader Marwan Barghouti. The document called for a unity government and peace negotiations with Israel to be carried out by the President Abbas and the PLO. At the time Abbas' used the referendum idea to pressure Hamas into a more flexible position.

The referendum plan may still have merits in comparison with fast or no elections. Whether in reference to the prisoners document or not, President Abbas could call for a referendum to give him a mandate to negotiate a peace agreement in a specific timeframe, promising that any peace deal would again be put to a referendum. For Hamas it may be difficult to object to such a plan, which after all promises to go back to the Palestinians on the most important question, in the face of a collapse of the Palestinian Authority. However, Abbas would need to propose this in good faith negotiations with Hamas, because there is no clear legal basis for holding a referendum and Hamas should not perceive this as a mere replay of last years' initiative. Abbas would have to offer something in return, such as a government of technocrats to oversee internal affairs until the conclusion of peace negotiations and subsequent general elections.

The moment for peace negotiations is worse than two years ago, when nobody pressed Israel to talk to Abbas and his Fatah government, but it is unlikely to get better. The West should not support Fatah to fight it out with Hamas, which would turn the territories into another Iraq. Fatah and Hamas have committed egregious crimes against each other, which cannot be undone. The international community should strongly encourage them to talk to each other and support Israel to negotiate. Most Israelis favour the two-state solution. Only a peace deal with agreed borders will allow the world to distinguish whether Israel's use of force in the West Bank is aimed at defending borders or at providing cover for ever-expanding towns and settlements, but time seems to run out for a two-state solution. By voting in favour of a mandate for peace negotiations by Abbas, Palestinians would not only extend his political legitimacy, they would also create the political momentum for the type of serious negotiations missing since 2001.

*Michael Meyer-Resende and Michel Paternotre work for Democracy Reporting International, a Berlin-based group promoting democracy. This is a personal opinion.

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CAN POLITICIANS SEIZE THE OPPORUNITY?

Source: *The Jerusalem Times* (<http://www.jerusalem-times.net>), June 30, 2007. Distributed by Search for Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

The recent Sharm El-Sheikh summit resembled a love fest, where all four leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Israel and Palestine agreed the time is ripe to move forward. Unfortunately, the local public remains sceptical as similar meetings have taken place, with promises made, but no tangible results. The urgency of the summit stems from the dangerous dive into the unknown, as a serious rift developed with Gaza falling under control of Hamas and Fatah seemingly in control of the West Bank.

International pressure, mainly American-Israeli, led Hamas to pre-empt Fatah, by using its military strength in Gaza, to oust troops loyal to President Mahmoud Abbas and allowed Hamas to accentuate that the PLO is not the only political voice of the Palestinian people. Both Hamas and Fatah emerged from the confrontation in front of the Palestinian public as losers. Hamas lost the public support that the elections bestowed on the movement. Using force and committing atrocities against Palestinian brothers not only undermined the democratic process but severely questioned Hamas's legitimacy.

The immediate backlash was an increase in the popularity of President Abbas and backing for his newly installed emergency government. How long this popular support will last depends on the ability of the President to demonstrate to the people that he can extract from the Olmert government actions and not just promises. Abbas has prohibited all others, even Fatah's al-Aqsa brigades, from carrying arms and ordered the PA security forces to collect all such weapons. In return, Olmert should order the IDF and Shin Bet to stop their daily raids, targeted killings and arrests in the West Bank and to return to security coordination between the two sides. Olmert and his aides should understand that the PA and its forces in the West Bank are under orders of the legitimately elected President and not quislings under the beck and call of Israel. So far, Israel and its leaders have brought more harm than support to Abbas. Olmert has to understand that he is dealing with the leadership of the Palestinian people and not with lackeys and employees at his disposal.

President Abbas has crossed his Rubicon and is actively implementing phase one of the road map process obligations; the Israeli government should, in parallel, remove illegal outposts and freeze settlement activities. Hard decisions have to be carried out by both sides, otherwise the moderate Palestinian leadership will lose credibility in front of its public. The Palestinian opposition is advancing that Israel is unwilling to carry out its obligations.

In the next twenty-four months, an active policy of stabilization in the region should be the primary responsibility of the leaders of Israel and Palestine, the Arab countries and the international community as expressed in the Quartet. On the Palestinian side, the President should work toward creating a political horizon with his Israeli counterparts. The Palestinian public has fully supported Abbas in the aftermath of the armed takeover of Gaza by Hamas, but the public also supports the Arab effort to pave the way to internal Palestinian reconciliation that will allow eventually a second national unity government. The PA under PM Salam Fayyad should continue the reform process while helping the Palestinian economy regain its health in the West Bank and Gaza in order to heal the present rift. It is not enough to allow humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, it is essential to create jobs. PM Fayyad has a tough agenda to tackle, but most Palestinians believe he can do the job. Fatah has to clean its act and hold its 6th Fatah Convention, elect younger leaders and prepare itself for the coming elections.

The Quartet has a special super-envoy, the newly anointed former PM Tony Blair; his main job is not to see that humanitarian aid reaches Gaza, or to ease the movement of people and goods. Blair's main job is to create a political horizon for Abbas and Olmert, discreetly, away from the media, to narrow the gap on final status issues and help all the parties in the conflict - Israelis, Palestinian, Syrians, and Lebanese - take advantage of the window of opportunity that the Arab peace initiative provides. Tony Blair does not need an initiation period to absorb the facts; for the past ten years, the Middle East has been high on the British agenda. One word of advice: Blair could work on phase three of the road map process while supporting both sides to meet the obligations of phase one, with phase two becoming relevant if the Israeli and Palestinian sides reach an understanding on the issues of the two-state solution.

In the present stabilization period, a long-term ceasefire, implemented by both sides in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, could help bring about an interim period in a way similar to what phase two of the road map suggests. Hamas advocated a long term Hudna from the first day it came to power; some Israelis are seriously discussing for the first time Hudna-ceasefire. In a way, President Abbas should seriously consider it, as it will help the internal reconciliation process. Hamas in the meantime has to decide if it wants to be involved and part of the process, to transform itself into a political movement and to accept, like all the other movements, to disarm its military wing.

Dark clouds cover the whole region, and as all sides believe that no military solution exists for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they should cooperate to work for a negotiated settlement. In the past the Labor Party advocated such a course but failed to realize it alone, it needed Begin and the Likud to bring about the first Arab Peace Treaty with Egypt. Fatah under Arafat and Abbas worked for a settlement with Israel, but the process will not move forward until Hamas plays the role of the Likud. The policy of sanctions and isolation have hardened Hamas; it is high time to engage them, now they have a stake to protect.

*Mr Hanna Siniora is the Palestinian co-CEO of IPCRI -- the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (www.ipcri.org).

WANTED: AN ISRAELI SCHOOL OF REALISM

Daniel Levy*

Source: Prospects for Peace (<http://www.prospectsforpeace.com>), June 29, 2007. Distributed by Search for Common Ground News service with permission to republish.

Speaking at the Sharm summit this week, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert seemed to hit all the right notes - empathy, generosity, and a passion for peace. It was a nice speech, lacking only one thing: relevance to the regional strategic environment. This absence of a realist policy outlook is hardly unique to Mr. Olmert. Much of the left still clings to the "heap everything on Abbas' shoulders" approach that is at least two years past its sell-by date, while more and more of the right is flirting with a "give some of the West Bank to Jordan" idea that was buried 20 years ago (by the Likud itself!). Olmert's people will repeat the mantra that he will work sincerely, if cautiously, with the region's moderates to defeat the extremists, and yet the former appear ever-weaker and the latter ever-bolder. It is a policy operating on autopilot, and it is not working.

Three leaders racing against the clock (George Bush, Mahmoud Abbas, Olmert) may attempt a dash to the finish line of a ceremonial declaration of Palestinian statehood - with the help of their new envoy - but this is hardly a recipe for sustainable peace and security.

What is missing and needed is for an Israeli school of realism to emerge, capable of addressing the new challenges of the region. This realist school should set out four strategic goals for Israel: to stabilize Israel's security environment; prevent Al-Qaeda copycats from gaining a foothold on Israel's doorstep; pursue an end of occupation that will allow for realization of permanent, agreed, recognized and legitimate borders on all fronts; and more effectively isolate the Ahmadinejadist wing in Iran's leadership. These goals are of course interlinked in many ways, and although this is not the place for a detailed blueprint, here are some guidelines for pursuing them.

The key place to begin is in rethinking the policy of driving the friendly leaders of deeply divided neighbouring states or pre-states further toward a politics that is ungovernable and irreconcilable. This applies to the Palestinian Authority and Lebanon, each in its own way. Abbas and Fouad Siniora are both being driven (politically) off a cliff. Locking them in to the "moderates' embrace," rather than facilitating a difficult domestic political accommodation, is not a way to advance stability, security or Israel's interests. The consequence, already witnessed, is a combination of pushback from powerful domestic constituencies, often directed at Israel, and the emergence of Al-Qaeda wannabes in the space created by the political vacuum, chaos and alienation.

In the Palestinian arena Israel should recognize that more is less - the more we hug Abbas the less he can deliver; and that less is more - the less we interfere in Palestinian politics the more likely it is to produce a stable outcome that can be a so-called "address" for Israel. A comprehensive cease-fire should be pursued and then respected, which of course includes Hamas. Single-party Fatah rule cannot be reimposed, Hamas is here to stay, an accommodation that serves Israel can be reached, and the splinters thrown off by an effort to crush Hamas will be extremely painful.

This conflict, even with Hamas, is not about an absolute rejection of the "other" or clash of civilizations. It remains grievance-driven - and can be resolved by ending the occupation. The alternative framing plays into the hands of Al-Qaeda. Palestinian power-sharing and a new unity government, now more complicated, still offers the best way forward for stability, the two-state solution and Israeli security. This idea is already being floated by elements in Hamas, the Arab world and even Fatah. It makes Abbas more, not less, relevant.

On Israel's northern border, roles have been reversed: We used to need a Syrian arrangement for peace with Lebanon; now we need a Lebanese arrangement for peace with Syria. That was the message from the Bush-Olmert meeting. The American president will apparently cling to the Cedar Revolution until Lebanon resembles Iraq, there will be no serious US engagement with Syria and therefore no Israeli-Syrian peace process. But the appearance of Al-Qaeda-inspired Fatah al-Islam in Tripoli and the Jund al-Sham and Usbat al-Ansar in Sidon should focus minds in Jerusalem.

The political stand-off in Lebanon and potential for escalation and collapse is regionally destabilizing. Here, too, a political deal that recognizes the Lebanese reality should be brokered, and if Jerusalem needs to explain this to Washington, so be it. While Lebanon will certainly not be handed back to Syria, all sides will have to swallow hard and reach an ugly compromise, including on the Hariri tribunal.

Discussions with Syria will not only have an impact on the Golan and on Hezbollah's options, but also facilitate movement on the Palestinian track and effect Hamas' calculations - helping to create a positive and mutually re-enforcing regional trend. Israel would then also be in a position to reap benefits from the Arab League initiative.

Which brings us finally to Iran. There are additional things Israel can do to isolate the "messianic" and dangerous Ahmadinejad tendency, beyond the promotion of sanctions. Israel should avoid ratcheting up the military rhetoric that is a gift to Ahmadinejad, while pursuit of the above regional strategy would undermine the effectiveness of playing the anti-Israel card and limit Iran's capacity to interfere as a regional spoiler.

As he attempts to re-launch his premiership, Ehud Olmert needs to think big, regional and realistic - not narrow, parochial and dogmatic.

*Daniel Levy is a senior fellow and director of both the Prospects for Peace Initiative at The Century Foundation and the Middle East Initiative at the New America Foundation.

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RECOGNIZING NEW REALITIES

Rafi Dajani*

Source: *The Jerusalem Post* (<http://www.jpost.com>), July 2, 2007. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

The recent military takeover of Gaza by Hamas has completely reshuffled the cards of the Palestinian political deck. As with any political earthquake of this magnitude, the new situation presents both opportunities and dangers. What will determine which prevails are the policies that will be adopted to deal with the new realities.

Before exploring what these new policies must be in the context of achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace, it is worth analysing the failed policies that resulted in the outcome in Gaza, as it is a safe bet that this outcome was not the intended one, save for Hamas, Syria and Iran.

There is no shortage of blame to go around. The Palestinian leadership did not decisively deal either with the growing military threat of Hamas as a militia, nor with the deep rot afflicting Fatah. Hamas, as the new Palestinian political actor, failed to address the international aid embargo levied against the Palestinians and the conditions for its removal. Elements within both Hamas and Fatah unhappy with the Mecca coalition government were encouraged in the belief that they could destroy the other.

Farther afield, Israeli and US policies that focused on isolating Hamas without focusing nearly as much on strengthening Abbas with more than words further weakened the Palestinian president internally and rallied Palestinians around the Hamas "underdog." The Quartet conditions, while necessary as an end result, were unrealistic in their time-frame and their inflexibility in encouraging Hamas's groping movement toward them.

Iran, aspiring to be the main regional power, adopted the Palestinian cause for its own interests and supplied weapons and money to Hamas through a problematic Sinai-Gaza border.

Formulating new policies that might achieve their intended results requires first and foremost recognizing three realities. First is that there can be no stability and security for Palestinians, Israelis and the region without minimal unity among the Palestinians, just as there can be no peace process without minimal Palestinian consensus.

Second is that a policy of feeding the West Bank and starving Gaza is illusory. No current or future Palestinian leader worth his salt will sit idly by while 1.5 million civilians in Gaza suffer collective punishment for the Hamas take-over. In addition, a hungry and seething population will not blame Hamas for its condition but will instead undoubtedly swell the ranks not only of Hamas, but also much more ominously of al-Qaeda and affiliated organizations.

Third is that Hamas cannot be eliminated from the Palestinian political scene or destroyed militarily. Owing much of its formative development to Israeli support and its official political ascendancy to the insistence of the US on the elections that brought it to power, it has become a permanent fixture of the Palestinian landscape, supported by a sizable minority of Palestinians and Iranian and Syrian patrons.

Given these three realities, the formulation of policies that preserve Palestinian unity, realize Israeli security, and set the path toward a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the conflict based on the two-state solution need to contain the following ingredients.

The Palestinian president and new prime and finance ministers must be allowed freedom in disbursing international aid not only to the West Bank but also to Gaza, whether to meet Gaza's humanitarian needs or to pay the salaries of those workers in Gaza, including members of the security services, whose allegiance is to the new government.

Efforts to strengthen Abbas and his platform of achieving statehood through peaceful negotiations must move beyond lip service and include Israeli freezing of settlements and removal of outposts and checkpoints, releasing Palestinian prisoners, resuming the handover of Palestinian tax revenues and last but certainly not least, beginning serious talks on a final political settlement.

Justified efforts to isolate Hamas militarily, diplomatically, and politically must allow the organization an out, a path to evolving into strictly a political organization through meeting conditions within a realistic time-frame.

Immediately, would be Hamas's total adherence to a cease-fire and giving Abbas complete authority to negotiate a permanent settlement with Israel. Later, would be recognition of Israel. Otherwise Hamas will return to its role as a spoiler outside the political arena with violent consequences for Israelis and Palestinians.

Strengthening Abbas and reforming Fatah will allow Abbas to negotiate a future power-sharing agreement with a reforming Hamas from a position of equality and credibility with the Palestinian people. It will also make statehood look real enough to Palestinians for the majority to abandon Hamas's vision and appeal.

When Palestinians come to believe that a real two-state deal is available through Abbas, many will reconsider their support of Hamas as has consistently been shown by polls showing a majority of Palestinians supporting a two-state solution.

Finally, the US as the indispensable actor to the conflict must re-engage in a serious and sustained manner. Though too late to achieve the Bush vision of a Palestinian state in the remaining months of his presidency, serious groundwork can be laid upon which the next administration can build.

The alternative is not simply the end of the Palestinian dream of statehood, but the maturing of the most extreme Islamist elements already evident in Iraq, Lebanon and Gaza. That whirlwind will be reaped by all.

*Rafi Dajani is the executive director of the American Task Force on Palestine, an organisation advocating the US interest in the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

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GUSH SHALOM STATEMENT ABOUT THE SUFFERING OF PALESTINIANS STUCK AT THE CLOSED RAFAH BORDER CROSSING, July 2, 2007

Gush Shalom, the Israeli Peace Bloc, today sent a strong protest to Prime Minister Olmert and Defence Minister Barak, and also a letter to representatives of the European Union - warning about the extreme suffering of about 6000 Palestinians stuck on the Egyptian side of the closed Rafah Border crossing and unable to return to their homes: "This shameful and unacceptable situation must be ended forthwith".

The Rafah Border crossing has been closed ever since the eruption of confrontations between the Palestinian militias in the Gaza strip, which culminated with the Hamas takeover. Some six thousands of residents who found themselves at the time on the Egyptian side - among them a considerable number returning from medical treatment at Egyptian hospitals - have been stranded ever since: waiting, sleeping, and living in the streets under the hot sun, unable to wash, and with no idea how long they would still have to wait. The money most of them had on them already ran out. And since last week the services of Western Union and DHL in the Gaza Strip were discontinued under Israeli and American pressure, making it impossible for families to send money to their trapped relatives.

Yesterday, July 1, Taghreed Abeaed, a 31 years old Palestinian woman, mother of five children - died while waiting in the very bad conditions at Rafah Crossing. Even her body is not allowed to be brought back into the Gaza Strip. "These stranded Gaza Strip residents have no part in the internecine conflict between Fatah and Hamas; it is not at their expense that the complicated problems of the Gaza Strip's legal and political status should be solved. They are innocent civilians caught cruelly in an unpredictable trap, and it is your duty to provide them the elementary right of going home" wrote Gush Shalom to the Israeli PM and Defense Minister.

Also the EU representatives were approached. "We place part of the responsibility and blame on the European. Since 2005, the armed forces of Israel are not in direct control of the Rafah Border Crossing. However, its opening was made conditional upon the presence of European monitors. The EU however has given the Government of Israel a complete power of veto. It is in practice the Defense Minister of Israel who decides whether or not there will be European monitors at Rafah, and thus whether the crossing will be open or closed. Now, the absence of European monitors at Rafah serves the encirclement and siege of Gaza, shortsightedly and cruelly decreed by the Government of Israel. In this way, the EU has abdicated its own often proclaimed responsibility to promote the welfare and peaceful future of all peoples in the Middle East. Gush Shalom calls upon the Europeans to emancipate themselves, form an independent policy and exert their influence to the reopening of the Rafah Crossing.

For further details: Adam Keller, adam@gush-shalom.org.

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THE DIRTY WORD

Uri Avnery, June 6, 2007, avnery@actcom.co.il

There never was a darker Middle East summit meeting. The darkest there can be. The four leaders at Sharm al-Sheik did not sit together at an intimate round table. Each one sat alone behind a huge table of his own. That ensured a striking separation between them. The four long tables hardly touched. Each one of the leaders, with his assistants behind him, sat like a solitary island in a vast sea.

All four - Hosni Mubarak, King Abdallah of Jordan, Ehud Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas - bore a severe countenance. Throughout the official part of the conference, not a single smile could be seen. One after the other, the four delivered their monologues. An exercise in shallow hypocrisy, in empty deceit. Not one of the four raised himself above the murky puddle of sanctimonious phrases.

A short monologue from Mubarak. A short monologue from Abdallah. A medium-length monologue from Abbas. An interminably long monologue from Olmert - a typical Israeli speech, overbearing, educating the whole world, sermonizing and dripping with morality. Held, of course, in Hebrew, with the obvious aim of appealing to the home public. The speech included all the required phrases - Our soul longs for peace, The vision of two states, We do not want to rule over another people, For the good of coming generations, bla-bla-bla. All in standard colonial style: Olmert even talked about "Judea and Samaria", using the official terminology of the occupation.

But in order to "strengthen" Abbas, Olmert addressed him as "President" and not as "Chairman", which has been the *de rigueur* title used by all Israeli representatives since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. (The wise men of Oslo circumvented this difficulty by referring -in all three languages - to the head of the Authority by the Arab title of Ra'is, which can mean both president and chairman. And the word that did not appear throughout this long monologue? "Occupation".

Occupation? What occupation? Where occupation? Anybody seen any occupation? The occupation was not on the agenda of this dark summit. Even in their wildest dreams, the Arab participants could not imagine anything more wonderful than "easing the restrictions". Making life a little bit less difficult for the suffering population. Giving back the Palestinian tax revenues. (That is to say, Israel may give back some of the money it has pocketed.) Moving some of the roadblocks that prevent people from going from one village to the next. (That has already been promised many times and will not happen this time either, because the army and the Shin Bet object. Olmert has already announced that it is impossible for "security reasons".)

With the air of a Sultan throwing coins to the paupers in the street, Olmert announced his intention of releasing some Fatah prisoners. 250 coins, 250 prisoners. That was the "generous gift" that was to make the Palestinians jump for joy, "strengthen" Abbas and awaken to new life the dry bones of his organization. If Olmert had not been sitting so far away from Abbas, he could just as well have spat in his face.

First at all, the number is ridiculous. There are now about 10,000 (ten thousand) Palestinian "security" prisoners in Israeli prisons. Every night, about a dozen more are being taken from their homes. Since there is no more room in the prison facilities, the wardens will be pleased to get rid of some inmates. In previous gestures of this nature, the Israeli government has set free prisoners whose term was nearing the end anyhow, and car thieves.

Second, fraternization between Fatah and Hamas is well established in prison. The violent struggle in Gaza has not been projected into the prisons. The famous "prisoners' document", which laid the foundation for the (now defunct) Unity Government, was worked out jointly by Fatah and Hamas prisoners. Olmert's announcement of his readiness to release Fatah - and only Fatah - prisoners is designed to sabotage this unity. It could stigmatize the Fatah people as collaborators, and Abbas as a leader who is concerned only with the members of his own organization, not giving a damn for the others.

So what did come out of this summit conference? Some say: zero plus, some say: zero minus. No wonder that the Arab participants looked so somber. What was it good for? Abbas was in need of strengthening after losing the Gaza Strip. Olmert promised the Americans to strengthen him. But after the conference, Olmert could have used the phrase customarily uttered by Israeli leaders visiting bereaved families: "I came to strengthen, but it is I who have been strengthened."

The sole winner was Olmert. The conference has proved that Mubarak's and Abdallah's influence on Israel is nil, and that Abbas' position is even worse. To eliminate any doubt about this, Olmert sent the army at once into the kasbah of Nablus, the heart of Abbas' virtual kingdom, in order to "arrest" the leaders of the military arm of Fatah. They put up determined resistance, wounding several soldiers. A lieutenant lost a hand and a leg. In another incursion, this time into Gaza, 13 Palestinians were killed, including a boy of 9. According to the official version, the aim was to throw the militants off balance so that they would feel hunted.

If this is not occupation, what is it? But God forbid that anyone mention this word in diplomatic discourse - the ten letters that have turned into an obscenity. A ten-letter word that has become taboo in polite society. The disappearance of the occupation as a subject for discussion is the real message of the conference. All the arrangements and ceremonies were designed to create the false impression that Olmert and Abbas were the heads of two states conducting negotiations on the basis of equality - rather than the leader of an occupying power and a representative of the occupied population. That is true for all the discourse about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at this stage: the world has become so used to the occupation that its very existence has ceased to be a subject for discussion.

That is also evident in the daily reporting on the conflict in the Israeli and foreign media. They report on what's happening - the Gaza take-over by Hamas, the actions of the Israeli army, the problems of Abbas, the decisions of the Israeli government - without the context of the occupation. As if the occupation, with all its killing, destroying, depriving and dispossessing, were a natural phenomenon like the light of the sun during the day or the twinkling of the stars at night.

There are many subjects that are being discussed, such as: whether to ease the situation of the Palestinians or to increase their misery, whether to allow Abbas' policemen to move freely with their weapons in the West Bank towns to try and eliminate the militias that fight against Israel, whether to enlarge the settlements or not. But all these discussions are based on the unquestioned assumption that the occupation is there forever.

All the talk about "strengthening" is conducted in this context: Abbas and his people are supposed to function as an administration under occupation. According to Olmert's and Bush's perception, their job is to fulfill the orders of the occupation, in return for their own money and perhaps some small arms. Incidentally, that is very similar to the "autonomy" promised by Menachem Begin to the "Arab inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District". Olmert is quite ready to talk about the "Two-State Solution" - much talk, with a lot of bloated words and pathos - while doing everything possible in practice to prevent this "vision" from being realized before the coming of the Messiah.

Into this reality Tony Blair is now stepping. He is being sent by the Quartet - something that does not really exist, a diplomatic fiction of four that are one. Europe does not exist as far as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is concerned, except as a financial instrument of the White House. When the President of the USA wants it, Europe sends alms to the Palestinians (and arms to Israel). When the President of the USA wants to starve the Palestinians, Europe imposes a blockade on them.

The UN has long ago become an instrument of the US Department of State, especially in the Middle East. When the American drill sergeant shouts, the UN jumps to attention or stands at ease. Russia dreams of regaining the status of a Great Power. As in the days of the Czars and Stalin, it thinks in terms of "spheres of influence". The Middle East is an American sphere of influence.

Therefore, Russia will not interfere, except by mouthing high-sounding phrases.

The Quartet is simply an American front organization. And Tony Blair is sent to Palestine as a special envoy of President Bush. The master sends his poodle. What for? If Bush really wanted to realize his "Vision" of two states, he wouldn't need Blair. He could do it all alone in a matter of weeks. Even poor Condoleezza could do it, instead of babbling about preparing final-status plans and pigeon holing them, if only she were backed by the determined will of the President.

So what is Blair's appointment for? Is it only to give some status to a redundant international star? To give a consolation prize to somebody who loyally lied and cheated for Bush before and during the Iraq war? Yes, of course. But his main task is to draw out developments and gain time, to postpone everything, to foster make-belief activity, to provide the Palestinians and the world media with an illusion of progress.

Blair will come, meet, make declarations, ooze charm from every pore, generate headlines, fly, come back, make more announcements, meet again with kings, presidents and prime ministers. A long tail of news-thirsty journalists will follow him everywhere, generate media noise, write, tape and take pictures, as if he were a male Paris Hilton.

Meanwhile Palestinians and Israelis will keep dying, the wall will be finished, more land will be expropriated, settlements will be enlarged, targeted "terrorists" will be killed, the blockade on Gaza will be tightened, and all the hundred and one daily activities of the occupation will go on, the occupation that dares not speak its name. The declared task of Blair, too, is to "strengthen Abbas". Woe to the task. Woe to Blair. Woe in particular to Abbas.

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A BREAKTHROUGH SOON?

MJ Rosenberg*

Source: Israel Policy Forum (<http://www.israelpolicyforum.org>), Friday, June 22, 2007. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

People seem to be waking up. Initially following the Hamas takeover of Gaza, conventional wisdom coalesced around the idea of flooding the West Bank with aid to strengthen President Mahmoud Abbas and also teach Hamas a lesson.

This was fine advice which some of us have been offering (without success) since 2005 when Mahmoud Abbas became President following the death of Yasir Arafat. It became even more urgent when it was clear that Hamas was going to mount a serious challenge to Abbas in the parliamentary elections of 2006. Our position was simple: if we wanted Hamas to lose, we needed to make sure Abbas could show the Palestinian people that he could deliver for them.

The response from both Israel and Washington was predictable; as a precondition for serious engagement and aid, Abbas would first have to do this, that, and the other thing. As for Congress, it grandstanded to the skies with Congressmen railing about Palestinian textbooks and indicating that there was little difference between Abbas and Yasir Arafat. Even following Arafat's death, Congress was still engaged in Arafat-bashing rather than looking for ways to bolster Abbas.

Flash forward to the inevitable Hamas victory over Abbas in the 2006 election. And again Congress rushed to put more conditions on the aid they were so stingy about providing even before. Again there was an opportunity to strengthen Abbas with significant aid but it was rejected with enthusiasm in favour of a Palestinian-bashing field day.

That brings us to the latest crisis. Suddenly the very people who demanded that we treat Abbas as if he was Arafat are urging that we flood him with aid. With Abbas having lost Gaza, we suddenly realize that our policies were wrong all along. At last, we are prepared to do what we might have done when it counted. Better late than never, I guess.

An editorial in last Wednesday's Washington Post demonstrates the shift in the conventional wisdom. The Post editorial page (unlike its news pages) is a bastion of neo-conservative thinking on the Middle East. There are few editorial pages more hard-line on Israel than the Post's, and none more unrealistic about Israel's chances of achieving security absent a deal with the Palestinians.

But on Wednesday, the Post shifted big time. To its credit, it not only moved to the easy way-station of supporting more aid to Abbas while ignoring Gaza (the position Dennis Ross took in the Wall Street Journal), but all the way to the common sense understanding that believing we can freeze out Hamas is downright ridiculous.

Referring to the Bush-Olmert summit, the Post writes: "The most dangerous illusion to emerge from the U.S.-Israeli discussions is the idea that Hamas can be isolated in Gaza while Mr. Abbas is built up in the West Bank. The Palestinian president is unlikely to abandon the 1.5 million people of Gaza to a de facto military and economic siege. If he does, Hamas will use its own forces to ensure that the West Bank also is ungovernable or to start a new war with Israel. As repugnant as its terrorism and ideology are, Hamas won a free election and still has the support of a large part of the Palestinian population. It cannot be abolished by decree, and isolation will only make it more radical and more dependent on sponsors in Syria and Iran."

Also in the Washington Post, former Clinton Middle East advisers Rob Malley and Aaron Miller (who have been consistently right about US policy) wrote: "We should not be fooled by Abbas's rhetoric. Sooner or later he will be forced to pursue new power-sharing arrangements between Hamas and Fatah and restore unity among Palestinians... And should a national unity government be established, this time [the Bush administration] should welcome the outcome and take steps to shore it up. Only then will efforts to broker credible political negotiations between Abbas and his Israeli counterpart on a two-state solution have a chance to succeed."

Unfortunately, Congress is already being heavily lobbied to block Abbas's ability to bring about Palestinian unity. According to Nathan Guttman in the Forward, lobbyists are pressing Congress to put onerous restrictions on any new aid to Abbas - aid that would make it impossible for him to reach out to more moderate elements in Gaza. For some people, the more things change, the more they are determined not to.

So what should the United States do? First, we should ensure the delivery of aid to President Abbas, starting with the tax revenues which Israel has refused to turn over since Hamas won power. The economic siege of the Palestinians needs to be lifted so that salaries can be paid, infrastructure can be restored and the descent into Third World economic chaos can stop.

Second, we need to send a clear, unambiguous message to Hamas that if they undertake and enforce a full and complete cease-fire with Israel, the United States and the West will re-consider our attitudes toward them. The demand that Hamas recognize Israel in advance of negotiations (which neither the PLO, Egypt or Jordan were required to do) is not a condition, it is rhetoric designed to preserve the deadly status quo. Hamas should also secure the release of Gilad Shalit and BBC correspondent Alan Johnston - actions that would have a powerful effect on public opinion in Israel and Europe.

Third, we need to emphasize, as Secretary Rice stated earlier this week, that the United States has no interest in establishing a West Bank Palestinian state but remains determined to establish a viable West Bank/Gaza state connected by a highway, tunnel or some other device.

Fourth, and most important, the United States needs to sponsor the resumption of final status negotiations with the goal of the establishment of a Palestinian state, with permanent borders, by the end of President Bush's term.

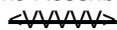
Fifth, the United States needs to push for the appointment by the Quartet (the US, EU, Russia and the UN) of a mediator who can coordinate the movement from a state of war to a state of peace and who will broker a final status deal. That person could be Tony Blair [editor's note: Tony Blair has since been appointed] or someone else, but whoever he or she is the mediator needs administration backing rather than being cut off at the knees by officials in Washington who see their role as putting the brakes on the Middle East peace process. The situation is changing and, perhaps, this time an envoy would be allowed to do his job.

Will any of this happen? Who knows? Washington is buzzing with reports that the Secretary of State is determined to salvage the "two-state" policy President Bush announced five years ago Sunday. Word is that top State Department staffers, including the Secretary, are burning the midnight oil in what would be a last ditch attempt to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian agreement by 2009.

It could happen. But, as everyone knows, there are key players in the administration who are determined to torpedo Rice the same way they sabotaged her predecessor, Colin Powell. Although most of the Bush administration's neo-conservatives have disappeared since it became clear that their Iraq war is the worst foreign policy disaster in American history, there remain a few key neocons who are determined that Israel-Palestinian peace not break out on their watch. And they are watching.

The preponderance of evidence is that change for the better is coming. We'll know by next week.

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GETTING TO YES AND RECOGNIZING IT

Rafi Dajani and Daniel Levy*

Israel just marked its 59th birthday and like a typical baby boomer, tends to vent its frustration at dreams not realized. Yet a core Israeli dream -- to not only establish a state, but to have that state accepted in the Middle East and live at peace with its neighbors -- is within reach. If only Israel, having finally gotten to yes with the Arab world, would recognize it.

Amidst all the Middle East doom and gloom, there are at least three reasons for real hope, Israeli, Palestinian and regional. On the Israeli side, there is a belated realization that the absence of an agreed border, the ongoing occupation and unfettered settlement activity have all been extremely costly in security, and financial and moral terms. Israelis are increasingly cognizant that military force delivers, at best, partial solutions and are keen to find a negotiated way forward. They are distrustful of the Palestinians' intentions and capacity to deliver, but view the Arab world as a more reliable and robust partner.

On the Palestinian side, and contrary to conventional wisdom in the U.S., the Mecca unity government deal between Fatah and Hamas in many ways represents a broadening Palestinian consensus around the inevitability of a two-state solution and acceptance of Israel as an irreversible reality. According to the unity government platform, President Mahmoud Abbas is authorized to negotiate with Israel, with any agreement reached having to be approved by a referendum or PLO vote, the legitimacy of which all parties would accept.

External Arab states' involvement helped to lock in this deal and would presumably be again required to back up a Palestinian sign-off on a permanent status peace deal with Israel.

That is why the third element, the regional role, is so important and why renewed peace efforts could take the Saudi Arabia initiative as a key point of departure. While the clauses of the relaunched Arab Peace Initiative are essentially the same as those of the original 2002 initiative, the context in which the current initiative is launched is very different.

The person who launched the 2002 initiative, then Crown Prince Abdullah is now king of Saudi Arabia that has assumed the leadership mantle of the Arabs, brokering the new Palestinian coalition government, mediating between the factions in Lebanon and formulating regional strategy over Iran.

In addition, the Arab world is witnessing a rarely seen unity over the initiative, signaling a fundamental shift towards accepting Israel as a neighbor and partner. Israel has oscillated between enthusiasm and concern in its response to the initiative. Israeli criticism of a take it or leave it proposal or of the refugee or border clauses largely misses the point. The Saudi and Egyptian foreign ministers have stressed that Israel should accept the initiative "in principle" and as "a framework", after which all issues were open for negotiations. The border clause says that borders should "be based" on the 1967 lines, implying that the exact borderlines would be negotiated. On the refugees, the key terminology in the clause is the phrase "agreed upon". By definition, "agreed upon" means Israel signing off on a solution to the refugee issue that it, too, accepts.

An additional bonus is that influential non-Arab Muslim states have also signed up to the logic behind the initiative -- peace for normalization. Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia all fall into this category.

It is no longer an act of wide-eyed naiveté to envisage an Israel at peace with its neighbors and accepted by the Arab and Muslim worlds. Israel did it; it got to yes. Now it is time to recognize it and act on it.

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JERUSALEM DEMOGRAPHICS

Gershon Baskin, "Jerusalem demographics"

Source: Blog Central at the *Jerusalem Post* (<http://www.jpost.com>), 09 May 2007, Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

Jerusalem is a divided city. Since 1948 it has been a divided city and it will always remain a divided city. The political leadership of Israel speaks of a consensus on the future status of Jerusalem. This consensus, defined as the Israeli policy, supposedly is as follows: All of Jerusalem is Israel's eternal, undivided capital. All of Jerusalem must remain under Israeli sovereignty forever. I maintain that this is not really the consensus of Israeli opinion on Jerusalem but is in fact a rather narrow view of what should be the future of this city. The true consensus, as opposed to this mythical consensus, can be stated as follows:

All Israelis believe and desire that:

1. Jerusalem must never return to the status it had prior to June 1967. Jerusalem should never be physically divided. It must remain an open city with free access throughout its boundaries for all.
2. Personal security and security of property must be guaranteed for all in all parts of the city. No one should have to fear getting a knife in his back in any part of the city and no one should have to fear getting his car torched or other property damaged in any part of the city.
3. The new Jewish neighborhoods built in East Jerusalem after 1967 must remain under Israeli sovereignty.
4. The Jewish Holy Places must remain under Israeli control. (This does not include the top of Temple Mount where Jews are not allowed to enter by Jewish Law).

Why do I think this is the true consensus? To begin with, if Israelis (and even Jerusalemites) were asked to draw a map of today's municipal boundaries, very few would be capable of completing the task. Moreover, if Israelis were asked to name the 18 neighborhoods of Arab East Jerusalem, almost none of them would be able to do so.

If you asked Israelis how many of them have visited in those Arab neighborhoods, the answer would be almost none. If you asked who would be interested in visiting those Arab neighborhoods, the answer would be the same. I feel certain that almost all Israelis, if asked whether the Jerusalem municipality should invest money in developing those Arab neighborhoods, almost all Israelis would say that it shouldn't.

Certainly, this has been the practice: Since 1967, the Jerusalem municipality has invested next to nothing in those. Again, ask Israelis if their country has any real need (other than perhaps security) for controlling those neighborhoods. The answer of most people, I

am certain, would be no. Ask any Israeli if they were willing to fight and die so that Jabel Mukaber or Tsur Baher should remain part of the undivided eternal capital of Israel -- the answer would be most certainly no!

All of this would seem to suggest that most Israelis don't really care about the Arab parts of East Jerusalem. Rather, most Israelis are concerned about the ability of Israel to maintain its capital in Jerusalem, to have security, to have an open Old City with Jewish control of Jewish Holy Places. But the status of the Arab sections of Jerusalem is really of little interest to almost all Israelis.

Jerusalem will never be a unified city unless it can be shared. It will only be possible to share Jerusalem once the two sides and their leaders cut down on the rhetoric that polarizes and, instead, begin to help the public, on both sides, understand the true character of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a city of two peoples which both claim national, historic and religious rights to it. Real sharing can only be achieved by recognizing the political reality that has existed here since 1967.

Since the overwhelming majority of Israelis really only care about the Jewish parts of Jerusalem, let's concentrate on them and recognize that the Palestinians today are willing to accept rule over only their parts of the city. Jerusalem can stay physically united. If Palestinian Jerusalem is growing, let it be -- and let them invest in its development.

Let us invest in Israeli Jerusalem, and let us all cut the empty talk of a demographic crisis in Jerusalem. There is only a demographic crisis in Jerusalem if we insist on continuing our control over Palestinian Jerusalem. Let Israel rule over Israeli Jerusalem and let Palestine rule over Palestinian Jerusalem and Jerusalem will become one city living in peace.

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JERUSALEM: A CENTER OF CONFLICT OR A CASE FOR CONVERGENCE?

Jihad Abu Zneid*

Source: Common Ground News Service (CGNews: <http://www.commongroundnews.org>>www.commongroundnews.org), May 10, 2007, Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to publish.

One of the oldest and most deep-rooted cities on earth: This is a statement one could use to describe my beautiful city, Jerusalem -- a city I have carried in the details of my face, the intonations of my voice and the sound of my footsteps, ever since the day when I discovered the colour of the sky, uttered my first letters and found my way out of the house, through the labyrinth of its charming alleys. Jerusalem, the city that is five thousand years older than me, and the city that makes me feel I am an heir to this great history that has been a centre of conflict and controversy.

After the late Palestinian president returned from the second round of Camp David negotiations in 2000, the conflict escalated and Jerusalem became fuel for a larger struggle that started taking form. The national struggle over sovereignty and the state deepened and extended to the holy places in a manner that bypassed human presence, dignity and belonging to this city, and deleted this city's belonging to humanity as a whole. Israel and its leaders started viewing sovereignty over Jerusalem's Holy Shrine as a matter that could not be given up. Palestinians considered this an attempt to replace the religious reality prevailing for over 1400 years. Fuelling the conflict and turning it into a religious feud threatens to neutralize Jerusalem's symbolic central position.

Never has Jerusalem been like any other city on Earth. It is the only city where brothers and cousins are enemies who decided to shun their blood relations behind the gates of death. They resorted to stones, turning them into tools of destruction, instead of tools for building a better future. It is the only city on earth that is holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews. This is why, and for a long time, it has been a centre of struggle among the followers of the three heavenly religions, in a continuous attempt to control it and prevent others from being there. After the war of 1967, the Zionist movement succeeded in consolidating its hold over Jerusalem and systematically sought to erase the Islamic and Christian aspects of its character and to change it into a completely Jewish city through various methods.

Such is the city where I learned my first letters, took my first steps and developed my incessant yearning. It is also the city of my continued pain, which stems from the occupation forces making life difficult for Palestinians within the historic walls of Jerusalem and elsewhere.

I want the city to belong to everyone. I want it free and without chains. I want it for all languages, for all peoples. I want it full of the land's love for water, a land that loves and seeks justice, a land that does not discriminate against me because of my color, shape or address. I want it without the barriers of fear.

Such is Jerusalem, the land I love, the land I dream will one day will nurture faith, love and peace among humankind. Jerusalem, is described by a Palestinian writer as: "The closest point to heaven and the deepest point on Earth. The land where injustice cannot persist, because God has selected it as a centre for His religions and a symbol of His punishment, by burying tyranny within it".

The question is: How do we enhance Jerusalem as a source of harmonious vision, a cooperative and constructive one for the benefit of the Palestinian and Israeli nations, the benefit of Arab and Muslim nations, the Christian world and humanity as a whole? Observing the following principles is key:

1. The road to peace starts from Jerusalem, the city of God on Earth, and the city of worship for all heavenly religions.

2. Jerusalem may be the capital of one united state where all people live equally, so it can be the capital of the land of God, the land of peace and a centre for spreading the vision of true peace on Earth. If this is not possible, then Jerusalem may be a united capital for two states, representing political division between Arabs and Jews on one hand, and preparing for an open future by providing open access to the city for all human beings.
3. Let us delineate borders between the two capitals that are open without an actual separation. The open city permits movement of people, materials and values between the two capitals. Check points may be established to deal with security issues in a manner that does not affect the principle of open borders.
4. The open city status is a basic element to enhance and strengthen the international status of Jerusalem. Religious, cultural, economic and social functions, connected to this status shall represent the impetus to advance the city as an international capital for humanity, in addition to being a political capital for two states.
5. The Old City should not be divided, being a piece of mosaic that belongs to all humans. The highest levels of cooperation should be achieved between the two parties to enhance the city's status and international role. Let us eliminate religious strife and struggle for domination, identity and character of the city. Let us view this city in a comprehensive manner as the common "trade mark" for the two parties and the world as a whole, which, in essence, is the targeted party and the beneficiary in this struggle.
6. Let us work at enhancing the international and regional presence of culture, religions, research institutes, universities and other academic institutions that concentrate on conflict studies and peace throughout the world.
7. Let us build common values between the two nations through enhancing the concepts of peace culture, mutual understanding and dialogue among peoples.

Lovers of peace, leaders of the world, you who love humanity, makers of social justice and human values: Make peace in the land of peace.

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A PARADIGNM SHIFT

Ziad Asali, "A paradigm shift"

Source: Common Ground News Service (CGNews: <http://www.commongroundnews.org>), May 3, 2007. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission is for publication.

A recurrent excuse that has acted as an obstacle to the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations over the years is that of either the political weakness of the Israeli leader or the political irrelevance of the Palestinian leader, whomever they may be.

The underlying assumption of these excuses is that the Israeli and Palestinian publics would not support the peace overtures of a weak Israeli or Palestinian leader. Such an assumption, however, could not be further from the truth.

Survey after survey over the years has consistently shown that a majority of both Israeli and Palestinian publics, in the 70 percent range, support a negotiated two-state solution to the conflict. The problem is that these same publics do not believe that the other side supports the same thing. In terms of actual numbers, barely a third of Israelis and Palestinians believe that the other side supports what surveys have shown both sides do.

The trick, therefore, is to raise trust in each other's desire for a negotiated peace. One way that has yet to be attempted in any coordinated and serious sense is for Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to change the traditional paradigm of Arab vs. Jew or Palestinian vs. Israeli, to a new paradigm pitting those who believe in a fair and negotiated sharing of the land by two states and those who do not. In other words, recognizing the finality of the 1948 war and all the implications that result from it.

Over the years, I have come to recognize that the wars of 1948 and 1967 bracket, like bookends holding together a number of volumes on a shelf, the objective, realizable political realities in the conflict. They define the constraints that the existence and persistence of both Israelis and Palestinians place upon each other's ambitions in the small area of mandatory Palestine - as it is said, "between the river and the sea".

The war of 1948 marked a definitive end to Palestinian and Arab hopes that Zionism would fail to realize a Jewish state in Palestine. Palestinians could no longer aspire to achieve the kind of independence the other Arab states had achieved, or for Palestine to remain an "Arab" Palestine. Moreover, the effect of the war was so devastating to Palestinian society that it took almost 20 years to reconstitute the national political identity. Much of that society continues on its uneven road to recovery to this day, almost 60 years later.

The decisive nature of the 1948 war in establishing Israel as a state that would be part of the political landscape for the foreseeable future was dramatically reinforced in 1967. Any enduring Arab hope for a reversal of the outcome of 1948 could now seem

plausible only to the most self-deluding. 1948 and 1967, in this sense, clearly established the limitations of Palestinian and Arab aspirations - Israel was here to stay.

Ironically, however, the era since 1967 has demonstrated analogous limits to the ambitions of some Israelis and Israeli governments in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Obviously, it is impossible to look back on the past 40 years, particularly as a Palestinian, without noting the terrible effects of the occupation on the Palestinians. Understandably, critiques of the occupation tend often to focus on the systematic denial of rights to the occupied population. But it is more significant, from a political point of view, that these repressive measures, and two major conflicts - the first and second intifadas (the first largely unarmed, the second disastrously militarized) - in the occupied territories have not consolidated Israeli control in any meaningful sense. Resistance to Israeli control, manifested in many legitimate and, of course, some profoundly illegitimate forms, is stronger than ever.

Almost no one outside the settler movement sees the situation as viable or defensible, and everyone has a plan for change because the realities are so plainly intolerable. The challenge facing Israelis in recent decades has been a mirror image of that faced by most Arabs in the early decades of the conflict, particularly between 1948-1967, that is to say, a recognition of the limitations of one's own political ambitions, the permanent presence of the other national constituency, the legitimacy of its national rights and the necessity, therefore, for an accommodation involving two states living together in peace and security.

While most observers see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as divided principally along nationalist constituencies, the more significant division is between those on both sides who understand and accept the finality of the outcome of the 1948 war and those who do not. Those who recognize 1948 as a decisive historical moment understand that it established insurmountable limitations for both Palestinian and Israeli nationalism, and that the armistice lines of 1949 have come to constitute the only serious basis upon which the conflict can be resolved.

1967 was crucial for demonstrating this to many Arabs, although certainly it took time to translate these obvious realities into political positions. The years since 1967 should by now have had a similar effect on most Israelis, none of whom can any longer fail to understand that Palestinians are not going anywhere, they will not disappear and they will not agree to live as non-citizens of a non-state in their own country.

We must all recognize that there will be no peace until the national aspirations and dignity of both peoples are respected. The only formula that can fulfill these conditions is the creation of a state of Palestine to live alongside Israel.

It is up to the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships, in coordination with all friends of Israel and Palestine, to cross the national religious, racial and ethnic fault lines that divide us and form a national and international alliance for two states. The "realities on the ground" that have prevented an ending of the conflict must be overcome by this vision and by the political forces that we bring to bear on it.

Young Israelis and Palestinians, struggling with their sense of injured pride and violated justice, coping with fear, vengeance, poverty and suspicion, can only be spared the fate of earlier generations by a wise and courageous leadership on both sides, relentless in its pursuit of both a historic compromise and preparing their respective publics for it.

*Ziad Asali is president of the American Task Force on Palestine. He served as one of President Bush's delegates to observe the 2005 Palestinian presidential election.

THREE WILD "OUT OF THE BOX" IDEAS

Gershon Baskin and Hanna Siniora, "Three wild "out-of-the-box" ideas"

Source: Arabic Media Internet Network (<http://www.amin.org>), August 8 2007. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish..

Memo to: Prime Minister Olmert, Minister of Foreign Affairs Livni, Minister of Defense Barak, President Abbas, Prime Minister Fayyad
Minister of Information Malki

Re: Three wild "out-of-the-box" ideas

Dear Leaders,

If the news reports are correct regarding real progress on talks towards an agreement on principles for permanent status, you are all worthy of congratulations. Some of the ideas presented in the press are quite constructive and show real progress through demonstrated flexibility and a genuine desire to find agreements.

The following are three wild "out-of-the-box" ideas that could help to translate some of the progress into concrete steps that can be already implemented and would not only strengthen the process by translating them into reality, but will also strengthen your leadership facing your own people and the need to convince the public to support the process. All three of these ideas are quite wild, but they could be accepted, advanced and could make a real contribution. Here they are:

1. Jerusalem

Within the future framework of an agreement on Jerusalem, as reported, there would be some kind of formal symbol (perhaps) a flag indicating Muslim/Arab control over the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount. It could be possible even now for the two sides to agree that President Abbas would issue an invitation to all of the heads of State of the Arab League to be his guest and to come to pray in the Al Aqsa Mosque. There would be no Israeli demands for meetings or for photo ops, this would be President Abbas' invitation and they would come to Jerusalem as his guest (with Israeli agreement, facilitation and recognition). Imagine the image of all of the heads of the States of the Arab League coming to Al Aqsa with President Abbas leading them! The payoff to President Abbas in Palestine and in the Arab world would be immediate. Israel would also gain its share of credit and appreciation for allowing this to happen. This would also be an indication and a step in the right direction towards the Arab Peace Initiative. It is important that for this to be successful Israel would not make any demands for the Arab leaders to visit Israel or to meet with Israeli officials ^ that could and would come at a later time.

2. Refugees

Recognizing that any real return of Palestinian refugees in the future will be to the Palestinian state, it could be possible to begin to translate that into reality by agreeing to offer the refugees in Lebanon to come home to the West Bank now. The refugees in Lebanon are in the direst situation from all Palestinian refugees and they are the most potentially volatile refugee community in the Palestinian Diaspora. It is clear that not all of them would accept this offer and it is also clear that there is no immediate possibility to absorb all of them now. There is already talk about building a new Palestinian city in the West Bank as a means of creating investment and employment. Linking the construction of a new city in the West Bank with the invitation to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon to come home would put the refugees issue on the right track. This would also attract a lot of support from the international donor community and from the Arab world and the Palestinian Diaspora. Obviously Israel would have to agree to this offer and Israel would also have to agree to turn over land in area "c" in the West Bank for this purpose. It is a proposal which will take several years to implement, but it can already begin quickly and to demonstrate the new reality in the West Bank that is so urgent to create.

3. The West Bank-Gaza Link

Prime Minister Olmert has already stated that he prefers the option of linking the West Bank and Gaza through a tunnel. The proposed tunnel going from Tarqumieh to Gaza is approximately 40 kilometres in length. At a cost of about \$25 million per kilometre we are looking at a cost of about \$1 billion. This is the most expensive option of the three main possibilities (an elevated route, a sunken route and a tunnel) or possible combinations of the three options. It is quite clear that there can be no real peace process without the inclusion of Gaza, however; given the current political circumstances it seems quite impossible to include Gaza in the framework of the current permanent status talks. Any agreements reached would have to include possibilities for the inclusion of Gaza at a later time. One positive point on this issue is that there are no real territorial questions open regarding the future of Gaza. The talks on Gaza will have to focus Gaza's external borders, the seaport and the airport as well as the link to the West Bank.

The current reality and political process seems to be focusing on creating a real contrast between Gaza and the West Bank with the hope being that a new West Bank reality of stability, security, economic development and investment and a genuine peace process would prod the people of Gaza to seek a different political course in the Gaza Strip.

It could be possible and feasible that the construction of the West Bank-Gaza link (tunnel and or other combinations) begin from the West Bank side towards Gaza. The project could be completed to within a few hundred meters of the Gaza Strip until Gaza can be reintegrated into the new political realities. While the Gazans might not immediately see the proverbial "light at the end of the tunnel" they will be quite aware that the entrance to that tunnel is very near by. Hoping that the people of Gaza would not take the initiative to dig a tunnel themselves to link to the West Bank tunnel, a significant real incentive would exist for them to understand the seriousness of the need to adapt to the international conditions for regaining full re-entry into the diplomatic process.

Respectively yours,

Gershon Baskin, PhD and Hanna Siniora

*Gershon Baskin and Hanna Siniora are the Israeli and the Palestinian Co-CEO's of IPCRI - Israel/Palestine Center for Research & Information.

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PALESTINIANS, ISRAELIS SHOULD AVOW HOLOCAUSTM NAKBA

Dan Bar-On and Saliba Sarsar*

Source: *Middle East Times*, April 27, 2007. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

While we are presently preoccupied with fighting extremism and terrorism, we should remember that history is a powerful resource for our images, beliefs and actions. The more focused we are on learning its lessons, the more prepared we may be to meet its challenges.

Past and current tensions have lasting negative effects that breed enmity and hatred. Reconciliation is a process that can salve history's poisonous after-effects by translating the painful memory of the past to the service of understanding, individual and social justice, and true peace.

The Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem and the ruins of Deir Yassin may be in geographical proximity, but a world apart in the psyche of Jews and Palestinians. While the first commemorates the systematic mass extermination of European Jews under Nazi occupation prior to and during World War II, the second marks the village where Palestinians were massacred at the hands of Jewish extremists in April 1948 and symbolizes Palestinian dispossession and their struggle for self-determination.

While there are fundamental differences between these human tragedies -- and we have no intention of comparing them -- Jews and Palestinians have been steadfast in their distinct interpretations of history, refusing to participate in each other's painful memories and denying each other's most sacred reconstructions of the past.

Unfortunately, the Oslo agreement was equally premised on putting the past aside. We, however, are suggesting history should be addressed, rather than repressed. As difficult as it is, this must be done if the Abrahamic people and faiths are to embrace each other and bring about a just peace for both Israeli Jews and Palestinians, who, supported by other Jews and Arabs, are in conflict not merely over territory, but also over narratives, rituals, public opinion and time frames. Indeed, it is common when Israelis and Palestinians meet for the former to emphasize building a different future, while the latter focuses on the unreconciled past.

Israeli Jews have generally refused to take even partial responsibility for the Nakba (the Catastrophe) that befell the Palestinian Arabs in 1948. Such an acknowledgement, in their mind, creates a moral obligation for the Right of Return or its equivalent, thereby undermining their majority in the State of Israel. Meanwhile, Palestinians have difficulty conjuring a positive vision of the future at a time when they are still subjected to critical conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip -- something the Oslo process did not change.

Only in the past decade have a few Israeli Jewish and Palestinian intellectuals found the courage to try and acknowledge these two devastating chapters of Israeli and Palestinian history, still preoccupying the minds of their people.

Al Hayat columnist Hazem Saghiyeh and Tunisian journalist Saleh Bashir have both argued that Arab denial of the Holocaust achieves nothing. The Palestinian reporter Nazir Megally has expressed shame that Palestinian education ignores the Holocaust, even though recognition of Jewish suffering and feeling empathy for Jews could be viewed by many Palestinians as psychologically dangerous at this point in the conflict. Meanwhile, a group called Zochrot made up of Israeli citizens works to raise Israeli awareness of the Nakba and of the Arab villages that were destroyed in 1948. In addition, B'tselem and Ta'ayush are Israeli organizations focusing on the practical aspects of the occupation and its negative impact on the Palestinians, creating an Israeli Jewish awareness of the Palestinian plight.

The Peace Research Institute in the Middle East, the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information, the Middle East Children's Association and Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam all promote understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. We hereby wish to join the courageous few by emphasizing our shared history and our moral obligation toward both the past and the future.

If mutual dialogue is to occur between Israeli Jews and Palestinians, each national community must acknowledge and respect the other's painful memory, whether or not it was party to its creation. An empathetic embrace of the construction of the other's history will help both sides to work through their tragedies rather than exclusively ignoring each other's pain. Such an inclusive act of communication and faith will prepare the way for reconciling the past and for building a better future, one to which our children and grandchildren are entitled.

It may be not a coincidence that the new exhibit of Yad Vashem in the form of a deep mountain tunnel opens up unwittingly toward the hill where Deir Yassin was once located. That, for sure, was not the intention of the architect. It takes a new kind of courage to recognize the symbolic importance and implications of both Yad Vashem and Deir Yassin in order to go beyond them and envision a better future for both Israelis and Palestinians.

*Dan Bar-On was born in Haifa and is Professor of Psychology at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev. He is also Co-Director of the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME) and presently a Fulbright Scholar-In-Residence at Monmouth University. Saliba Sarsar was born in Jerusalem and is the Associate Vice-President for Academic Program Initiatives as well as Professor of Political Science at Monmouth University.

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BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

MJ Rosenberg*

Source: *Israel Policy Forum* (<http://www.israelpolicyforum.org>), Friday, April 6 2007. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish

You know what they say: no good deed goes unpunished. That is certainly the case with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and her visit to Syria. At a time (the Easter-Passover recess) when dozens of House members and Senators are visiting foreign capitals and discussing policy with foreign leaders, Pelosi is being skewered for, in the words of the Washington Post's editors, "substituting her own foreign policy for that of a sitting Republican President."

The Post accuses Pelosi of "try[ing] to introduce a new US diplomatic initiative in the Middle East." Heaven forefend! Things are going so swimmingly in the Middle East that the last thing anyone needs is for the 3rd highest official in the United States trying to resuscitate diplomacy. The specific objection is to her meeting with the Syrian leader, Bashar Assad. Of course, few could object to what she told Assad - that he should stop trouble making in Iraq and Lebanon, that the Israeli government is ready for negotiations, that Israel has no bellicose intentions toward Syria and that Syria should use its influence to free Israeli prisoners.

In fact, David Hobson, a Republican from Ohio who accompanied Pelosi, said that the Speaker did not stray very far from Bush administration policy. Hobson said Pelosi "did not engage in any Bush bashing. She did not...bash [Bush] policies as they relate to Syria." Instead, Hobson said, Pelosi urged Assad to curb the number of suicide bombers who cross the Syrian border into Iraq to "murder our troops and the Iraqi people."

Republican House leader, John Boehner, admitted that there was nothing wrong with legislators in general visiting Syria. "It's one thing for other members to go," Boehner said, "but you have to ask yourself, 'Why is Pelosi going?'" The answer isn't that hard. She went for the same reasons as Tom Lantos (D-CA), Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, as Henry Waxman (D-CA), the most senior Jewish Member of the House, as Keith Ellison (D-MN), the first Muslim-American in Congress, as Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), Rules Committee Chair, as Nick J. Rahall II (D-WV), the senior Arab-American in Congress, and Senior Defense Appropriator David Hobson (R-OH). She went to advance US interests in the Middle East, believing that we can perhaps get more out of Syria by engaging it than by shunning it.

The critics are feigning outrage because they don't like Pelosi (CNN, in particular, seems to have a problem with a female Speaker) and because, by visiting Syria, Pelosi has revived one of the Baker-Hamilton Report's prescriptions for ending the Iraq war: engaging Iran and Syria. Baker-Hamilton recognizes that Syria and Iran can do more to impede the extrication of our soldiers and marines from Iraq than any other countries on the planet (with the exception of Iraq itself).

On the other hand, if they choose to, they can ease our way out of Iraq and help prevent that country's further descent into chaos and civil war. The Israeli government added to the Pelosi controversy by saying that Pelosi did not carry any private messages from Jerusalem to Damascus. But the Israelis have been using intermediaries to convey information to the Syrians for a long time. It is inconceivable that the highest ranking American in memory to visit Damascus would visit Israel, en route to Syria, and not be asked to convey a message to President Assad from Prime Minister Olmert. One can only hope that she was carrying messages from Israel. Why wouldn't the Israelis seize that opportunity?

Pelosi's visit strengthened America's position in the region, and likely helped Israel on prisoners, on Hezbollah, and in its effort to avoid another war like last summer's. It was a gutsy move by the new Speaker and one that deserves commendation, not criticism from those who are committed to the whole litany of failed policies of recent years. One would think that some of these pundits would look at the sheer carnage they delivered in Iraq - the 3200 American dead and the hundreds of thousands of dead Iraqi civilians - and be shamed into shutting up. But no such luck.

In this context, and on this Good Friday, it is worth recalling Jesus' words in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God." That is not exactly what the critics are calling Pelosi. But, the New Testament notwithstanding, peacemakers are rarely praised in their own time while the cheerleaders for unnecessary wars are never held accountable for them. Pelosi is too smart to expect plaudits for trying to deter war rather than simply standing firm behind a status quo that will inevitably produce the next one.

Readers of this column know that I like to hearken back to the great missed opportunity of 1971. That was when Prime Minister Golda Meir rebuffed Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's call on Israel to pull back from the Suez Canal. Sadat said that in exchange for a pullback of just a few miles - which would enable Egypt to re-open the canal -- he would begin negotiating a peace agreement with Israel.

This week Yediot Achronot revealed new information about the missed opportunity. Zeev Tzahor reports that then-American Secretary of State, William Rogers, was so disturbed by Golda's rejection that he enlisted Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, to try to persuade her to, at least, seriously consider the offer. Let the *Yediot* columnist, Zeev Tzahor, tell the rest of the story: "The 85-year-old Ben-Gurion was retired... His relations with Golda were poor, and he was not particularly eager to speak with her. Rogers implored him. The Egyptian initiative is a one-time opportunity, he said, but Golda has taken a dismissive, supercilious view of it. She admires you, maybe she'll heed your advice. Ben-Gurion acquiesced, and asked his aides to put him in touch with Golda in Jerusalem.

"The brief conversation between them was acerbic. The people present in the room heard Ben-Gurion repeat why she ought to begin negotiations with Egypt... While the people present in the room could not hear what Golda was saying on the other side of the line, it was clear to them that she was not interested in promoting the Egyptian initiative. "Ben-Gurion lost his patience, lambasted Golda and said she was leading Israel to catastrophe, and terminated the conversation. For some reason, he placed the receiver down on the table and not in its cradle. The people present in the room heard Golda calling, "Ben-Gurion, Ben-Gurion," but he refused to pick up the telephone again. He just kept repeating, "war is going to break out soon, war is coming." It did. Israel lost nearly 3000 men. Ben Gurion died a few weeks later. Israel ended up relinquishing not just the west bank of the Suez Canal, as Sadat had demanded but every last inch of the Sinai peninsula.

Until this week, I had never heard that Secretary of State William Rogers tried so hard to help Israel avert catastrophe. All I recalled about him was that the pro-Israel community despised him because he was thought to have applied pressure on Israel. Little did I know that the pressure was in the form of the wise counsel of David Ben-Gurion, the founder of the Jewish state. I hope Pelosi is not daunted by the criticism emanating from all the usual suspects. Her delegation's visit to the Middle East advanced America's interests and Israel's too. As they like to say in that region: the dogs bark but the caravan moves on.

* MJ Rosenberg, Director of Policy Analysis for Israel Policy Forum, was a long time Capitol Hill staffer and former editor of AIPAC's *Near East Report*. The views expressed in IPF Friday are those of MJ Rosenberg and not necessarily of *Israel Policy Forum*.

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WHAT WE READERS ARE ABOUT?

Please share with us what you are doing relating to nonviolent change. If you send us a short report of your doings, learnings, ideas, concerns, reactions, queries,... we will print them here. Responses can be published in the next issue.

Steve Sachs: I am encouraged by the numerous developing openings in U.S. and international politics for positive change, from improved foreign policy and diplomacy to doing better on environmental issues, especially on climate change. But the openings are just that. It will take considerable energy, intelligently applied, with considerable on going feed back and reevaluation of what is happening, and likely to happen, to make much needed progress. It will take perseverance, and thoughtful patience, to meet the complex, continually changing, situations, which will require considerable time for real advancement. Many people expect quick fixes. That is not possible. But patience does not mean just waiting. Continual long term, regularly corrected, action is necessary on many fronts.

As to particulars, I am looking forward to attending the UN NGO conference in New York, in early September, this year focusing on climate change and what to do about it. May you enjoy a fine fall season.

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ARTICLES

WHO REALLY CARES ABOUT IRAQ?

Alon Ben-Meir,* May 14, 2007

The recent conference on Iraq, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, and attended by more than 50 countries representing half of the world's population, seems at first glance to underscore the "great interest so many countries have displayed" over the future of that torn country. But, perhaps we should lay it on the line and ask, "Who really cares about Iraq itself?" I submit that each nation represented at the conference came not only with its own diagnosis and cure for Iraq, but, even more, because it sought to protect its own national interests. Let's look at the eight most prominent countries, those with the greatest stake in Iraq, but whose "deep concerns" were nothing more than exploitation of Iraq's vulnerabilities and resources. First, the United States: Trapped in a quagmire, dammed if it leaves and dammed if it stays, the Bush administration is now desperately seeking a way out that allows it to claim a modicum of success while securing the flow of oil that was and continues to be the main factor in America's strategic calculus. The Democratic Congress and many Americans, who agree with it, have lost patience with this misadventure and wants America out. Never mind that the war has plunged Iraq into a merciless civil war while unleashing the forces of extremist Muslim radicals committed to fight America and the West literally to death. And it is just too bad for the Iraqis that their country has also become the breeding ground of a new generation of terrorists.

The United Kingdom is on the receiving end of the other half of a bad deal. The prospect of gaining anything from Britain's reckless foray into Iraq has diminished along with the fading star of Tony Blair. The British, who evidently learned nothing from their first occupation of Iraq after World War II, want to bring their troops home. Now, after they helped create the horrendous situation, they are quite ready to leave Iraq and the Iraqis to their own fate.

To China, the Middle East is the most fertile ground for the expansion of its global influence. China's unquenchable thirst for oil and gas to meet the demands of an exploding economy make Iraq and Iran critical to its long-term strategic supplies of energy. With deliberation and sophistication, the Chinese are gradually chipping away at America's influence in the region, using the Iraqis' plight and the consequences of the war to their advantage.

Russia is for the Russians who are looking for lucrative oil and gas deals with whichever Iraqi government that can deliver these prizes. The Russians want to recover billions of dollars in contracts they signed with Saddam Hussein that were lost to the war. Russia could not care less whether Iraq is run by a democratic or totalitarian regime and will transact with the devil as long as they can secure their profitable deals while enhancing their regional influence.

To France, the Iraqi tragedy is just an unfortunate episode for the poor Iraqis. The French salivate over the Bush administration's dismal failure but, like the Russians, seek to regain billions in contracts lost with the demise of the Hussein regime. Quel dommage that Iraqis and Americans are dying, but feeling vindicated about France's objections to the Iraq war feeds well into their national psyche.

For Iran, Iraq is the greatest windfall. Not in their wildest dreams could the Iranians have imagined that Iraq, their great and proud enemy, would be handed to them on a silver platter and by their staunch adversary, the United States. Now, although involved in heavy trade with Iraq, to promote their own agenda they also arm Iraqi Shiite militias, which have no scruples about killing Iraqi Sunnis while pretending to be Iraq's saviors. For Tehran, the goal is to exert every ounce of its increasing influence over Iraq's internal affairs to secure its long-term strategic ambitions.

Saudi Arabia, terrified of Iran's growing regional influence and the potential of Sunni-Shiite regional conflict, wants to stem the Shiite tide at all cost. The Saudis do not want to be engulfed should the civil war escalate beyond Iraqi borders. Fearing for their very existence, the Saudis seek to empower the Sunni Iraqis in order to decrease the threat of a Shiite-perpetrated genocide, which, from their perspective, is far more plausible once the Americans leave.

For Syria the war in Iraq has only increased its own economic difficulties. Although there was no love lost between Saddam Hussein and the el Assad regime, extensive trade crossed the borders between the two nations. Syria could benefit again from a stable Iraq and at a minimum repatriate the more than one million Iraqis who have found refuge there. Syria, however, has no incentive to be overly helpful as long as the United States both occupies Iraq and threatens regime change in Damascus.

So who really cares about Iraq? It seems that only the Iraqi people and their government can save Iraq. To do so, they must first accept that there is no military solution and therefore all efforts must be focused on reconciliation, including the following measures: 1) passing an oil law that distributes oil revenues equitably among the Iraqi people, 2) allowing the majority of former Ba'athist members to rejoin the government, which will alleviate the financial plight of millions of Iraqis and dramatically reduce sectarian conflict, 3) establishing a political dialogue with the insurgency with the objective of empowering the Sunnis to create their own entity within the a federal system, 4) granting universal amnesty to those who have been involved in unlawful acts of violence, 5) releasing all prisoners except hard-core terrorists, 6) opening up the ranks of internal security and the military forces to Sunni recruits.

Sooner or later the American troops will leave Iraq. It is up to the Iraqis to find the way to live with each other in peace and begin to rebuild their lives and their country. The bitter truth is nobody else really gives a damn.

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FORTY YEARS OF DEADLY DELUSIONS

Alon Ben-Meir, June 5, 2007

Perhaps more than anything else, the fortieth anniversary of the 1967 Six Days War has shown a spotlight on the present crisis of leadership in the Middle East. Israel is now being led by a government paralyzed by self-inflicted wounds, a government that lost its compass in the wake of the war with Hezbollah along with the courage to risk seizing the initiative and taking real steps toward peace. Meanwhile, the Palestinians continue to pay dearly for their delusional and inapt leaders, who have missed every opportunity to give them any hope for the future.

It is true that some important and positive developments have occurred since 1967: Israel signed peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan in 1979 and in 1995 respectively. The Arab League adopted a resolution in March 2002 and reintroduced it in March 2007, offering Israel a comprehensive and normal peace in exchange for the territories captured in 1967. The Initiative is in stark contrast to the resolution the League adopted more than 30 years ago in Khartoum, which is known for its three No's: no recognition, no negotiation, and no peace. And today, however, a majority of Israelis and Palestinians accept the principle of a two-state solution. Despite these moves forward, the ongoing violent conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and the existence of a state of war between Israel and Syria have substantially hurt Arab-Israeli relations. The continuing occupation has strengthened Islamic radicalism throughout the Middle East, and the Iraq war has vastly increased anti-Israeli and anti-American sentiments all across the Arab world. Given the disarray and bloody infighting among Palestinians, and Israel's internal political frenzy coupled with the absence of any national consensus about the nature of peace, the political and security environments are rapidly deteriorating to newly dangerous levels. The extremists on both sides, although they are in the minority and pursue different means, are gaining in strength. Taking advantage of the present situation, they have usurped the political agenda and through their actions and single-mindedness are pushing the majority toward the precipice.

Forty years after the Six Day's War, it seems, now more than ever, that the sanest questions to ask are: What are Israelis and Arabs, especially the Palestinians, waiting for? How, and by what measures, can any party improve its position, given more time? Forty years of occupation have given Israel no added security and no recipe for a lasting peace. Forty years of blind resistance has consumed the Palestinian community from within and is destroying the last vestiges of a civil society.

A comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace is still possible, but how much more destruction must both sides endure before they recognize this bittersweet truth? Although Palestinian factionalism and violent internal rivalries are to a large degree preventing Israel from undertaking open-ended negotiations with the Palestinians, the Israeli leadership must somehow rouse itself from its "deep sleep" and find the resolve to develop a coherent strategy to deal with the Palestinian conflict. At the same time Israel needs to move more forcefully on the Syrian front and seriously explore the possibility for peace. Israel must not reject Syria's call for peace negotiations without testing Damascus' real intentions. Not do so would be nothing less than a continuation of the failed policies that led to the last summer's war. It is obvious that hewing to these policies will only result in future wars that will exact a far greater toll. It is not that Syria can instigate wars at will without serious risks to itself; it is that the growing forces of Islamic radicalism, terrorists, and Jihadi movements will create conditions beyond anyone's power to control, including Syria's. Because the stakes are so high, Syria must demonstrate that its call for peace is genuine.

A breakthrough with Syria will isolate extremist Palestinians such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad and strengthen the moderate camp. As Israel negotiates with Syria, it must do everything in its power to encourage Palestinian moderates by taking some unilateral actions on the ground to ease the lives of ordinary Palestinians. Measures that Israel can enact without major risk to its national security concerns may include the much-spoken about release of prisoners as well as allowing for the freer movement of people and goods. In addition, Israel should reward non-violent communities with economic incentives, signal an end to settlement expansion, and channel tens of millions of Palestinian tax dollars to moderate Palestinians. Most importantly, the Israelis should not wait for the Palestinians to get their act together. Israel must abandon its tit-for-tat policy and pursue a strategy that will eventually lead to ending the conflict. Meanwhile, the Arab states,

having just reintroduced the Initiative for a comprehensive peace, have to remain relentless in pursuing a peace agenda. They must demonstrate the capacity and the political will to deal with extremist elements that undermine the Arab collective will.

John F. Kennedy once observed, "Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other." The last forty years have been long enough and painful enough to suggest that forty years from now the requirements for peace will not significantly change. But the price of peace, as shown in the effect of delay on human lives and resources, will be monumentally higher. Will the current Arab and Israeli leaders gather up their courage and take heed or by their inaction usher in another forty years of deadly delusions?

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A MISSING LINK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVES AS PART OF PEACEMAKING

Paul Scham*

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At the present time, there is a fundamental perceptual difference between the so-called "peace camps" among Israelis and Palestinians, on the one hand, and, on the other, those who would like to see peace, but don't see it as possible. The members of the peace camp believe that majorities on both sides are essentially willing to live in peace with the other. As opposed to this, the "potential moderates" believe that they are willing to make peace but the other side isn't.

Breaking through this wall of suspicion must be the chief task of all those who identify with the "peace camps", whether they are in the government, working with grassroots organizations or in other countries. It must be recognized that the governments on the two sides are not themselves the main problem; rather their fear, unwillingness or inability to take the steps necessary to punch through the suspicion is part of the fabric of the conflict.

A significant component of these walls of suspicion is the baggage that both sides carry in the form of historical narratives. These narratives cannot be jettisoned; they are essential components to the respective national identities of both sides. Neither can they be combined into a single narrative. Rather, they are indispensable elements of national identity that need to be dealt with in any future serious peace initiative.

Traditional diplomacy usually assumes that each side will "take its narrative and go home"; i.e. each side can ignore what the other thinks or believes through carefully spelling out the rights and responsibilities of both sides in a treaty. However, it must be recognized that any peace treaty between Israelis and Palestinians, to be effective, must deal with issues such as the Right of Return and Jerusalem, which are rooted in the basic historical narratives of both sides.

The "Right of Return" is an outgrowth of the seminal event of Palestinian history, the Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948, in which 700,000 Palestinians left their homes, through force, fear or persuasion. The most fundamental Palestinian demand is for their right to return, and that of their descendants, now numbering an estimated 4 million, to these homes (which in most cases no longer exist). Israel strenuously refuses this, arguing it is tantamount to the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state. Further, it refuses any discussion of the issue, seeing it as incompatible with peace, as well as denying even partial responsibility for the Palestinian exodus, maintaining Israel was solely defending itself.

In fact, the historical record has become clearer in recent years, primarily due to the work of younger Israeli historians. There is little doubt that atrocities can be attributed to both sides. It is hard to maintain, now, that any side was solely a victim.

Most Arab moderates readily agree (privately) that a blanket Right of Return can never be implemented. However, most likewise believe it must be a part of the peace process. This is not a contradiction. Both sides can reasonably insist that their narratives be "acknowledged", not necessarily accepted, but respected by the other.

Jews should be able to understand this through the prism of the Holocaust. While there is no legitimate comparison whatsoever between the scope, intent and nature of the Jewish Holocaust in Europe and the Palestinian Nakba, it can reasonably be expected that the importance of both to each national narrative be acknowledged by the other. Both are integral and irrevocable elements of that narrative.

Another issue that needs to be part of the preparation for peace is the Jewish connection to Jerusalem. While Palestinians can show that the location of the Second Temple is now fully occupied by the Al-Aqsa Mosque, they must acknowledge the importance of the site to the fundamental Jewish and Israeli narrative. This can go a long way towards allowing Israelis to feel their legitimacy is accepted by their neighbours, as recognition of the Nakba will for Palestinians.

Acknowledgement of these issues by top officials and by official documents of Israel and the Palestinian Authority can help to diffuse the fears of the moderate majority on both sides that they will never be accepted by the "other".

Acknowledgement of the historical narratives of the other side is not, of course, a magic bullet for settling the conflict. However, as part of a comprehensive package that deals with land, sovereignty, borders, settlements, security, and the like, it can go further than many people realize in confirming the legitimacy of both peoples in the land, which is the only feasible way to attain peace.

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ISRAEL PARTLY AT FAULT

Amos Oz*

Source: Ynetnews.com (<http://www.ynetnews.com>), April 29, 2007. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

Each time we Israelis hear the words "the 1948 refugee problem", our stomachs flinch out of anxiety and objection. In our parts, the refugee issue has turned into a synonym for the right of return, and the right of return spells Israel's demise.

Perhaps it's about time we put our thoughts in order, and learn to make the distinction between the refugee problem and what is termed the right of return. The refugee problem can and must be resolved, but not by returning refugees to Israeli territory within its peaceful borders. The call to allow refugees to return to Israeli territory must be rejected because if it is realized, there will be two Palestinian states here and not even one for the Jewish people.

However, the problem of the 1948 refugees must be resolved. Moreover, resolving the refugee problem is a vital interest for the State of Israel because as long as this problem remains unresolved - as long as hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees are rotting in inhumane refugee camps - we shall have no rest.

Different versions

Who is responsible for the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees? According to the Israeli version, Arab leaders are to blame for launching the War of Independence, and the refugees themselves are to blame for fleeing their homes in fear. According to the Arab version, Israel is guilty of forcefully and cruelly expelling them. There is some truth in both versions: The War of Independence was a total war, a village against a village, a neighborhood against a neighborhood, a house against a house. Populations are uprooted in such wars. Some 12 Jewish communities, including the Old City of Jerusalem, were taken over by the Arabs during the War of Independence. The Jewish populations in these settlements were wiped out or forcefully deported by the Arabs. On the other hand, hundreds of Arab communities with hundreds of thousands of citizens were uprooted in 1948, some fled, and others were expelled by the Israeli army.

The time has come to openly admit that we are partly responsible for the plight of the Palestinian refugees; not exclusive responsibility or exclusive guilt, but our hands are not entirely clean. The State of Israel is mature and strong enough to admit its partial guilt and to also accept the inevitable conclusions: We would do well to take upon ourselves part of the effort to settle these refugees outside of Israel's future peace borders, in the framework of future peace agreements.

Emotional shockwave

Israel's actual admission to part of the responsibility for the Palestinian refugees' plight, the actual preparedness to bear part of the solution's burden - is likely to send an emotional shockwave through the Palestinian side. It will serve as an emotional breakthrough of sorts that will significantly facilitate the continuation of talks - because the tragedy of the 1948 refugees is an open and bleeding wound in the flesh of the Palestinian people.

On the Israeli side there is a fixed tendency to increasingly reject the "core issues" of the conflict: Refugees. Jerusalem. Borders. Settlements. This rejection was perhaps what led to the failure of the Oslo Accords, and it obviously doesn't contribute to current negotiations: Israel's tendency to avoid talking about core issues sparks founded suspicion on the Arab side, which argues that Israel is indeed seeking calm but is not ready for a comprehensive solution.

Perhaps Israel's leadership should initiate a discussion on the Palestinian issue and suggest Israeli participation in resolving the problem such as removing all the refugees from the camps in which they are rotting and providing housing, work and citizenship to any refugee that so desires within future Palestinian borders.

Financial burden

Obviously, comprehensive treatment of the root problem will oblige Israel to admit its partial guilt in the Palestinian Nakba and the responsibility stemming from this guilt. Treating the root problem would also have to touch on the fact that hundreds of thousands of Jews were uprooted from their homes in Arab countries. Both from moral and security standpoints Israel should seek a solution to the 1948 refugee issue. It would involve a financial burden that would have to be met by Western states, Israel and the wealthy Arab states. In such an eventuality, the level of violence would drop, and the desperation that breeds extremism will begin to wane once the occupants of the refugee camps begin hearing that their lives in the gutters are about to end. From Israel's point of view, even if we sign agreements with all our enemies - as long as the refugee plight is not addressed, we shall have no calm.

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THE PALESTINIAN PLIGHT

Ziad Asali*

Source: Washington Times (<http://www.washingtontimes.com>). Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

Forty years ago this month, Israel stunned the Arab states in six days of war whose consequences are yet to be resolved. Hamas' version of its own six-day war has created new political realities that may be with us for some time to come. Negotiations, conferences and meetings of diplomats and pundits flying around the world will do very little to undo the new realities if we dither and lose the opportunity this crisis presents.

The Palestinian people have paid, yet again, an incalculable price for the decisions of their leaders. The world will stand sanctimoniously by judging the barbaric behavior of a people reduced by degradation, poverty and incarceration. We will hear, as we already have, about the Palestinians losing their moral right to a state because of the abominable acts of the combatants. A mean-spirited public debate will do nothing but fuel hatreds and diminish serious prospects for solutions.

The essence of the historic compromise for peace cannot be anything but a state of Palestine alongside Israel. Israeli and Palestinian rejectionists have consistently frustrated the realist moderates and found ways to block their efforts to bridge the gap between the two peoples in search of a compromise. The right-wing militant Israeli rejectionists have been aided greatly by the violent actions of Palestinian militants, by leftist nationalists in the past or Islamists more recently, to justify and maintain the disasters that the occupation inflicted on the Palestinian people.

Polarizing extremist forces on both sides have understood, but not discussed, the tactical coordination that served their strategies. They both believe that time is on their side, and not that of their opponents, in their exclusive claim to the whole land. The only chance that moderate realists of both sides can achieve a compromise is by having their own tactical coordination. Without hope of a political settlement, violence, in the name of religion and resistance, will polarize and pay off in political dividends. Those Israelis who wanted to maintain the occupation, and to expropriate the land, could not think of better partners than violent Palestinian militants. These militants provide the rationale for the facile argument that there is no Palestinian partner. The danger in their actions lies in the fact that Israel occupies Palestinian land.

Since there is no military solution, the occupation can only end through political means. Winning the hearts and minds of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples for compromise is a strategic tool for peace, while scaring or alienating them is a recipe for continued conflict and occupation. There will always be a constituency amongst both peoples for an exclusive claim to the land. This is the constituency for war and so far it has done well for itself.

The events that happened in the last few days in Gaza are the most significant since the Oslo Agreement. They exposed the gap over the two fault lines that divide the Palestinians: a political one between the moderate realists and the religious absolutists and a geographic and cultural one between Gaza and the West Bank.

Desperate attempts by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, to the point of exposing himself to ridicule and accusations of weakness and indecision, have failed to prevent the rupture. In a brutal fratricidal battle, marred by acts of savagery that reveal deep psychological wounds, Hamas routed Fatah and the forces of Mr. Abbas. Abandoned by their military leaders, they were outgunned and out-disciplined and went down to a speedy, humiliating defeat.

Gaza and the West Bank will be governed by two different systems in the immediate future. However, in the long run their fate is one and the same. Gaza has no future by itself and has no choice but to be part of Palestine. Israel has walked away from it and Egypt does not want it. However, in the short run it will be run by Hamas. In a few months, the people of Gaza will be comparing their lives with their cousins in the West Bank: Are they safer, freer, better off? Hamas will have to provide worldly answers to the most densely populated place on the planet with one and a half million people. It has to deal with issues like food, water, electricity, security, schools and, yes, a budget with money in the bank to pay to keep these people alive. It also must deal with its neighbors and the rest of the world.

There should be no doubt that even the most heartless in the international community should not allow the Gazans to starve or suffer extreme want and need. The international economic blockade is unlikely to be lifted soon. Calls for renegotiating with Fatah and Mr Abbas to reconstruct the unity government or any such device will go unanswered for some time. Hamas will have to fend for itself in Gaza with no other Palestinian partner to provide it cover.

In the West Bank, licking his wounds, Mr Abbas has taken action. He asserted his constitutional responsibility and dissolved the unity government which he desperately tried to hold together for three months, fired its Hamas prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, and asked the respected Salam Fayyad to form an emergency government. By so doing he removed the cover of legitimacy from the mutineers of Gaza and freed his government from the political and economic boycott imposed on Hamas. He at last did what he vowed he would never do: He jumped without a safety net in hopes that the West, Israel and the Arab governments will shoulder their responsibilities. Now that he has confronted Hamas he can legitimately claim his role as a genuine partner with Israel and the international community and enter into serious negotiations to end the conflict about Palestine.

After suffering military defeat and the loss of Gaza, he and the Fayyad government stand to defend a secular, progressive state of Palestine against the rising militant Islamist tide that is spreading across the Middle East. His proving grounds are in the West Bank. It is up to the United States, responsible Arab states and especially Israel to decide whether they will stand with Messrs Abbas and Fayyad, as genuine partners in establishing a secular free state, or to let them fail and live with the consequences.

The time to help is now: What is needed is a genuine partnership, where Palestinians do their own heavy lifting as their partners extend assistance and support. Israel has to face its moment of truth: no excuses. It has to decide whether it will support and partner with a moderate Palestinian state in words and in deeds or will face a religious militant movement that will drag it and the region into a holy war. Avoiding this partnership now is political malpractice. Palestinians have to declare the indivisibility of their future state in the West Bank, Gaza and Arab Jerusalem as they negotiate final-status issues based on previous agreements and discussions. Creative solutions can overcome all obstacles if a strategic partnership is forged between the Palestinians, Israelis, moderate Arabs and the United States. A political horizon is indispensable for the political transformation that must take place in Palestine and will govern its relations with its neighbours and the world.

The emergency government of Mr Fayyad has to provide the following:

- A defined, competent security leadership that can impose its will across the land under its control. It must prevent efforts to undermine it.
- A palpable improvement in the economy and mobility that is widely spread and benefits citizens of all classes.
- A prompt and serious commitment to accountability, transparency and rule of law. An attorney general and a special tribunal should be authorized to weed out corruption from this moment forward and to impose the most stringent penalties.
- It has to inspire the people, level with them, and work with them to build a nation and a state. Let the citizens make their contributions.

The international community has to express its support for this government by specific and immediate measures:

- Israel needs to release Palestinian tax money, promptly remove all non-security roadblocks and checkpoints and put an end to the humiliating encounters between its government employees and Palestinian citizens. The carrots and sticks at Israel's disposal should now be used to empower moderation.
- The United States has to publicly and openly provide funds and systems of assistance to the Palestinian government. President Bush also has to express his commitment to the two-state solution as he reiterates and redefines his vision for a lasting peace.
- Arab governments, as they offer to negotiate on the basis of the Arab League Initiative, need to provide immediate financial contributions to the Palestinian economy.
- Egypt and Jordan need to play a special role in stabilizing the political and security needs of the new Palestinian government.
- The Quartet needs to enter into immediate negotiations with the emergency government to provide coordinated assistance to all government departments and civil society. It must resume its political role to revise and update the Road Map with the view of implementing a political program that aims at ending the conflict. Palestinians should expect political and violent opposition in the West Bank directed against the government, the people and also against Israel and they must deal with it.

Their dream of ever having a state rests on their success at this beginning. Politics, national and domestic, have consistently thwarted efforts of politicians to do what they know they must to solve this conflict. Present leaders who have everything to gain, and little to lose, in the United States, Palestine and Israel have an opportunity for a historic breakthrough by committing to solve it. The world cannot wait for them to act.

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THE FALL OF GAZA AND THE RISE OF PALESTINE

Gershon Baskin*

Source: *IPCRI News-Views* (<http://ipcri.org>), June 15, 2007. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

The fall of Gaza to Hamas has thrown the Palestinian people into its worst crisis since 1967. With every crisis there are usually new opportunities and those must be investigated and pursued, if possible. Gaza is lost, for the time being and there is little that the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah can do to immediately change the course of events. The present focus must now be on the West Bank and on saving the Palestinian people from additional unnecessary disasters and nightmares. There is now an opportunity to contrast the horrors of Gaza with a new reality in the West Bank that could serve as an example and focal point for positive Palestinian energies.

The Palestinian leadership in Ramallah should detach itself from Gaza (for the time being). If, at the same time, the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and East Jerusalem would issue the following ten-point plan, a new future of promise and hope could be turned into a reality that would be the best possible way to serve the interests of the Palestinian people. The following is the proposed ten-point plan:

1. The Palestinian leadership of the West Bank and East Jerusalem should declare that it is their intention is to establish an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that will live in peace with all of its neighbors.

2. The Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and East Jerusalem recognizes Israel's right to exist, adheres to all of the agreements that have been signed between the PLO and the State of Israel and renounces all forms of violence.
3. The Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and East Jerusalem calls for the Government of Israel to renew permanent status negotiations immediately that will convene with the assistance of the Quartet and will proceed without interruption until agreements are reached and ratified by both sides.
4. The Palestinian leadership calls on the Government of Israel to immediately release all of the tax revenues which are being held by Israel and to transfer them to the Palestinian treasury account in Ramallah. The leadership calls on Israel to also release Palestinian prisoners to the West Bank, especially those who were arrested prior to the establishment of the Palestinian authority in 1994 and other prisoners who state their agreement to live under the new realities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and are willing to live in peace with all of their neighbors.
5. The Palestinian leadership calls on the governments of the world to renew their diplomatic relations and financial support for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
6. The Palestinian leadership calls on the governments of the world to provide humanitarian support for the people of Gaza through various international aid agencies and calls on the Government of Israel to allow food and medical aid that will reach the people of Gaza directly to enter Gaza.
7. The Palestinian leadership will make preparations for new elections in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that will be held within three months. In those elections, only political parties that accept the recognition of Israel, adhere to previous international agreements and commitments, support democracy and renounce violence will be allowed to participate in the elections.
8. Recognizing the mistakes of the past, the Palestinian leadership is immediately implementing a plan to unite all Palestinian security forces into one singular force under the direct command of the political echelon. The number of troops will be greatly reduced so that the new government will focus its attention on development, building the new state, education, health and welfare. The law of holding unauthorized arms will be strictly enforced and the first task of the Palestinian security force will be to collect unauthorized arms. The Palestinian government, with the assistance of foreign governments, will engage in an aggressive public campaign to collect arms, through public media and education and through the enforcement of the law.
9. In accordance with the peace directive of the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, all forms of incitement against peace and against Israel will be prohibited. The government of Palestine will immediately advance programs of educational reform that will introduce education for peace with Israel at all grade levels and in all schools. This campaign will include the public owned media as well and will prove without any doubt that the people of Palestine are determined to make peace.
10. The actions of the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and East Jerusalem will seek to create a new reality in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that will serve as the primary inspiration to the Palestinian people of Gaza to overthrow the Hamas government in Gaza and to once again unite the Palestinian people and lands so that eventually the Palestinian state to be established in the West Bank and East Jerusalem will include Gaza as well.

With such a platform placed on the table by the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israel should immediately respond in accordance with the Palestinian requests: release tax revenues, release prisoners, reopen full diplomatic relations including permanent status negotiations, assist in the creation of a new security reality by removing checkpoints and road closures throughout the West Bank and even declare that Israel will freeze the further construction of the security barrier pending future assessment. Israel should make all efforts to assist in the creation of new promise and hopes for the people of Palestine and for the people of Israel.

Public opinion research on the Israeli public recently conducted by IPCRI has clearly demonstrated that if the Israeli public truly believed that the Palestinians were sincerely interested in peace, they would be willing to make the concessions necessary to secure a peace agreement with the Palestinians. The most convincing action that Palestinians could take that would convince the Israelis, according to the research, is the adoption of peace education in schools and in the media. For Israelis, that is a true reflection of the values of the society and such a program would demonstrate to the Israeli people and to the international community that the Palestinian people are ready for peace. Israel would have to respond swiftly and with sincere intent that would strengthen the commitment for peace amongst Israelis and Palestinians alike.

The alternative to the above proposal is only more disasters and suffering for all Palestinians and for all Israelis. The recent events are far from the best scenario and from a Palestinian perspective represent a colossal tragedy. The Palestinian leadership has reached a new crossroad -- and they must make a choice in which direction to lead. There are always more than two alternatives, but those alternatives lead either in the direction of hope and peace or towards more despair and suffering. Leadership is about making tough decisions. Crises provide opportunities for real change and this is the time for change.

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Source: The Jerusalem Times (www.jerusalem-times.net), June 18, 2007. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to publish.

The damage that many Palestinians feared would occur took place -- no excuses; we all share in the blame. Hamas heavily tarnished its image as a democratically elected movement, by resorting to brute force to resolve the power struggle resulting from its sweeping electoral victory in January 2006. Up to the military putsch that led to Hamas's takeover of the Gaza Strip, the movement had the democratic and moral high ground. The impatience of its radical elements and its alliance with extremist regional partners might bring about the demise of the first Arab Islamic party that came to power through the ballot box.

Hamas now, although it has military supremacy in Gaza, has lost the support of civil society in Palestine. The public was horrified at the barbaric atrocities committed by the military militias. Hamas has undermined the democratic process and allowed a combination of forces, internal and external, to seek its elimination.

President Mahmoud Abbas was constantly blamed for indecisiveness, but Abbas knew that whoever resorted to force would lose legitimacy and the backing of the Palestinian people, as well as the Arab world and international community. Hamas radicals have committed political suicide by allowing civil war and usurping power by force. President Abbas with the backing of the majority of his people was finally forced into action.

Abbas dismissed Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and appointed a new cabinet headed by Dr Salam Fayyad to repair the damage that divided the future Palestine into two entities, Gaza under the military domination of Hamas, and the West Bank under the legitimacy of the presidency and the PLO. PM Salam Fayyad's emergency government, according to the basic laws of the PLC, has a mandate of 30 days that can be extended up to 90 days to avoid a constitutional showdown with the Hamas majority in parliament. Ninety days are not enough for the emergency government to repair the damage of the past 15 months. President Abbas and legal experts have to look for legal means to extend the mandate of the emergency government, at least up to the end of the presidential term in 20 months. This period is necessary for Fayyad to deal with the political and economic damage, and to repair and stabilize the internal collapse. PM Fayyad's immediate concern and full attention should be focused on preventing the collapse of security in the West Bank; institutionalizing the security force to serve the nation and not individuals and parties; providing the basic needs and services to the Palestinian people in Gaza, in spite of illegitimate Hamas control; and working on preserving relations with Gaza despite the political nuances. The Palestinian economy should receive primary attention; plans prepared while Fayyad was Finance minister should be implemented, as international sanctions are being lifted.

Hamas, as emotions simmer down, has to revert to rational behaviour, should remove weapons and masked militias from the streets of Gaza and observe and implement the rule of law. Assassinations of political and security rivals should cease immediately. As soon as possible Hamas should accept the dismissal of Ismail Haniyeh and his cabinet to begin to seek reconciliation. Hamas has two alternatives to preserve its place as a political movement. In the first place, Hamas's future is not as a military force; its strength is political. It has to renounce violence to prevent Gaza from sinking deeper into violence, otherwise it will give the hard line military in Israel the perfect excuse to try to eliminate the Hamas movement by force. Already such plans are being discussed by the new Minister of Defense, Ehud Barak.

Secondly, if sane forces in Hamas prevail, it should avoid further radicalization and military confrontation, to prevent being snuffed out by force. The Algerian experience should be fully understood by Hamas and Fateh: Eve ybody loses in a civil war situation. The Palestinian supporters of Hamas, as well as the Palestinian people at large, will become the victims, if the present rift is allowed to deepen. The national aspirations of the Palestinian people for self determination and independence will experience a major setback, and the suffering will escalate.

Hamas has to work in earnest now with the special Arab League committee that was set-up recently to repair relations and heal wounds. Hamas has to seriously consider early elections to avoid a constitutional impasse, in order to regain public confidence. If Hamas is so sure of public support, it should support the process of early elections. In addition, seeking the release of the BBC journalist from captivity should be one of its first acts of restoring law and order in Gaza. Hamas, if it is serious about show that it supports the recent statement of Ismail Haniyeh that Hamas accepts a Palestinian state in the borders of June 4, 1967, should release the captive soldier Gilad Shalit, via the good offices of President Abbas, it will help it to reverse negative public opinion worldwide and internally.

The president should be firm and resolute; he was forced to act, but should keep in mind that he was elected to look after the welfare of his people -- all his people. Abbas has to work toward re-establishing internal dialogue, economic reconstruction, massive reforms and an end of occupation. This is a tremendous agenda, no one except the President has this mandate; let us all support him and pray that he may succeed.

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THE PATH FORWARD FROM GAZA: AVERTING A DEEPER CRISIS

Mara Rudman and Brian Katulis*

Source: *Middle East Progress* (<http://middleeastprogress.org>), June15, 2007. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

The violence in Gaza this week has created new facts on the ground and generated new laments about increasingly limited options. For all those concerned about security, stability and the values we hold dear, what happened in Gaza is a harsh wakeup call, one that should spark action going forward, not just words of regret for what brought us here.

We can't say we weren't warned. Last fall on the ABC News program "This Week", King Abdullah of Jordan, warned of three possible civil wars in the Middle East in 2007 -- the one already occurring in Iraq, and two possible civil wars among Palestinians and Lebanese. A staunch ally of the United States, Abdullah repeated his core message on the need for increased U.S. leadership to stabilize the Middle East in a Joint Session of Congress in March. And long before he raised these concerns, careful observers of events in the West Bank and Gaza had already noted the dangerous divisions and predicted the ugliness that the world saw spilling in Gaza's streets this week.

Leaders in Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization had recognized Israel and readily participated in negotiating a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But many were notoriously corrupt, and provided little opportunity for new approaches and leaders to emerge. They also had too few tangible results to show the Palestinian people on the key issues most directly affecting their lives: not enough jobs or quality education; constraints put in place to protect Israeli settlements that impeded Palestinians' movement; and limits on the movement and access for goods and services that held back Palestinian businesses' ability to export products, sustain and grow jobs. In sum, this absence of leadership resulted in the failure to deliver what the Palestinian people so desperately seek: a government that offers hope that Palestinian children can aspire to a better future than their parents in a society that respects the rule of law and rewards those who respect it. Hamas exploited the gap between Palestinians' expectations and their daily lives. They won an election last year on the Palestinian leadership's failure to deliver. Arguably, they've now won a costly battle for control of Gaza. We cannot allow them to win any more.

So how to steer a better course? President Abbas, Salaam Fayyad and other key Palestinian leaders cannot go it alone. Israel working now with Palestinians in the West Bank to achieve near term results with increased intensity is a necessary but not sufficient step.

The United States must step to the front, working closely with our European allies, to bring all the countries with a direct stake in ensuring that the Palestinian people have a future considerably better than their recent past: not only Israel, but the entire Arab League must be brought into the conversation. Through bilateral discussions with key countries and an immediate international conference, the United States and its allies can lay out a framework for pulling back from the brink of further chaos. Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank should start by working toward a political resolution of their conflict and take steps to build a Palestinian state anchored in the West Bank.

Specific measures include: Israel allowing an increased flow of people and goods throughout the West Bank; joint Israeli-Palestinian efforts to address shared concerns about law and order; Israel's dismantlement of some settlements immediately both as a sign of good faith and to eliminate impediments to basic transit problems settlements pose; pressure and increased incentives by the international community led by the Middle East Quartet (which includes the United States, Russia, the United Nations and the European Union) to motivate Palestinian leaders to undertake significant reforms; and efforts by the Arab League to support the Palestinian economy in the West Bank.

One vital goal of all of these efforts is to help Palestinians construct a governing authority that delivers to the people. In words attributed to another seemingly intractable conflict in Northern Ireland that has moved closer to resolution -- "Justice must be seen to be done." While making political progress in the West Bank the primary focus, we cannot abandon Gaza. First and foremost, members of the Arab League should take the lead in facilitating humanitarian operations in Gaza to address the growing crisis there. Ignoring or isolating Gaza puts Israel, Egypt and the region at greater risk and ignores an international obligation to the 1.4 million people living in a small enclosed area of 360 square kilometers (25 miles long, 6 miles wide), who did not choose this fate, regardless of how they may have voted in the 2006 elections. Israel continues to maintain control over the Gaza Strip's lifeline energy and water needs. Terrorist groups have smuggled weapons through the border with Egypt, and all countries in the region are threatened by what Islamist militants could send back across Gaza's borders. And what happens in Gaza will not stay in Gaza. How Hamas chooses to exercise its newly gained authority -- what it delivers to its people and to its neighbors -- will affect us all.

The key ingredient necessary to put all of these pieces together is U.S. leadership. In the aftershocks of such a grim setback, some argued that the United States should do nothing because the situation is so complicated. This is exactly the wrong approach, and U.S. leaders should have the confidence to tackle a difficult situation that just got more complicated. The United States has experienced similar crises before, and it has capably managed similar shocks to advance its interests. In a short year and a half period from 1989-1991, the United States under a different President Bush, through a series of interlinked, multi-track diplomatic efforts, managed aftershocks from the Soviet Union's break up, German reunification and Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. The United States has managed tough challenges before, and it can do it again.

In the near term, the Middle East Quartet should work jointly with Israel and the Arab League to negotiate a cease-fire. Part of this arrangement must include humanitarian and medical assistance to the Palestinian people of Gaza. To help these efforts, Israel might consider offering up the remaining tax revenues proportionately due to Gaza in the forms of international relief most likely to reach Palestinian Gazans quickly. Coordinated international efforts implemented by the Arab League can help ensure greater humanitarian needs are met so that the people of Gaza are able to see out to the West Bank and look beyond the immediate crisis to another horizon.

We cannot allow the political horizon -- two states, Israel and a future Palestinian state that includes both West Bank and Gaza, with sustainable viable borders, outlined by President Bush nearly five years ago in the Rose Garden, to fade from view in light of this dangerous setback in Gaza. But to keep all eyes on that horizon, an international call of "all hands on deck" is needed. With the Quartet in

the lead, the United States making clear its commitment to peace, and the Arab League as key players working with Israel, the current crisis offers an opportunity to test the propositions of the Saudi Initiative and keep hope alive for a two-state solution that brings stability to the Middle East one day.

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EXPERIENCE TRUMPS APPEAL

Roberta Fahn Schoffman*

Source: *Israel Policy Forum* (<http://www.ipforum.org>>www.ipforum.org), June, 18 2007. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

The elections in Israel last week came not a day too soon. As the bloody infighting in Gaza was reaching its zenith, Israelis were holding elections. The two familiar (some might say too familiar) victors -- Shimon Peres, ninth President of Israel, and Ehud Barak, new chairman of the Labour Party -- represent far more experience than appeal. But, according to most polls in recent months, and given the multiplying security threats confronting us, experience is surely called for.

The civil war in Gaza resulted in a shattering Hamas takeover. The flight of Fatah leaders, including Mohamad Dahlan, to the West Bank, and Abu Mazen's establishment of an emergency PA government headed by Salam Fayyad, brought about a separation of the territories more daunting than anything Israel could have foreseen. It all seemed to happen so quickly, almost unnoticed; it was as if Israelis figured that if they ignored the situation, the Palestinian problem would go away. And so we hummed new jingles for the Labor race, held our breath as the Knesset voted in secret ballot for Shimon Peres, and didn't pay much attention as hell broke loose in our wretched backyard.

Prime Minister Olmert, in his visit this week to Washington, will have much to discuss with President Bush. First on the growing list of urgent issues will be the grim reality in Gaza and the terrible humanitarian meltdown in its wake, as well as Israel's concern that Hamas, now in control of the "Philadelphi Corridor" bordering Egypt, will be able to upgrade its supply of weapons to include longer-range missiles. Next comes Iran, which continues to incite the Islamists in northern Lebanon while menacing Israel and the West with its incipient nuclear capability. Not to mention Syria, which is in the process of a hefty military build-up along the Golan Heights that might -- or might not -- be for defensive purposes, depending on whether talks with Israel succeed, fail or happen at all.

What seems certain is that we are quickly headed for a very hot summer. The tragic events of last year at this season are still fresh in our minds, especially since the Winograd Committee, charged with examining the performance of the government and IDF in the Second Lebanon War, will deliver its final report in August. No doubt many Israelis are feeling more secure knowing that this time around, Ehud Barak, Israel's most decorated war hero, will be in charge at the Ministry of Defence and Shimon Peres, Nobel Prize winner, will be working the international community.

Until just a few days ago, the analysis and commentary following last week's double elections were focused on backroom deals and what this all means for the future of Ehud Olmert and his coalition. Barak, who beat Ami Ayalon in a second round of voting, joins the cabinet as Defense Minister, while Shimon Peres vacates his dual title of Vice Premier and Minister for the Development of the Negev and Galilee. With the Finance Minister's seat still vacant since Avraham Hirschson stepped down amid charges of embezzlement, the great Israeli game of musical cabinet was underway. Loyalty or talent, voter appeal or genuine skills -- round and round it goes, and where it stops nobody knows.

What we do know is that after a long career of losing, Shimon Peres won this vote at a critical juncture. It seems as if his entire journey in public life inevitably brought him to this very time and place. Shimon Peres as President is exactly what's needed. Not just because of his clarity and optimism; imagination and hope; intellect and vision. Not just because he is widely admired abroad and brings respect to Israel and respectability to the presidency. But because he has seen a lot in his years; he has managed crises and engaged in conflict resolution. Because he has experience.

One commentator last week wrote that "Barak is still the most hated politician in Israel", and will have to work very hard to prove himself now. Maybe. But it was the failure of last summer's Lebanon war and the terrifying predictions of more violence this summer that gave Ehud Barak the lead he needed to beat Ami Ayalon. His simple mantra to voters, "I am most suited to be minister of defence" and "only I can beat Bibi Netanyahu", persuaded Labourites to back the former general. As Chief of Staff and Prime Minister, Barak showed, among other qualities, that he is strategic and bold, creative and courageous. Again, Israelis voted for experience.

Of course, even experience cannot be the sole elixir for our current woes. The whole place seems to have spun out of control and it will take more than impressive CVs to get us out of this mess. But as Ehud Olmert understood on the eve of his U.S. departure, when he summarily appointed Barak Defense Minister (without waiting the two weeks he promised former Defense Minister Amir Peretz): we don't have the time for fig-leaf farewells, for empty pomp and ceremony. We finally have to get down to the most serious business of state: securing our home front, preparing for potential war and aggressively pursuing peace -- as if our lives depended on it.

In the shadow of the Hamas conquest, the Arab League plan promoted by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan looks like a bright light at the end of an ever-darkening tunnel. Olmert must now enlist the support of Washington and the international community to work quickly

with those who are willing to work with us -- even including Hamas if a viable ceasefire is offered. If nothing else, experience has taught us that the longer we wait, the fewer options we have.

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FINDING MANDELA

Byron Bland*

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Several years ago, a high-level Israeli official asked me to tell him everything I could about how the Israelis might find their Palestinian Mandela. His question was interesting and appropriate, but also troubling, because the Afrikaners didn't really "find" Mandela. It took several months before the answer came to me. Show me the Palestinian to whom you Israelis are willing to lose, and I will show you your Palestinian Mandela.

My friend had overlooked the fact that Mandela and the African National Congress had won in South Africa. The decisive element in the so-called miracle was that white South Africans had, in one way or another and to varying degrees, accepted this outcome and had made it, if not their victory, then certainly something other than their defeat.

Much has been written about the many factors that drove the process forward, but no one would deny that leadership - Mandela's leadership - played a decisive role. Although he was offered his freedom numerous times if he would just give up the struggle against apartheid, it was a deal that only a quisling would make. Mandela was made of sterner stuff and refused to make the fundamental concession that the Afrikaners sought.

De Klerk's decision to release Mandela unconditionally came in response to the unrest that had rendered the country ungovernable. De Klerk hoped to engage Mandela in a lengthy process of negotiation in which he could be coaxed into making critical compromises. Nevertheless, after many ups and downs, it was de Klerk, not Mandela, who made the fundamental compromises.

How did this unbelievable turn of events come about? The standard political science answer is that de Klerk found himself on a slippery slope where he thought that every concession was the last needed to get Mandela to comply. Still, this account cannot explain why, in the end, de Klerk conceded power to the ANC especially when the South African state was not on the verge of collapse.

It is always difficult to look into the mind of a political leader at a crucial moment. Nevertheless, I think that a fundamental shift took place in the way de Klerk saw Mandela. De Klerk came to power thinking that Mandela was the only African who could make the concessions needed to keep Afrikaner South Africa afloat. Slowly, he came to see Mandela instead as the African who could give Afrikaners a future they could live with.

Who will lead us there? Mandela let no opportunity pass to talk about the place of white South Africans in the new South Africa. He emphasized time and again that majority rule did not mean the domination of the white minority by a black majority. Seeking a "middle ground between white fears and black hopes," Mandela laid the very foundation for peace - "We do not want to drive you into the sea" - because there would be no peace unless white South Africans heard and believed his words.

In virtually every statement, Mandela presented a vision of the future in which white South Africans would be appreciated and respected. Those who heard him felt that they, their family, and their community could have a satisfying and secure life in what he was describing. Rather than offering concessions that would prop up the old, Mandela was offering a future to many who had begun to doubt that they had one.

Israelis need to find a Palestinian Mandela, and Palestinians need to find an Israeli Mandela. However, the Mandela they need to find is not the leader who will make the concessions they seek but the one to whom they can make the concessions they say they cannot offer. Mandela was this kind of leader because his repeated actions and unequivocal words gave witness to a future that Afrikaners could embrace without fear.

Mandela presents leaders today with a twin challenge. First, how do we find the person on the other side to whom we can make the concessions that we feel we cannot afford to make? Second and much more important, how can we become the persons to whom the other side can make the concessions they say they cannot make? Both are important, but the second is critical in a time when each, standing back, looks to the other to perform the difficult actions needed to move the peace process forward.

Progress toward peace between the Israelis and Palestinians is not stalled because no one can envision the final settlement. Every thoughtful observer knows that some rough approximation of the Clinton formula is the only deal possible. The question is not so much what is needed -- this much is known. The real question is who will lead us there.

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The Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Relief Services are offer a new publication: John Paul Lederach, Reina Neufeldt, and Hal Culbertson, ***Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit***, designed to improve peacebuilders' abilities to learn before, during and after interventions in unpredictable conflict contexts. Electronic copies of the toolkit are available online at: <http://www.crs.org/publications/peacebuilding.cfm>.

Journal of Globalization for the Common Good, the journal of Globalization for the Common Good, is available at: www.commongoodjournal.com.

The Journal of Peacebuilding & Development is published three times a year. To glimpse sample pages or subscribe, go to: <http://www.american.edu/cgp/jpd2/resources.htm>.

The World Security Institute has begun publishing ***Arab Insight***, a quarterly journal dedicated to bringing Middle East perspectives to Washington. The journal is available on line by going to: <http://www.worldsecurityinstitute.org/showarticle.cfm?id=217>. Fro more information contact Whitney Parker, (202)797-5287, wparker@worldsecurityinstitute.org.

The World Security Institute will publish first edition of ***Caucasus Context*** in the spring of 2007. *Caucasus Context* is a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary journal focused on regional integration and cooperation between the three South Caucasus republics: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The journal will offer in-depth analyses and commentaries on issues pertinent to the region, including perspectives from individuals in the media, government, civil society and academia. We welcome guest opinions, articles, and contributions. To receive a free subscription via E-mail go to: http://app.bronto.com/public/?q=landingpage&fn=Mail_LandingPage_Link&id=aehkqkqfuwpggmvciviftvedrsbkd&page=subadd&type=page.

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The **ABA Human Rights Committee weekly newsletter** is available at no cost for human rights attorneys, activists and educators by visiting: <http://w3.abanet.org/abanet/common/email/listserv/listcommands.cfm?parm=subscribe&listgroup=inthumrights>. The **listserve** can be joined by sending an email to: russell@kerlawfirm.com or by going to the website.

The ***Journal of Peace Education***, sponsored by the Peace Education Commission of the International Peace Research Association, understands peace education as education for the achievement of a nonviolent, ecologically sustainable, just and participatory society. To subscribe, view on line copies or to see submission details, go to: www.tandf.co.uk/journals/cjpe.

he Human Rights University Network and the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) publishes the ***International Journal on Human Rights on Transitional Justice*** twice a year, distributed free of charge in over 100 countries in English, Portuguese and Spanish. The Journal aims at disseminating a Global Southern perspective on human rights and tofacilitate exchange among professors and activists from the Global South without disregarding contributions from other regions. For more information go to: <http://www.surjournal.org>.

The ***Journal of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies*** has begun publication. For information go to: <http://www.humiliationstudies.ucepece.org/>.

New videos from the Chiapas Media Project": ***A Very Big Train Called the Other Campaign, 2006***, 39:00 Min., Spanish w/English subtitles, shows the January 2006, tour of the Mexico, by Subcomandante Marcos, in La Otra (The Other Campaign), the Zapatista initiative launched in an effort to evolve new forms of governance in Mexico and beyond; and ***Letters for our Words***, on Zapatista Education. Videos can be purchased from Chiapas Media Project (773)504-4144, cmp@chiapasmediaproject.org, www.chiapasmediaproject.org/.

Scientists for Global Responsibility (SGR) Newsletter is an independent UK-based organization of scientists, architects, engineers, and technologists promoting ethical science, design and technology. To receive their newsletter visit: <http://www.sgr.org.uk>><http://www.sgr.org.uk>.

Mahatma Gandhi News Digest, a weekly is a web service by GandhiServe Foundation. To receive the digest visit: <http://www.gandhiserve.org>><http://www.gandhiserve.org>.

Global Education News is a monthly electronic newsletter published by the Council of Europe's North-South Centre. Global Education News is a platform where national global education coordinators can share global education news and events, useful thematic links and educational materials. Global education is understood to encompass development education, human rights education, education for sustainability, education for peace and conflict prevention and intercultural education - the global dimensions of education for citizenship. The May 2007 issue of the newsletter can be found in both HTML and PDF at: http://www.coe.int/t/e/north-south_centre/programmes/3_global_education/g_GE_Newsletter/

National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) members Len and Libby Traubman, founders of the long-running Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group of San Mateo, CA, have created two great DVDs. The first film, **Dialogue at Washington High**, (43 Min.) shows a Jew and a Palestinian modeling how to connect with the "other" beginning with personal Story. Tenth grade high school students then engage each other in dyads with a new quality of listening, and the diverse youth speak about their new way of communicating. The 43-minute DVD, can be ordered free at: <http://traubman.igc.org/vidschool.htm>. The second film, **PEACEMAKERS: Palestinians & Jews Together at Camp**, shows how a Palestinian-Jewish Dialogue at a camp in the California mountains with 140 Muslims, Jews and Christians of all ages, including some from Israel and Palestine brings the participants to discover one another and their ability to communicate and cooperate in new ways. Later, it shows them holding a public event in San Francisco to tell the community about their struggles and breakthroughs. This 83-minute film can be ordered at no cost at <http://traubman.igc.org/vidcamp.htm>. NCDD has **additional videos on line** at: www.thataway.org.

Marshall Rosenberg, **The Nonviolent Communication Training Course** is a set of 9 CDs from Sound's True, P.O. Box 8010, Boulder, CO 80306 (800)333-9185, www.soundstrue.com.

USEFULL WEB SITES

Global Beat, has been an excellent source of information and further sources for *Nonviolent Change*, at: <http://www.nyu.edu/globalbeat>. Global Beat also has an E-mail list serve.

The **International Crisis Group (ICG)** carries regular reports and sets of recommendations about difficult developing situations around the globe, and has been an extremely helpful source of information and ideas for this journal: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm>. ICG also has a regular E-mail report circulation service that can be subscribed to on its web site.

The International Relations Center (IRC): <http://www.irc-online.org/>.

Europa World Plus: Europa World/Regional Surveys of the World On Line is at: www.europaworld.com.

The Pulitzer Center, whose mission is to promote in-depth coverage of international affairs, focusing on topics that have been under-reported, mis-reported - or not reported at all: <http://www.pulitzercenter.org/>.

Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR): www.acr.net.

Peace Media publishes a monthly web magazine at: <http://peacejournalism.com/ReadArticle.asp?ArticleID=6086>

The **Open society Institute and the Soros Foundation**: <http://www.soros.org/>

Conciliation Resources (CR) has re-launched its website <http://www.c-r.org>.

International Peace Bureau (IPB): <http://www.ipb.org>

The Institute for Strategic Studies: <http://www.iiss.org/publications/armed-conflict-database/>

World Security Institute and the Center for Defense Information: www.worldsecurityinstitute.org. The World Security Institute (WSI) offers audio podcast programming in its list of interactive communication features at the iTunes Music Store. WSI's podcasts will include audio recordings of press conferences, panel discussions, and interviews with WSI experts hosted by WSI or in collaboration with other media outlets. Download iTunes at www.apple.com/itunes. Find WSI podcasts by searching for "World Security Institute" under the podcast section of the iTunes Music Store, or by clicking this link: <http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=215717216>. The WSI Brussels Security Blog aims to continue and expand the efforts of the World Security Institute, Brussels, to inform, stimulate, and shape the debate around the security and defense dilemmas facing Europe and the world, with a view to formulating effective and lasting solutions, posting regular commentary related to: Afghanistan, the Balkans, Darfur, ESDP, Iran, Iraq, Missile Defence, NATO, OSCE, Peace Support Operations, and Terrorism, at: <http://wsibrusselsblog.org/>.

The **Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA)**: <http://www.peacejusticestudies.org/>.

The International Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) Program a American University web site, including bi-monthly news letters, is at: newsletter at www.aupeace.org.

The **Stanley Foundation**, "brings fresh voices and original ideas to debates on global and regional problems. The foundation seeks a secure peace with freedom and justice, built on world citizenship and effective global governance," is at: www.stanleyfoundation.org.

The International Journal of Conflict and Violence focuses on one specific topic in each semi-annual on line issue while also including articles on other, unrelated subjects. In the Fall 2007 issue the focus will be on terrorism. The Journal is at: http://www.ijcv.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=27.

Culture of Peace Online Journal is at: <http://www.copoj.ca/>.

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