



# Middle East Report

Afghanistan Iran Iraq Israel Lebanon Syria Turkey

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I WOULD, AS ALWAYS, LIKE TO THANK OUR CONTRIBUTORS AND THOSE WHO TOOK TIME OUT OF THEIR BUSY SCHEDULES TO BE INTERVIEWED FOR THE PUBLICATION. AND I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SAY A SPECIAL THANKS TO IA FORUM STAFF MEMBERS LEIGH MARSHALL AND DR. GHADA MOHAMED FOR THEIR EFFORTS IN BRINGING TOGETHER SUCH INTERESTING AND DIVERSE MATERIAL.

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**JASON MIKS**  
MANAGING EDITOR  
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Greater Middle East



## What the West is doing wrong

An interview with Aaron David Miller

**Q:** **International Affairs Forum: Strong Western world powers have historically had difficulty in the Middle East. Do you see a common thread?**

**A:** **Aaron David Miller:** In large part, Western powers are distant to the neighborhood. Their capacity to assert leverage and endure in the face of determined efforts by smaller powers to resist them there usually ends badly. That, combined with the fact that usually Western interests, at least in a colonial sense, were designed to take precedence over those of local states and powers. So it was inevitable conflict. That's before the religious and cultural differences that separate West from East are considered. So it's by and large been a pretty unhappy story.

**What misperceptions has the United States had about the Middle East that have caused problems with brokering peace there?**

I think we don't have enough respect for the issues. As Americans, we live pretty sheltered lives. We've never been occupied or invaded, at least from the early nineteenth century. We have non-predatory neighbors to our north and south; and fish to our east and west. As a consequence of that we tend to be very optimistic, pragmatic, at times naïve, and at times, even arrogant as a consequence of our exceptionalism. We don't bother to listen very well to the needs and requirements of smaller powers. Even if we were listening, there are fundamental differences that are going to separate any great power's interests from those smaller powers on whose support they sometimes rely or in opposition to the great power's policy. So structurally it's an inherently tense relationship.

When it comes to the Arab-Israeli issue, we have a very close relationship with the Israelis and when we use it wisely, we can succeed. When we don't use it wisely, when we allow the special to become the exclusive and we don't take care of American interests, we usually do not succeed. We have a lot of leverage and a unique role to play when we're smart and tough.

**In your book, "The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace", you've highlighted several Americans you consider to be success stories, as well as some failures.**

Two Republicans, Henry Kissinger and James Baker; and a Democrat, President Jimmy Carter, managed to do the kind of smart and tough diplomacy that I think is called for. All of them man-



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aged to be tough yet gain the trust of the Arabs and Israelis they were dealing with, they were tenacious in their efforts, and had an exquisite sense of timing and knew how much they could get away with, how far to push Arabs and Israelis toward an agreement.

Over the past sixteen years, under President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, we've had much less success. We've lost touch with some of the qualities – the four 't's' as I call them: trust, toughness, timing, and tenacity – that the other three persons possessed. We need all four qualities and then you also need an Arab-Israeli leader who has the political will and the sense of urgency to get something done. If you don't have that, then no matter we do, what we say, we can kick and scream all day long, nothing's going to happen. You need the right balance. Commitment and intention is not good enough. You need to be smart and tough.

**President Bush, Tony Blair, and Condoleezza Rice have all expressed optimism about reaching a peace settlement before the end of the year. Do you think that is realistic?**

I think the odds of reaching a conflict ending agreement OR peace treaty are slim to none by the end of the year. It is conceivable where you have a situation where Olmert and Abbas could agree on a general declaration of principles which would be historic, if they could do it. The real question though is not just agreement but how such an accord is implemented under the current circumstances. There is a divided Palestinian polity, a divided Israeli government, and a regional environment which is really pretty nasty. There are the Iranians, Hamas, the Syrians and their proxies – even when their proxies operate independently of them for their own interests. The Arab summit is a classic example of how much dysfunction and division there is within the Arab world today. While some argue that it's good that the Syrians are somewhat isolated, and I can see their point because of Syrian behavior in Lebanon, the Syrians can be spoilers. We know that, the Israelis know it, and the Palestinians know it. Not to mention the Iranian capacity. So the idea of reaching a text between now and the end of the year, maybe. The idea of implementing it—not a chance.

**How effective can other countries and groups such as the Arab League and European Union be in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations? Or should the United States still act as the primary broker?**

We are the primary brokers in large part because we have a good and working relationship with all sides. When we're smart and tough, follow our interests, and read the Israelis and Arabs correctly, we're an indispensable mediator and we've delivered on occasion. When we're not smart and tough, when we allow our ideology to dictate our behavior, listen too closely or too critically to one side or the other, we fail.

**At a recent roundtable, former Secretaries of State Madeline Albright, James Baker, Warren Christopher, Henry Kissinger, and Colin Powell said that the next U.S. President should open negotiations with Iran. Do you agree?**

It's fine, but it's a key to an empty room. We should start talking to the Iranians but it's not going to yield much. Iran's foreign policy is driven by domestic politics that are highly fractionated by its ideology and its own national self interest. That may change, but until it gets into a much better balance, it seems that it's going to be very difficult to reach any level of real understanding on the part of Iran and of course it will involve a measure of understanding on our part as well. I'm not sure this administration is capable of that, so I think a lot of it will be left to the next one.





## Globalization and the political economy of reform

by Anoush Ehteshami

**T**HE UNSTATED BIG FEAR OF GLOBALIZATION in the Middle East is of international economic marginalization on the one hand, and domination on the other. These are sentiments shared by countless others across the continents. It is in the sense of powerlessness which accompanies globalization that the real fear of many millions of communities in the developing world lie. Where some countries and regions seem able to overcome the fear and forge ahead and accept the risks of riding the tide of globalization, others either fall by the wayside, or worse still, are crushed by the weight and volume of the tide.

Despite concerted attempts at accommodation with globalization by some countries (Israel, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, Turkey) the bulk of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remains firmly in the timid camp of countries fearing change which could lead to loss of control. Globalization in the MENA context implies opening domestic markets to foreign competition, which is often better equipped, fitter, and with greater marketing power. But much MENA economic data suggests that without fundamental and rapid change the region is probably heading for a far less palatable outcome than even submission to globalization might suggest.

In terms of the region's business environment ranking in global standing, the region's top six economies stack up as follows: Turkey is 41st, Saudi Arabia is 42nd, Egypt is 43rd, Algeria is number 55th, and Iran and Iraq are 59th and 60th respectively. According to the Heritage Foundation's 2005 Index of Economic Freedom, the MENA region was the only part of the world to experience a decline in economic freedom. The region's least economically free were Iran, Libya, and Syria, with scores of 4.40, 4.16, and 3.90 respectively; and Bahrain, Israel and the UAE were seen as its most free. The region's freest economy was only ranked 20th in the world, however, and the United Arab Emirates 48th! These figures provide a hardly promising picture.

Yet, much internationalization – leading to globalization – had already begun to take place in the 1970s, creating a critical socio-economic group in the Middle East region, which was structurally linked to global capitalism. Great wealth had practically 'northernized' some Arab states, particularly in the Persian Gulf sub-region, in material standards, and their wealth comfortably knit them in the Western-based international economic system. This process has accelerated in the early 21st century and the accumulation of vast financial reserves in the oil-producing countries today is now creating a bourgeoisie of a cosmopolitan character whose arena for investment is the world capitalist market. At the same time, powerful local bourgeoisie are being greatly strengthened by the experiences of state capitalism that countries like Egypt and Algeria have gone through.

Despite these significant developments, legitimacy challenges posed by the spread of globaliza-



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tion remain, relating, for example, to the flow of information, control of the sources of information, the rapidity and stealthy nature of information and communication flows. At another level, the preconditions for economic reform – in terms of transparency, the rule of law, accountable functionaries – bite into the hitherto exclusive domains of the state. In the absence of pluralization of the political system, the elites' loss of control of information flows, coupled with the need to reform the structures and institutions of governance, provide a double challenge to their legitimacy as rulers and guardians of the nation.

In the final analysis, the region is yet to find a way of squaring the circle of globalization – but without moving forward it can only fall further behind.





## Improving education in the Middle East

An interview with Magdy El-Kady

**Q:** International Affairs Forum: What is the state of education in the Middle East?

**A:** **Dr. Magdy El-Kady:** Based on my experience thus far, there is a rich talent pool of students in the region, and they are motivated to acquire the highest level of education. Everyone is realizing that the market is becoming competitive and they need to keep up with the ever-changing demands. However, the resources are limited and there is little being done to provide direction on integrating education with real world experience. The energy and the desire to contribute is there, the right means to funnel it to be productive is lacking.

**What needs to be done to improve it? To what extent should external assistance be provided and if provided, what form should it take?**

At a minimum, a clear path from education to a productive lifestyle. Also, some concentration in certain fields, like what India has done with computer science, to become best in class in a highly competitive market. Unlike what I experienced in the West, the local business community is not involved in the educational system and this creates a vacuum after graduation. Like Canada, there are programs that encourage companies to hire new graduates. Most programs have active student placement departments. But I strongly believe we need to take the responsibility of ensuring that the graduates are choosing the right path, and we need to connect them with the right placement in the region and outside.

External assistance should revolve around integrating the curricula to ensure that there is a quality of graduates on par with their Western peers which can then generate opportunities with global companies. Also, scholarships that support circular immigration in specialist fields are needed. The most important assistance is to provide successful role models of Middle Easterners who live in the West. They should be active in sharing their experience and how they managed to get their talent to excel at the highest level.

**Can furthering higher education in the Middle East work to quell hostility and encourage steps toward peace? What are the mitigating factors?**

Absolutely. Education is very important in providing a balanced view of the world. But education alone won't get us there—we need to ensure that the educators are qualified, well informed and



*Dr. Magdy El-Kady is president of CIC; Cairo Campus of Cape Breton University in Egypt.  
<http://www.cic-cairo.com/>*

most importantly have the flexibility and freedom to express their views. The challenge is providing the opportunity for students to use that education and to become productive citizens. Unemployment and jobs being available based on talent and qualification, instead of who you know, are obstacles that need to be addressed. The gap between who has and who has not needs to be reduced in accelerated fashion to build and strengthen a middle class.

**How have programs through Cape Breton worked to facilitate international exchange and assistance to the host country?**

The most important thing we accomplished is the creation of the joint program that is recognized by a Canadian university. This ensured that the graduates feel they are getting a degree that is on par with western standards. It also opens the opportunity for those students to work in global companies in the region or abroad.

**What do you see as the future of, and needs for, Cape Breton University in Cairo?**

The next step is a coop program that will allow a subset of talented graduates to work in Canada and bring experience and understanding of Western society back. The other part that is missing is the ability to fund some scholarships for talented students who have no access and resources to join us.



## Policies, not liberties, at heart of Muslim resentment

An interview with Michael Scheuer

**Q:** International Affairs Forum: A central premise of your book, ‘Marching Toward Hell: America and Islam After Iraq’ is that Al-Qaida’s motivations don’t lie in who we are but in what we do, in our policies towards the Muslim world. As a result of these policies, past and present, how far off track do you think we are on the War on Terror?

**A:** **Dr. Michael Scheuer:** I think you can hardly be on track if you don’t understand what motivates the enemy. I was reading a new book by John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, ‘Who Speaks for Islam?’, and they identify the major problem for the United States and the West with the Muslim world as the impact of our policies on that part of the world. The most interesting thing is that they find there’s no difference in that attitude between what they call moderates and radicals. So if we’ve got the most fundamental thing wrong, I don’t see how we can expect to prevail anytime soon in this war that we are engaged in.

**Do you see any chance of change among the West’s political elite to move away from this school of thought in dealing with the Islamic world?**

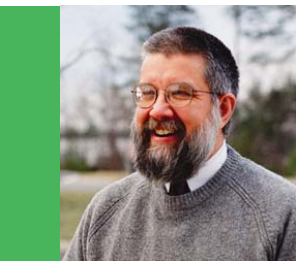
I don’t see any right now. I don’t think there is a great deal of difference between Senator McCain, Senator Obama and Senator Clinton. For awhile it looked like Senator Obama was a little different, but he has moved towards being unequivocally pro-Israel [recently]. I suspect that whoever is the President four years from now, we will see the same situation or worse than we’re facing today. We’ll still be in Iraq, we’ll still be losing in Afghanistan.

The problem for our politicians is that you can’t go to the American people and say we’re sending your men and women overseas so they can make sure the Saudi police state stays in power and can steal all the revenue from the Saudi people from the production of petroleum. You can’t say we’re in this war because of our support for Israel to some extent and now Americans are going to have to die because we’ve pledged support to Israel.

It’s a very difficult set of foreign policy issues to discuss, so what happens is we fall back to the inane but very powerful argument that they hate our liberties, gender equality, freedom in the workplace, and want to wipe our society out.

**What would you advocate for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East?**

I am very much a non-interventionist. I think you can’t do everything at once, but the one thing



*Michael Scheuer served in the CIA for 22 years before resigning in 2004. He was Chief of the bin Laden Unit at the Counterterrorist Center from 1996 to 1999. He is the author of ‘Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror’ and the newly released ‘Marching Toward Hell: America and Islam After Iraq.’*



we are terribly negligent on is energy. It's been thirty-five years since the first oil embargo and we have done very little to wean ourselves away from dependence on foreign oil. Now the Saudis control whatever small amounts of SWING capacity is left, but they also hold a huge proportion of our debt. So we're really in the position of being beholden to a state that is extraordinarily anti-American in its activities in terms of spreading a form of religion that's very anti-American and anti-Christian. It seems to me that if we're going to start somewhere it has to be with oil. If you did something about oil it would be clear to Americans that there is nothing in the Arab Peninsula that's worth the life of a soldier. A big step ahead for America in the Muslim world would be to stop supporting some of these Arab tyrannies that we and our allies have supported for almost sixty years now.

### **Your policy with Israel?**

My policy with Israel is that I don't see Israel as an important ally to the United States in any kind of fashion. Ultimately, that's one man's opinion. But I try to attack very hard in the book the idea that somehow if you're not a full supporter of the current state of the U.S.-Israel relationship, you're less than a good American—you're unpatriotic, you're an American hater, you're an anti-Semite, or you're just crazy. There's a whole legion of American citizens who take it upon themselves to denigrate other Americans if they criticize the American relationship with Israel and I think that is clearly not the way we should be working in a small Arab republic. I think that is a grotesque way to approach debate on foreign policy.

Just because my position is 'I don't think we would miss Israel if Israel didn't exist, I don't think we'd miss Bolivia if it didn't exist,' it doesn't mean I'm less of a patriot or less an American than David Gergen, Elliott Cohen, or [Gabriel] Schoenfeld from Commentary. It just means that I have a different opinion.

### **Back to the subject of intervention in the Middle East, what is your response to those who are pro-democratization and believe that it works to prevent cross border conflicts?**

If they could bring some evidence to the table that would be a useful thing. There's a whole theory, I gather, that democracies don't fight each other. But the American Civil War occurred between the two most democratic nations on earth, Athens was a democracy, Sparta was a democracy and they fought each other, most of the Italian city-states were republics—democracies of some sort—and they fought each other. So saying the more you democratize the more peaceful things will be, that sounds very good if you say it fast, but it doesn't stand up to any kind of inspection.

It's especially the case if you're trying to impose a secular democracy on a Muslim/Islamic state. There's no reasonable expectation that that attempt would work and there's every expectation that it would cause more violence rather than less. I think, like many things today, this democratizing business is a good slogan but there's not much behind it.

### **How would you assess Al-Qaida's current strength, not only the group itself, but its influence?**

Its influence is extraordinary. The rise in the number of groups that are attacking the United States and its allies either rhetorically or with violence is growing a great deal. We now have two distinct tiers of threat. There is Al-Qaida itself, the group that remains under the command and control of Bin Laden and Zawahiri. According to Admiral McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence, it's all but completely refitted since 9/11 and is as powerful, and perhaps more powerful, than it was on that date. There is a whole second tier of threat from groups that have been instigated or inspired by Al-Qaida but have no command and control relationship with Bin Laden. These are the people that were responsible for attacks in London and Madrid and any number of cells that have been broken up in North America, Europe, and Australia. I think the threat is

growing markedly.

People tend to forget that Al-Qaida has always designed itself as a vanguard organization and not as a political vanguard, not as a fighting vanguard. It has always seen itself as an engine of incitement. From that perspective, they've been extraordinarily successful.

### **You've called them insurgents, not terrorists.**

Yes. I think we're so bound and determined to make this problem, at least from political leaders' viewpoints, manageable. We want to define it as a small problem, so terrorists by definition are on the lunatic fringe of society and we want to not have to fight too hard against it in terms of causing collateral civilian damage. So we look on it as kind of a law and order problem, saying we're going to bring them to justice one person at a time.

I was involved with this first hand since 1995 and I'll tell you, after twelve years of operating in that manner, there are far more of these insurgents out there than there were in 1995. One man at a time isn't working. Al-Qaida itself is very much an insurgent organization modeled on those groups that fought the Soviets. They're always expecting to be fighting a far more powerful enemy and so they put a great amount of time planning for leadership succession. We've seen it. We've claimed that we've killed dozens of number two's, number three's, number four's, and number five's and yet authorities in the United States and the West continue to say that Al-Qaida is as dangerous as ever. That's because they train for leadership succession. When someone gets killed, wounded, or captured, the person that takes over is not as competent as the person who was removed from the scene, but is certainly not a novice—he has been an understudy. One of the reasons I had been hoping that we would abandon this terrorist label is by using the word insurgent or thinking in terms of insurgent groups, we would have a much better idea of what the enemy looks like, how much bigger it is, than anything we're ever characterized as a terrorist group.

### **What effect have military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq had on these groups?**

Certainly they don't like the initial phase of air power. But in both cases they have learned to operate in ways that limit the effectiveness of our air power. Overall, the insurgents in both places sort of look up now and say 'listen, we rode out the air power stuff and now the Americans don't come after us'. There's very little hand to hand combat now. They stay in their garrisons; they try to get surrogates to come after us. Basically what the attitude is of the Mujahideen, Al-Qaida, and others is simply contempt for the United States military. They think we're afraid to inflict casualties on them and their supporters and they definitely believe we are afraid to take casualties. That's not the fault of our troops, it's the political rules that they operate under. I often say, and I think it's true, that so handicapped are our forces by political restrictions that they're much more targets for the enemy than they are killers of the enemy. I think our military power is not at all respected, and in many ways it shouldn't be, because we have not unleashed our military power to any great extent.

### **Do you think there has been too much emphasis on dealing with threats at the state level, such as Iran, versus groups like Al-Qaida?**

What I wrote in the beginning of my book is that in some ways we talk about the Cold War being over, but we really don't act as if it is. For example, Iran might be a threat to the Israelis, but otherwise it's surrounded by an ocean of Sunnis who hate it, it's surrounded by American military bases, and it's running out of petrochemicals in the next fifteen to twenty years. It's going to be increasingly economically deteriorating. It's hard for me to imagine any right thinking American could believe that Iran is a threat to the United States. It's probably a little more of a threat than Iraq was, but Iraq was virtually no threat either. Our leaders in both parties are children of the Cold War and they still think that Russia, China, Iran are the things we need to worry about, not the guys who wear robes and sit around campfires in the desert. That's too bad, because those are

the people that are really hurting America now and can really attack us inside our own country.

**Since the military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan and Homeland Security efforts since 9/11, is the United States a safer place than before 9/11?**

I think the best way to answer that question is with a question: how can anyone say we are safer if our borders are mostly wide open, if our ports are mostly wide open, and law enforcement has to contend with eleven-plus million undocumented aliens? If you can answer that, in spite of all those things, that we're safer, I don't know how you arrive at that conclusion, but I admire the optimism of the answer.

**What advice would you give to the next U.S. President?**

The President of the United States is a very important position, and I'm certainly not one to suggest specific things, but I do think that for any President the truth is the place to start. The first Mr. Bush didn't tell us and then Mr. Clinton didn't tell us, and this Mr. Bush didn't tell us. But if we're going to beat this enemy we're going to have to understand that we're not being attacked because of who we are or how we live, because we have elections, liberties, and women in the workplace. We're being attacked because of what we do in the Islamic world. That's not to say that what we do is evil or wrong, simply that our enemy is motivated by his perception that our policies are an attack on his faith. Until we have a leader who tells the American people that reality, we are going to be underestimating the threat and probably will remain on the short end of the stick in terms of being able to win the war.





## Cooperation, compromise key to tackling water shortages

An interview with Shlomi Dinar

**Q:** International Affairs Forum: What are the particularly troubling areas in the Middle East because of water rights issues?

**A:** **Dr. Shlomi Dinar:** I should first mention that the subfield that we call hydro-politics is pretty much in agreement that this idea that the next war will be about water is sensationalist at best. While we can't predict the future, history has shown more instances of inter-state cooperation over water than war. Historically, there have been armed skirmishes, but the first and last all-out water war occurred in 2500 B.C.

There are several areas in the Middle East demonstrating conflicting water relations between states. One is the Tigris-Euphrates that is shared between upstream Turkey, midstream Syria, and downstream Iraq. The essence of this dispute is the lack of a multilateral agreement for water sharing, and Turkey's (unilateral) efforts on the headwaters of these rivers. The second is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While a protracted conflict exists over settlements, refugees, and borders, water is also an important component. Specifically, there is a dispute over a sizable underground aquifer (Mountain Aquifer) that is shared between the two parties. Israel has been using it for quite some time and the Palestinians, who have also been using water from this source, claim that it is under their future state and therefore they have every right to a more equitable allocation. Finally, there's the Nile River. There are eleven riparians to the Nile Basin, although the three major riparians, which most people identify in the context of the region's water dispute, are upstream Ethiopia, midstream Sudan, and downstream Egypt. Upstream Ethiopia wants to use the Nile water and exploit it for development. However, Egypt has dominated the basin and essentially instituted (together with Sudan) a water allocation regime in 1959 which excluded the other riparians.

That being said, in the context of these conflicts, there is also cooperation. Currently the Tigris-Euphrates does not embody a trilateral regime on water sharing. Throughout history, however, limited bilateral agreements have been negotiated. Most noteworthy is the 1987 Agreement between Syria and Turkey. In return for security guarantees (essentially making sure Kurdish rebels don't cross into Turkey from Syria), Turkey guaranteed Syria a minimum flow from the Euphrates River. As recent as today, Turkey and Syria are cooperating on other water related schemes and sectors, which some analysts hope will spill-over to the water allocation issue. Naturally, a trilateral agreement will be paramount for the true harnessing and exploitation of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. Iraq's development and reconstruction, for example, is dependent on stable flows of water as the Iraqi government will require this vital resource for industrial, agri-



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cultural, and domestic purposes.

Perhaps the presence of the United States in the region might help promote a comprehensive agreement in the Tigris-Euphrates case. The United States could perhaps use its influence with Turkey. Another potential broker for an agreement is the European Union. If Turkey wants admission to the EU, it may need to show good will and compromise on the water issue. Turkey is also in grave need of additional monies to complete its projects (otherwise known as GAP) on the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates (the unilateral projects that have irked Syria and Turkey throughout the years). Due to Syrian (and Iraqi) pressure, international donor agencies and private institutions have not invested in Turkey's GAP. Consequently, Turkey has had to finance most of the projects on its own. In short, a comprehensive agreement over the two rivers, would likely promote Syrian and Iraqi approval of Turkey's GAP and usher in international monies.

On the Israeli-Palestinian front, water is one of the final status issues. The parties have signed several interim agreements over the peace process and they contain interim agreements over water. They have included water allocation transfers to the Palestinians, transferring authority over water to the Palestinians in particular areas of control, etc. These interim agreements have likewise devised joint mechanisms to monitor, enforce, and use shared water resources. It is true that there are still some thorny issues to settle in the context of the water dispute—such as the final water allocations and control of the Mountain Aquifer. Still, once a final status agreement is reached over the other political issues, it will also take place over water. The parties have come a long way in terms of settling their water dispute.

The Nile Basin also provides an interesting case of cooperation. Particularly, in the late 1990's the World Bank stepped forward playing an active role in bringing all the parties together in what is known as the Nile Basin Initiative. The initiative is focused on the pursuit of long-term, development, and management of the Nile waters among all the Nile riparians. Large development projects are considered in the context of this initiative that can provide benefits to all and increase collaboration among the riparians. In the background of this benefit-sharing initiative it is also hoped that a more equitable water sharing agreement could likewise emerge.

### What are the per capita water usage rates in the region?

#### Per Capita Water Usage 1998-2002

Algeria	185 . 1851852
Bahrain	410 . 9589041
Egypt	994 . 1775837
Iran	1089 . 686099
Iraq	1556 . 384124
Israel	350 . 00
Jordan	185 . 1851852
Kuwait	162 . 601626
Lebanon	307 . 6923077
Libya	695 . 7197005
Morocco	411 . 7647059
Palestine	85 . 47008547
S. Arabia	870 . 6896552
Syria	1123 . 595506

(in cubic meters)

Here are some World Bank numbers from between 1998 and 2002. It shows the average of water withdrawals per capita for different sectors: municipal, agricultural, and industrial. Egypt (994 cubic meters), Iraq (1556 cubic meters), Syria (1123 cubic meters), Jordan (185 cubic meters), Palestinians (85 cubic meters), Algeria (185 cubic meters). I was struck by the number for the Palestinian water withdrawals. That number corresponds to some of the literature I have seen but seems a little low at the same time. An alternative number for the Palestinians that I have seen is 124 cubic meters, although not necessarily for the above range of years. Israel's water withdrawals are somewhere around 350 cubic meters (also not necessarily for the above time ranges).

To put these numbers in perspective, compare them to countries known to be relatively 'water-rich.' Per capita water availability in Canada, for example, is at around 88800 cubic meters. Albeit much less compared to Canada, per capita water availability in the United States is still at a relatively high 8900 cubic meters. Another way to place these numbers in perspective is to use Falkenmark's Water Stress Index. Falkenmark, a Swedish scientist, claimed that in instances where water availability per capita is under 1000 cubic meters a year, it becomes a limitation to economic development, well-being, and human health. Where water availability per capita is under 500 cubic meters a year, it is a main constraint to life. Falkenmark's benchmark threshold was 1700 cubic meters a year—above this threshold water shortages occur irregularly or locally.

Despite this valuable index, one must keep in mind a country's ingenuity, adaptability and institutions. For example, Israel uses 350 cm per capita for those three sectors but is a developed country and is technologically savvy. Despite the general and social ramifications of its water availability, according to the Falkenmark Index, Israel has the ability to deal with such a constraint. In opposition, countries that enjoy much higher water availability still struggle with the same social and economic consequences outlined by the index. These two scenarios again

demonstrate the importance of institutions to either mitigate water scarcity or to utilize relatively abundant water resources.

**How efficiently is water used in the Middle East countries? Is there enough sharing of best practices and availability of technology throughout the region? How environmentally friendly are those practices?**

There is an increasing need for efficient uses of water because populations are rising in the Middle East. The urban sector will thus drive the high demand for water. As in every region, there are inefficiencies in water use. For example, in Jordan, fifty percent of the water that goes to urban and industrial uses is unaccounted for. This is due to a variety of reasons from inaccurate metering, burst pipes, illegal connections, to leakage.

Despite the water saving innovations brought about in Israel's agricultural sector, inefficiencies can still be observed. Although the agricultural sector has declined in relation to the national economy (down from 11 percent to 2 percent of GDP since the founding of the state) and despite the virtual elimination of Israeli agricultural products for export, (down from 60 percent to 4 percent), agriculture has grown significantly in absolute terms, with important implications for water use. Currently agriculture is the dominant user of water in Israel—using between 60 to 72 percent of total water consumption. Much of the consumption trends of the agricultural sector are due to the sector's strong political organization and lobby power and to the subsidies given to water intensive agriculture.

The Mountain Aquifer which the Israelis and Palestinians share is also a symbol of inefficiency. There is such a high demand for water that over-drilling and over-drawing of water has been undertaken for decades. When water withdrawals surpass the replenishment rate of the aquifer, sea water begins to intrude into the aquifer. This damages the physical composition of the aquifer and makes the water more saline. It, therefore, affects the quality and quantity, especially if you cannot desalinate the water.

Some positive assessments, however, should be noted.

Both Israel and Jordan are increasing the use of recycled waste water. Agriculture doesn't need fresh water as compared to the domestic sector. Instead reclaimed waste water can be used for agriculture. Thus, freshwater can be left to the domestic sector. The governments of Israel and Jordan are investing more money into increasing the amount of available reclaimed waste water in the next twenty years. By 2020, Israel, for example, hopes to reclaim eighty percent of its sewage. As mentioned, the issue of unaccounted for water is a serious problem in Jordan and the government has invested in a huge multi-billion dollar plan. Some of the envisioned projects will work to reduce unaccounted for water by a large percentage.

**Marc Levy (Columbia University and International Crisis Group) has compiled data that presents a case for “when rainfall is significantly below normal, the risk of a low-level conflict escalating to a full-scale civil war approximately doubles the following year” and based on this, times for potential crisis may be identified. Do you agree?**

When it comes to water scarcity and intra-state affairs, there is increasing evidence of violent conflict among different groups (this is in opposition to the inter-state water-wars scenario based more in speculation). However, when considering intra-state conflicts and/or states with low water availability you also have to take into consideration several intervening variables, which may also explain why such conflicts erupt into violence or, alternatively, don't exhibit such hostility. For example, other factors one must consider include second-order resources—or the ability of countries to adapt to scarcity and the existing institutions available for adaptation. Therefore, while studies confirm that low fresh water availability is correlated with the increased likelihood of intra-state conflict, they likewise confirm the importance of other variables (political, economic) that mitigate (or enhance) the violent effects from water scarcity.



### **How will increased desalination efforts in Israel affect water issues there?**

Among the three basins we discussed there is no better example of potential (and on-going) desalination efforts than the Israel-Palestinian case because Israel sits on the Mediterranean with great access to the ocean. To a large extent, Israel has concluded that to satiate its water needs it must look to desalination. Desalination is relatively cheap at 50 cents per cubic meter. Israel is planning to construct a number of desalination plants along the coast that will produce 400 million cubic meters a year. To put this in context, Israel's renewable water potential is at around 1800 to 1900 million cubic meters a year. So this is a good portion of its water needs. Israel already operates a major desalination plant that produces 100 million cubic meters of water a year.

### **What does this mean for relations with its neighbors?**

When it comes to negotiating water with the Palestinians, Israel's ability to desalinate will probably allow it to be more willing (and able) to transfer additional water to the Palestinians from its current allocations from the disputed Mountain Aquifer. Desalination will, therefore, increase its flexibility.

The Palestinians have also realized that some of their water will have to come from desalination. There's simply not enough water. Many of the sub-aquifers within the Mountain Aquifer are already tapped. A final agreement between the two parties could codify water transfers, through pipelines, from Israel's desalination plants into the West Bank. When it comes to the Gaza Strip, USAID has been very active with desalination efforts. Unfortunately, that has not taken hold due to the political situation and violence in that area. But the planned desalination plant will generate 50 million cubic meters a year and that's about what the Gaza Strip needs. If you compare the water situation in the Gaza strip to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip is in shambles. The only existing aquifer is the Gaza Aquifer and the water is very over-drawn and the aquifer over-drilled. The water is so saline that it's beyond international standards. Desalination, therefore, is the only option for Gaza's water needs.

So Israel is focused on desalination. It sees this as a way to augment water supplies for itself and, perhaps, the region. Israel could potentially fill the role of a regional water supplier. The Palestinians have also realized that desalinated water will have to make-up some of their total intake.

### **Are there any trends that support the claims of climate change effects in the region?**

The Middle East has always dealt with a hot and dry climate. The models show, however, that for the Middle East as a whole, it's only going to get hotter, drier, and create a series of weather patterns that lead to a reduction of available water. The increase in sea level is also an issue of concern, especially for countries in the Nile Delta as well as other coastal areas in Tunisia, Libya, and Qatar. The result of all this is that it's likely that more people in the Middle East will be exposed to water stress and severe weather patterns.



## U.S. attitude towards human rights hampering progress

An interview with Sarah Leah Whitson

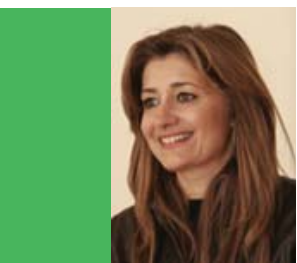
**Q:** **International Affairs Forum:** The U.S. State Department recently released its 2007 Country Report on Human Rights Practices. It considered Iran and Syria to be the biggest offenders in the Middle East. Do you agree with their assessment? Which Middle East countries do you consider to be the biggest offenders?

**A:** **Ms. Sarah Leah Whitson:** As a preliminary matter, it's extremely disappointing that the U.S. should list Iran and Syria among the world's top ten offenders while not mentioning Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia, for example, where there are certainly violations as severe, if not worse, than the violations in Iran and Syria. The list is not particularly tied to which countries are truly the top ten offenders but rather who the United States is on the political 'outs' with. That kind of politicization of what should be objective human rights reporting is very disappointing. It plays right into the hands of people who dismiss all of these kinds of human rights reports as mere political cudgels with which to beat United States' enemies.

With respect to which countries are the "worst" in the Middle East, Human Rights Watch does not rank abusers in that way, and we don't think it's helpful to do that. Whether it's one person being tortured in one country or thousands in another, it doesn't really matter. What matters is someone is being tortured and that shouldn't be happening. It takes away from the suffering and indignities that people endure in countries that might be able to hide behind statements like, 'we're not as bad as Sudan, we're not slaughtering people'. Every country has to stand on its own and defend its human rights record without respect to what others are doing because these human rights standards are absolute obligations of these countries.

**Considering those countries you mentioned as not being included, would you discuss human rights issues in Egypt?**

Egypt is the second largest recipient of U.S. aid at just over \$1.7 billion dollars a year. In light of this, the United States should have a tremendous amount of leverage with Egypt to improve its human rights record; Egypt is absolutely one of the worst abusers in the region, if not the world, in terms of violence against political opponents or perceived political opponents. There is an endemic problem of torture and arbitrary detention in Egypt with thousands of persons affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood or with other Islamic movements behind bars, most without any charges against them. They are detained under the so-called Emergency Laws, which allow people to be detained without charge. In their detention, they face abuse, cruel and inhuman treatment as well



*Sarah Leah Whitson is Executive Director of the Middle East & North Africa Division of Human Rights Watch.*

as torture. These cases are well documented.

There is a significant attack on journalists, writers, bloggers, and anyone who dares to criticize the government. At a minimum, they face persecution and harassment. At the worst, they face jail time, abuse, and torture. The judiciary has some judges who have tried to exercise their independence, but the government has clamped down on them. They have tried to remove two of the most independent judges in the judiciary and will, in effect, try to prosecute them.

While a few years ago there was a little freedom of press, the government has relied on the penal code and libel laws to prosecute editors and journalists when they write critically of the government. Freedom of assembly is also not allowed. People who have tried to publicly protest government policies have been arrested and beaten.

Egypt is a good example of a country where there is little respect for human and political rights. That's in addition to the other issues the country has including rampant corruption in the government.

### **Saudi Arabia?**

Again, there are virtually no political and civil rights. There's no freedom of speech, no freedom of press, and no freedom of association. The difference compared to Egypt is that Saudi Arabia doesn't have an active opposition that's been out on the streets in thousands, if not tens of thousands, protesting and resisting the government's control. In Egypt, there is the Muslim Brotherhood as well as some smaller secular leftist parties. In Saudi Arabia, there's very little opposition, very few voices of protest and dissent. The ones who do raise their voices pay in similar persecution and harassment, arrest, detention as people do in Egypt.

This is compounded by the lack of freedom for women. Women are not considered anything more than legal minors, the equivalent of children, who need permission not only to travel or to get a job from a male guardian, but to go to school or to a hospital. In some cases, a woman might need her son's permission in order to get a job or to open a bank account. There are cases where the male guardian has not allowed a female to obtain medical services or attend school because he has the power to not allow it. That is something that is in urgent need of reform in Saudi Arabia.

The other significant problem in the country is the treatment of foreign workers. There are over nine million foreign workers in Saudi Arabia and they lack any serious remedy to the abuses that they often suffer at the hands of employers. The biggest problem is that the government is doing virtually nothing to enforce laws and protect foreign workers. It is doing virtually nothing in the case of domestic workers who are not even covered by labor law, who can't even file a grievance.

### **Are there any countries in the Middle East that have made significant human rights progress in the last few years?**

'Significant' is a tough word. A few years ago there were some efforts that provided some optimism for change. For example, when the United States did exert pressure on Egypt to give space to political activists, to have a more open and truly fair election, the government did allow public protests and freer elections. About three years ago, the Egyptian government allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to run more freely in elections but as soon as they won so many seats in the parliament, and as soon as Hamas won the elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the United States and Western allies retreated from their democracy and human rights agenda.

They prefer to support the known regimes - 'the devil known' so to speak - rather than support results of free democratic elections that bring into power those they are more distrustful of. After this happened, the dictators were sort of licking their chops and saying: 'Well, we told you so. This is what happens when free elections are allowed. You are going to get radical Islamists.' So that was the end of the democracy experiment.

There are, unfortunately, few and far between instances of progress. That said, there have been advances in Kuwait for example. On its own initiative, it started to have a more open election and a lot more opposition candidates came to power.

**What is the current situation regarding Palestinian and Iraqi refugees? What programs are in place, or being put in place, for assistance?**

With the Palestinian refugees, it's really a status quo. The number of Palestinian refugees is over four million now. The U.N. offers assistance to these refugees but in most cases, in the countries in which they live, namely Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, they are not afforded the full rights of citizens. In Lebanon, they don't have employment rights either, which is especially problematic because it ghettoizes them. And of course, there are Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, about which people seem unaware.

The Iraqi situation is of course much newer. There are two million refugees inside Iraq, but technically, since they're still in Iraq, they're called "internally displaced persons." There are about a million Iraqi refugees in Jordan, over a million in Syria, forty thousand in Lebanon, sixty thousand in Egypt, and some in Turkey and surrounding countries. On the one hand, Jordan and Syria in particular need to be credited for their tremendous hospitality on the part of their people and governments to allow such huge numbers of Iraqis to enter and live in their countries. They have put a burden on these countries in some ways socially and politically. On the other hand, the Jordanian and Syrian governments unfortunately have done little to make the lives of the Iraqi refugees a little more stable. For example, in Jordan and Syria refugees don't have the right to work and are not entitled to medical care. Most are living off their savings or taking money under the table in jobs that don't necessarily match their skill level. Their children also don't have the right to go to school. Jordan has recently amended that, but it's not a formal policy allowing refugee children to attend schools.

The United States, which is the most responsible for creating the problem of the refugees, has done virtually nothing to address the crisis of the refugees both outside the country and inside the country. The U.S. has failed to deliver on its own promise to resettle Iraqis. It promised to resettle 12,000 this year, but last year only resettled 1,600 people. Of course, even the 12,000 is a completely negligible number. The burden of solving the refugee problem lies more in the hands of the United States, the United Kingdom, and leaders of the multinational forces than it does on Jordan and Syria who have shouldered the burden because of easy geographic access. It's not fair that they have had to do that. While the U.S., U.N., and certain international countries have given additional money to Jordan and Syria to deal with the refugees, it's really a drop in the bucket to what's really needed.

We don't see security in Iraq in the near future so there really needs to be a 10 year plan on how to deal with the Iraqi refugees. The other thing to note is that Jordan and Syria have now effectively closed their borders to Iraq so people trying to flee the country and violence, can't. It is a particularly dire situation for those stuck in Iraq.

**To what degree can human rights organizations work towards progress within some of the countries we're talking about?**

The fact that any are allowed to exist is fortunate. For example, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights in Egypt is an important voice documenting violations, and important voice for criticizing the government. But they are under close watch and severe control by the government. It's important they exist because they provide a local voice on human rights issues and they have local credibility in a way that international groups don't have. But their scope of operation is limited because of their government's arbitrary interference and control.

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the NGOs have had more freedom. Groups like Al-Haq and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights have done extremely important work documenting human rights violations. The violations they document are primarily Israeli violations; it's much harder and riskier for them to document Palestinian violations in the territories themselves. They are in a precarious situation. In fact, the Abbas-led government has cracked down on hundreds of NGO's on the West Bank and Gaza who are perceived to be affiliated with Hamas



or other Islamist groups.

The true human rights groups, whether they're doing their work in Jordan or Egypt, are made up of very brave, resilient people who are doing their best under extremely challenging circumstances. We try to work as closely as possible with them and give them as much support as we can. Of course we rely and depend on them to learn what's important and what's going on because they're closer to the events than we can ever be.

### **What is the biggest challenge Human Rights Watch faces in covering the Middle East?**

The biggest challenge we have is Israel. If we write a report extremely critical of Saudi Arabia or Egypt, the government will probably just complain and everything may be denied. We don't come under scrutiny; we're not attacked and vilified in the way that we are when we criticize Israel. That's primarily because of fairly well-placed and influential voices, in the United States in particular, whose *raison d'être* is silencing anyone who criticizes Israel by accusing them of being anti-Semites. It's a very predictable formula: we write a report criticizing Israel, and the next day the New York Sun will have an editorial by a self-professed Israel defender like Gerald Steinberg who condemns us for being terrible anti-Semites because anyone who criticizes Israel is deemed anti-Semitic.

The attacks are not really against the substance and facts of our work. In fact, they rarely take on the work itself. It's all based on ancillary arguments - 'the reason this report is not credible is because you criticize Israel more than you criticize Saudi Arabia and that shows that you're biased and therefore we can't believe anything you say.' Sometimes there are even personal attacks against the staff, against me, the researchers, our executive director. They can be very crude attacks trying to prove our personal bias against Israel. Of course they never complain when we write extremely damning reports on Saudi Arabia, Iran, Lebanon, or Hizbollah. But if the report is critical of Israel, all hell breaks loose and as a New York-based organization, we're more susceptible to criticism than in the U.S. press elsewhere. Sadly, dealing with this takes up more of our time than it otherwise should.

### **What should other countries and international organizations such as the United Nations do to increase pressure on Middle East states to improve their human rights?**

The best way to start is with the United States. The top four recipients of U.S. aid are, in order, Israel, Egypt, Pakistan, and Jordan. All of these countries have extremely flawed records of human rights violations. There's no reason the United States should be enabling governments like these to commit the kinds of abuses that they commit by financing them with billions of dollars in aid, without any real human rights conditionality. These governments hide behind the guise of the U.S. alliance to get away with these terrible abuses.

The United States should not be funding human rights abusers. The U.S. should say 'if hard earned U.S. tax dollars are going to go to the Egyptian government's coffers, then as minimum we should require the Egyptian government to respect its international human rights obligations. It shouldn't beat protesters, it shouldn't sodomize activists in Egyptian jails, it shouldn't quash judges who try to act independently. The United States should insist that its aid not go to Israel if Israel is going to drop over four million cluster munitions indiscriminately and in violation of international law. The United States should not fund the Jordanian government if it's going to pass Draconian laws that basically take away any notion of independent non-governmental organizations and take away any chance for independent society to blossom.

The EU has an important obligation as well. European countries individually, and the EU collectively, have major trade agreements with these countries. These agreements should condition trade on human rights reforms; the EU should say clearly that it won't do business with abusing governments.

# Israel-Palestinian conflict



## Time for Israel to change tack

An interview with Ahron Bregman

**Q:** International Affairs Forum: In retaliation for rocket strikes, Israel has significantly reduced power to Gaza. Prime Minister Olmert has stated: “We will not allow a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, but we have no intention of making their lives easy. As long as these hardships are greater, providing there are no humanitarian blows, not in hospitals, not in clinics, not with young children, not with helpless people, we will not allow it. But in no way will we let them live comfortable and pleasant lives. As far as I’m concerned, all the residents of Gaza can go on foot and have no fuel for cars, because they have a murderous terrorist regime that doesn’t allow people in the south of Israel to live in peace.” Do you think this approach can achieve Mr. Olmert’s goal of halting violence from Gaza?

**A:** Dr. Ahron Bregman: No. This approach will never stop the shelling coming from within the Gaza Strip. The idea that the Gazans will somehow turn on Hamas because of the Israeli siege is ridiculous. If the Prime Minister wishes to halt violence from Gaza he must choose one of two options: Either to speak with Hamas and arrange a ceasefire with them, or send the IDF into the Strip to search and destroy the launchers. But no, starving the people and making them go on foot rather than using their cars isn’t going to stop the shelling. It will only produce a generation of angry Palestinians.

**Israel has also been criticized for not letting more supplies into Gaza and over a rapidly worsening humanitarian crisis. Is this a fair criticism?**

It is indeed a fair criticism. But the feeling in Israel is that after the August 2005 withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the Palestinians should try and build themselves in the Strip, rather than using it to shell Israeli villages in the Negev. No government can accept the shelling of her citizens without responding to it. But not letting supplies into Gaza is, in my view, the wrong method and, in fact, it shows that despite the 2005 withdrawal, the Israeli occupation of the Strip continues, as the army demonstrates what International Law of Occupation calls “effective control”, which is a feature of occupation.

**What is your assessment of Egypt’s actions in response to the situation?**

Egypt is under huge pressure. The so called “Arab street” expects Cairo to help the Palestinians.



*Dr. Ahron Bregman served in the Israel Defense Forces and as an artillery officer participated in the 1978 Litani campaign and the 1982 Lebanon War. He also worked as a parliamentary assistant in the Knesset. He teaches at the Department of War Studies, King's College, London, and is a journalist.*

So, quite sensibly, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak allowed the Gazans to travel as far as El Arish in the Sinai to equip themselves with food and other provisions. On the other hand, Egypt is a sovereign country and it can't afford seeing her borders breached and people streaming into her land, particularly as many of these people are supporters of Hamas, which is close to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood opposition.

**What effect has the crisis in Gaza had on Hamas' political strength? And Fatah's?**

It obviously strengthened Hamas. After all, it managed - quite cleverly and effectively - to break the Israeli siege by toppling the border with Egypt and buying food there. And this crisis weakened Abu Mazen.

**President Abbas' group has suggested that Palestinian Authority forces should take charge of all of Gaza's crossing points. Could this be a viable solution?**

No, it isn't a viable solution. By now, the Gaza Strip is firmly controlled by Hamas. I can't see a situation where Hamas let Abbas's Palestinian Authority have any influence in the Strip.

**Twelve top former Israeli commanders recently wrote a letter to Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak in an effort to persuade him to gradually remove checkpoints along the West Bank, saying they are excessive and that other military means can be used to prevent suicide bombings in Israel. Do you agree with this assessment?**

The hundreds of checkpoints across the West Bank cause immense damage to Palestinian economy and turn Palestinian life into a nightmare. It is a daily reminder of the continuing Israeli occupation. On the other hand, the checkpoints, together with the security fence (or the "wall" as it is often called) and other measures taken by the military, make it very difficult for Palestinian suicide bombers to penetrate Israel proper - this is backed by dry statistics. I can't see Ehud Barak removing the checkpoints. At present, it is very unlikely.

**What effect do you think the Gaza situation will have on the prospects for an Israeli-Palestinian peace, rekindled at the Annapolis meeting?**

In the end, Israel will have to negotiate with Hamas. It will not be possible to ignore it forever. The late Yitzhak Rabin used to say that peace you strike with your enemy. And at present Hamas - the enemy - is in full control of the Gaza Strip, hence it will have to be part of the peace process. Unless, of course, Israel invades the Gaza Strip to stop the rocket strikes and in the course of this operation also topples Hamas. If - God forbid - a Palestinian rocket lands on a kindergarten or on an Israeli school killing children, the government will find it extremely difficult to resist public pressure to invade the Strip.





## Absence of trust barrier to peace

An interview with Christos Kyrou

**Q:** **International Affairs Forum:** You've performed peace and conflict resolution research in Northern Ireland and regarding insurgencies. Do you see any parallels to the problems in the Middle East in your research?

**A:** **Dr. Christos Kyrou:** Groups need to be able to negotiate from within a tractable manner, meaning through the political process, as opposed to intractable: through violence, through complexities. There has to be a creation of political space where grievances, interests, power, and politics can be discussed and renegotiated. We saw such a transformation in Ireland because as politics paid off, people put faith in the process and everyone became eager to enter. We came close to seeing this with the elections in Palestine, yet that was a moment of opportunity that was missed.

When dealing with insurgency groups we're nearly walking blind. Since we have very little research on how such groups act from within, it is difficult to understand the best way to serve such a transformation in the political sphere. Most existing literature advocates that if only we have the right components of civil society and international pressure, they will give up weapons and give up violence. Yet there is little evidence that this is usually the case! For as long as there is political oppression present there will always be vacuums of legitimacy left open for insurgencies to fill in. You may erase Hizbollah or Hamas militarily, but there will always be another group with different names or acronyms, trying to fill up this empty space created by oppression. Oppression in peace studies is considered the highest form of violence because it does not discriminate between innocent and guilty, between an infant and an adult. Once you're born in a society that's being oppressed, you're already being discriminated against.

**What patterns have you seen in studying violent conflicts?**

In peace studies, we see violence in a long spectrum. It starts with cultural violence that discriminates against a particular culture through jokes, songs, etc. or glorifying violence as a means of conflict management within your own culture. Then there is statutory structural violence – laws, statutes that discriminate against a particular group in favor of another. After that is structural violence based on demographics that reveal some level of discrimination; who has money, AIDS, prison demographics. Lastly, physical violence. This spectrum allows us to understand a conflict before physical violence erupts. What we aspire towards in terms of peace is not necessarily a utopian island. It doesn't exist because of change. Change comes naturally, such as when rainfall that falls in one nation and not another, causing automatically an imbalance, instability and po-



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tentially over time even tension between the two. Even if all is agreed upon, people get old in the background of the arrival of new generations, new technologies, and so on... But violent destructive conflict is always a problem.

Violent conflict acts like the opposite of a democracy. Democracy as a tool of conflict management is meant to bring forward people's creativity, free spirit and cooperation – you have the best of everyone. Violent conflict consumes all of that for its own sake: for destruction. The opposite of this destructive violent conflict is reconciliation. It has to cover four different areas: peace, mercy, truth, and the most difficult, justice. If justice is not served, there will always be space for more and more violent conflict. Insurgencies will always emerge under circumstances of violent conflict. Even if the groups or the heads of the groups may be removed, for as long as issues of illegitimacy remain in society, there will always come someone new to take their place, to balance back the scale so to speak.

### **What are the prospects for finding peace in the Middle East?**

I don't see a time in the future when people in the Middle East will live in absolute peace. Such as in every other normal place there will always be conflict. The question is how will the conflict be managed. Will people be allowed, and safe to, express themselves, their identities and to peacefully negotiate and re-negotiate their power relations? In such environments conflict is no more the primary problem, conflict becomes politics and the main issues such as power, justice and the future are dealt with through consolidated institutions.

But to get there, there has to be the right people, the right means, and the right opportunity for something to happen in peace negotiations. The Oslo Agreement came at a time when Rabin needed an agreement. He promised an agreement to the Israeli people and was working towards it, committed to it. Arafat was becoming increasingly marginalized in Tripoli and losing his power to the Palestinians. They both needed something to happen. Oslo was needed by both of them to happen, to sit down and talk directly to each other. Both felt an impasse, and that's when miracles happen. A lot of people say the Oslo agreement didn't work, but we didn't have Palestinians representing themselves directly in negotiations before Oslo; it was the first time the Palestinians negotiated for themselves. Even in the Madrid Conference (1991), although present, they were represented by the other Arab states. So that was a beginning we didn't have before. The Palestinian Authority, the recognition of Israel by the PLO, the idea of two states, Oslo did not solve the problem in Palestine, but it did give that space for new things that may allow us now to move forward.

Both Israel and Palestine are societies that are young. In Israel there have been constant changes as immigrant group waves enter the country. Every time there is a new group, there is a new birth. This has not allowed a very smooth development. Many people think of Israel as one entity that makes decisions, but it has been in political crisis for some time now. There have been coalition governments in one form after another. The political discourse is being removed and being replaced by the pressure from sectarian groups to prevail in power.

In the last five years, complexity in the Middle East has increased. Besides the political situation in Israel, the Palestinians are divided right now, at civil war, so it's a very difficult situation for any negotiation or reconciliation. Hamas is not recognized by the Palestinian Authority and Fatah. So there is a President and two Prime Ministers. Abbas does not want to talk to Hamas, he doesn't want to recognize them, and meanwhile it is Hamas who fires the rockets. If you don't have the power to silence weapons, there's a part of your legitimacy that is missing. If you don't include those who have the power to silence the weapons, the negotiation process is incomplete. Hamas should be involved in the process, they should have a place to talk because if instead we wait for all the factions to come together first, it's going to take a very long time. This has to be resolved, but all the countries in the region that could play a role such as Jordan and Egypt have some enormous problems themselves. The Mubarak government in Egypt is increasingly trying to suppress dissent and he is getting older and growing distant from his people. It used to be that Mubarak would bring everyone together from the Arab side including the factions from PLO and Hamas. Today it

is not the same, lines are drawn; there is a lack of leadership in the Middle East. There were times under Rabin when rockets were flying against Israel and bombs were exploding but he had the leadership to say 'let's be patient, a lot of things are happening, we're getting there.' That determination, that leadership, is missing today. We don't have Rabin or Arafat or even Sharon. Those leaders who could say words that people would follow are not there. Also, there is a lot of pressure on Egypt from Israel to control their borders, which has caused additional friction with Gaza.

Another issue is the conflicting or even opposing objectives that are present in the Middle East. There begins a cease-fire and yet Israel will bomb a Palestinian neighborhood because it's presumed to be a bomb factory, or to exterminate a militant. Even if it were so... when do cease-fires become more important than such tactical objectives? But then how big a price are each willing to pay over time?

Trust is therefore a big issue. Each action builds a link of a never-ending chain reaction. Right now, it is very hard to find the opening in that window, of asking people to be patient, to give; it looks like no one has anything to give. On the other hand, the determination shown with the withdrawal from Gaza of settlements was an optimistic message. The capacity for things to change still exists, even with Hamas, but opportunity has to be taken. Hamas, a little after their election, when asked whether they would recognize Israel, gave a very interesting response: 'We cannot recognize any state. Only a state can recognize a state.' That said a lot about space for negotiations. Of course this was an opportunity that was lost though. At that time we had the quiet initiative of the former President of Israel (Moshe Katsav) to determine the final borders of the country: Israel is a country without finalized borders. Its Constitution does not foresee a physical space, so Israel is a concept. That potential opportunity for progress, space for discussion, was also missed.

So I'm not very optimistic about the situation there. As long as there are new settlements being built, and certain other practices used as collective punishment, there will always be some form of insurgency. With the new generations not seeing any progress... when they don't see space for peace, that space can always turn their creativity and spirit into something destructive.

### **How do you view the United States' role in the Middle East peace process?**

The United States has a doctrinal affiliation with Israel. The birth of Israel occurred at the same time as the start of the Cold War. Truman said it was the right of Israelis to have a home based on the Bible, but I think it's more important to look at who were important in building a thermo-nuclear United States, preparing for the Cold War: Einstein, Oppenheimer, Teller, among others. This relationship with Israel has deep roots, including Judeo-Christian beliefs, and is not going to change. That connection is not going to be undermined. The question is how do we strengthen other connections? There have been relations with other countries in the area such as Saudi Arabia, but at the elite level, not at the people level. So there is a discrepancy, a dissonance. We have great relations with the royal families but when it comes to the ground level movements we have very little. We may use those governments to influence the case of the Palestinians but we don't have much clout in the popular movements. When it comes to Palestinians who have millions of people in Egypt, in Jordan, almost everywhere, there is a diaspora. Many are, but most of these people are not at the highest levels of government. They are immigrants, refugees and if we can't reach them, our influence in the region is not substantial.

It is in the best interest of the United States to establish a stable Middle East. This doesn't mean weak Arab countries and a strong Israel. It means a well-organized society of nations that live in peace. The role of the United States at this point is so complex because of the situations elsewhere in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere that we need Israel so much that the Palestinian situation seems like interference almost. It becomes a forgotten issue and we are losing sight of its immense significance.

### **What other factors make it difficult to perform research and promote peace building in the Middle East?**

The War on Terror is an issue. It's good to bring nations together to avoid the death of innocent civilians around the world but, on the other hand, it has become very difficult for alternative routes of communication to take place. In peace and conflict studies, we are involved in dialogues and initiatives involving groups that could not talk directly before but if you go and try to talk to certain groups now to promote that process, you break the law. Based on the Patriot Act and other global acts against terrorism, the channels that were open before are now more closed than they ever were. It's difficult to involve principal parties such as Hizbollah and Hamas, groups that can partially control the levels of violence. They can't be approached for talks directly now because they are legally considered terrorist. So when it comes to talking with these groups, there is no legal access to them, which is a serious problem for the peace process.

The same applies to peace studies scientists studying such groups to understand better how they function so as to develop better theories on what can assist their effective transition into politics. To move the peace process forward, we need to get closer to them. To identify what they think about those they fight and about themselves. To understand and even appreciate better today's insurgents' potential in future, post-conflict, political landscapes.

In peace and conflict studies, compassion and empathy towards those we study are expressed best by rigorous research, by understanding and including all the narratives in the conflict, in the process of transformation. For example: you have your narrative, and I have mine, and we're in conflict. Each of us have a different understanding and perspective of the world. If I am to make peace by imposing my narrative on you, that my view is true, how much will you participate in that peace process? If I am to build peace, how much does it matter whether the other side believes what I say is true or not? What's important is that all the narratives have been taken into consideration.

In the Middle East, there are hundreds of narratives with an almost collective paranoia about centers of influence. It is not as important whether those narratives are lies or true as that people act on them one way or another. The problem is that in many cases they seem irreconcilable and that they almost constantly grow, transform, they change. If you begin a peace process and you leave outside a narrative, that narrative will most likely become your next conflict.

The problems in the Middle East are so complex. The Palestinians are not ready. Hamas has to be brought to the table with the PLO and Fatah and start talking about their problems and what caused them to be so far from each other.

The PLO needs to look in the mirror and recognize what they have done to the Palestinian people over time, how much money they have wasted, how many opportunities they have missed. Meanwhile, Hamas members reached out to the people, building hospitals and schools. They have engaged a great deal of people not just because of religious needs... but many other things – the need for something to change.

It's not practically easy to talk to Hamas but there is always space. Before the elections when Hamas was elected, the question was whether the U.S. would recognize Hamas as a political party. President Bush gave a very important speech where he said 'the United States will not allow armed bandits for election. But if the groups are not acting as armed bandits, then they should run for election.' Hamas declared and sustained a stable ceasefire then ran for the election. There are ways for the U.S. to play. What we are doing now, by focusing on Abbas and trying to isolate Hamas, is not going to work. Hamas has to see open space for running again for elections. Unless people start seeing dividends from politics, why would they give their weapons up? It's not easy to drop your normal life, deny your children safety and education, and live in the mountains or desert or streets of Ramallah in secret and in fear. That's not what most people want and insurgents do not actually enjoy such life. They are determined to fight against what they consider a state of oppression, but still, it is a life spent. People are looking for a way out, but there has to be a way out. Hamas is looking for a way out. They throw out announcements that give hints about how this could happen but people don't listen well enough. I think Hamas would even recognize Israel under certain conditions. After all, only a state can recognize a state.





## The PLO and the Islamic agenda for Jerusalem

by Ghada Hashem Talhami

**J**ERUSALEM OCCUPIES A UNIQUE POSITION IN THE WORLD OF ISLAM, not only as the third holiest city after Mecca and Madina, but also as the first direction of the qiblah. For much of its history, Jerusalem was inhabited by a majority of Arabs until the arrival of European Jewish settlers during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Arab population of the city always upheld its position as the custodian not only of Muslim, but of all the holy sites.

Once Israeli statehood became the declared objective of the Zionist movement, the Jewish leadership fought hard, diplomatically and militarily, to acquire Jerusalem as its capital. It also maneuvered strongly to conceal its plans from 1948 until after Israel's admission to the United Nations in May of 1949 so as not to confront advocates of the internationalization of the city or aggravate Israel's tacit Jordanian allies. During this period, Tel Aviv served as the unofficial capital. But Israel's occupation of the rest of Palestine in 1967 encouraged a steady program of expansion and changing the multi-religious character of the city. By April of 1968, the Israeli Finance Minister, Pinhas Sapir, has allowed the seizure of ninety-nine acres in the southern part of the Old City, using a 1943 British Ordinance which justified such action when approved for "public purposes". This turned out to be a plan to rebuild the Jewish Quarter and repopulate it with Jewish citizens of the state, even if this meant seizing lands of the Islamic waqf, or charitable trusts. The passive and limited action taken by the Jordanian authorities was obviously based on a strategy of avoiding any public dealings with Israeli courts. Response to Israeli activity in the newly conquered city took the form of appeals to Muslim sources of funding, rather than meaningful support for local acts of resistance.

Activities by Jewish vigilante groups formed the run-up to the outbreak of the first intifada, which began in December of 1987. The late 1980s were particularly dangerous since responsibility for the West Bank and for Jerusalem was lost between the Jordanian regime and the Palestinian Liberation Organization which by 1969 was reconfigured under Arafat's leadership. Even though the Rabat Resolution of 1974 had already recognized the PLO as "the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," responsibility for the occupied territories remained diffuse, with the Jordanian regime gradually losing control to the PLO. At the beginning, the latter's acts of military resistance were not centered on Jerusalem per se. Indeed, the intifada permitted the PLO to shift its focus from the losing Lebanese theater to the occupied territories where a new front was opening up.

Jerusalem was never regarded as a separate issue, deserving of a separate strategy. Already burdened with the largest settlement expansion program in the occupied territories, Jerusalem became



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a magnet for Palestinian workers who were forced to work in the construction of the same settlements which usurped their lands due to the lack of meaningful Arab financial support. Annual reports filed by the ILO have made it clear that, beginning in 1979, Palestinian workers were being exploited by their Israeli employers but lacked an alternative form of employment. Until the second intifada and the building of the Separation Wall and the network of checkpoints that impeded population movement in and out of Jerusalem, the majority of the construction workers came from the surrounding villages largely because of the loss of agricultural lands to the settlements.

Israeli settlement activity was followed in recent years by an efficient program of bureaucratic cleansing that managed to reduce the number of Palestinian holders of Jerusalem I.D. cards by about 11,000. As many as 220,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites who lost their right of residence within the city's boundaries may never be repatriated in the future. Much of the publicity surrounding this Israeli plan to thin out the Arab population of Jerusalem was carried out by The Middle East Committee of the American Friends Service Committee in conjunction with a number of international and Arab NGOs.

The process of turning Jerusalem into a Jewish city and demolishing or repossessing most of its Arab and Islamic cultural sites continued even after the PLO agreed to participate in the Madrid, and later Oslo, peace talks. It was Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi who raised this issue in a 1999 conference of pan-Arab Town Planners held at Beirut by calling for the creation of a \$5 billion fund specifically earmarked for the preservation of Arab Islamic Jerusalem. Two large settlements in particular increased even during the Clinton Administration. Following the signing of the Protocol Concerning Redeployment in Hebron, in January of 1997, which entailed renewing the commitment of both parties to the Oslo Peace Process, the Israelis announced by April their intention to build new housing units at Jabal Abu-Ghneim and Ras al-Aamoud.

Resistance to Israelis on the part of the local population continued with minimal support from the PLO and later, the PNA. Nowhere was this form of peaceful resistance more visible than in the Shu'fat refugee camp north of the city. In 2004, Jerusalem's mayor, Uri Lupoliansky, along with other Israeli city officials, came up with a plan to relieve overcrowding within the Old City by relocating the Arab residents of the Old City to Shu'fat. Jerusalem's Arab NGOs, accused the Israelis of harboring such intentions since 1967. Shu'fat, which has been prevented from growing due to the expansion of the Jewish settlements of Pisgat Zeev and French Hill, was originally constructed by the Jordanian authorities in order to absorb Palestinian refugees who were removed from the Old City in 1966 due to Israeli protests. With a population of 30,000 in an area of no more than 52 acres, the camp was hardly able to absorb any new additions. Israeli officials apparently hoped to unburden themselves of this excess Arab population by dumping them on Shu'fat in the interest of improving some of the Old City's neighborhoods. Since the creation the PNA, it has taken over some programs in the camps whenever the U.N. Relief and Works Agency curtailed its projects. But neither of these managed to establish the camp's independence from the local Israeli economy. Shu'fat's residents continue to seek employment in the Israeli labor market.

The PLO continued to claim that it had received the Israelis' commitment to withdraw from Jerusalem after the signing of the DOP agreement. Hassan Asfour, a member of the Oslo negotiating team claimed in an article in 1993 that a new precedent had been achieved, namely gaining Israel's commitment to withdraw from the entire West Bank, including Jerusalem, in accordance with UN Resolution 242. The PNA, in reality, had managed to float some unusual ideas in secret talks with the Israelis that later jeopardized its serious standing among Palestinians.

An Israeli official, Yossi Beilin, had agreed that his government would recognize a municipality for Arab Jerusalem, treating it as the capital of a future Palestinian state, except that it would be located in one of the neighboring villages of Abu-Dis, Aizariya or al-Ram. Arafat, however, later resisted all kinds of pressures at Camp David II to relinquish Islamic rights to the city. But his confinement at Ramallah, which eventually emerged as the PNA's de facto capital, reduced his ability to affect developments at Jerusalem. Some would even argue that he despaired over regaining any representation in Jerusalem to such a degree that he eventually used it as a venue for neutralizing some of his serious rivals. One of these was Faisal Husseini, the only Jerusalemite to have been allowed by the Israelis to join the Palestinian-Jordanian negotiating team at Madrid,

and who later held the Jerusalem portfolio. His duties within the city were severely curtailed, until finally the government of Benjamin Netanyahu managed to secure the closing of the Orient House, the semi-official headquarters of the PNA.

Other Palestinian institutions in the city such as the land and water companies were also seized. Later on, Arafat entrusted the Jerusalem portfolio to a much lighter political figure Sari Nuseibah. The PNA also continued to waver publicly on the issues of Jerusalem and the return of the refugees, which made it look as though one could be exchanged for the other. But in the end, Arafat resisted efforts by Ehud Barak and Bill Clinton to have him relinquish control of parts of East Jerusalem or Haram al-Sharif. In the meantime, Israeli expropriation of Arab lands prompted the Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Ikrimah Sabri, to issue a fatwa (a religious opinion) denouncing land sales. The fatwa, issued in 1996, prohibited the sale of land and property to Arabs and to Jews.

Hamas, whose existence dates to the first intifada, had developed a public position on the sanctity of all of Palestine and not only Jerusalem as stated in its 1988 Charter. Thus, the liberation of Palestine, declared to be a Muslim waqf, is a duty for every Muslim wherever he resides. Under Article 15, the Hamas Charter reminds Muslims that when the enemy has usurped the land of Muslims, then the jihad becomes a sacred Islamic duty. Unlike the PLO, which moved from seeking a historic solution in Palestine to a solution of phases, Hamas distinguishes between an imminent and a deferred solution, the latter based on a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza as an interim solution which may result from a ceasefire.

Ultimately, all Palestine, “from the sea to the river” will be liberated. Not a single organization or state, not a single leader or king, has the right to dissipate this right to the Palestine waqf. Though critical of the PLO’s deferment of the Jerusalem issue according to the Oslo timetable, Hamas itself did very little towards focusing national attention on the Jerusalem issue. But Hamas made up for its banishment from Jerusalem by nurturing excellent relations with the Christian Palestinian population in general, many of whom enjoy special attachment to the Christian holy sites in the city. Significantly, whenever the officials of Hamas extend greetings to Palestinian Christians on the occasion of their religious holidays, invariably they invoke Caliph Omar’s pact, which pledged protection to Christian churches and properties in the holy city. Reference to Omar’s legacy in Jerusalem becomes a convenient tool illustrating Islam’s historic pledges of protection to Christians and Jews living under Muslim rule.

In its 1988 declaration titled: “The Movement’s Policy toward Palestine’s Christians,” Hamas affirms that Christians are part of the Palestinian people and the Arab nation. They are entitled to the same civil rights as the rest of the Palestinian people. Hamas calls on Palestinians to share in celebrating Christian holidays, and calls on Christians not to emigrate under the pressure of Israel’s brutal treatment. In that spirit, Hamas has cancelled one of its strike days in 1990 when it realized that it coincided with the date of the birth of Jesus. It also publicly condemned Zionist attacks on the properties of the Greek Orthodox Church in the holy city in 1990.

In terms of the reality on the ground, however, the presence of Hamas within the holy city has always been tenuous. Its basis of support has always been limited to the membership of the workers’ union of the Jerusalem Electrical Company, elected student bodies in Jerusalem University, and among workers in al-Maqasid Hospital. This base of support pales in comparison to what the PNA controls. The position of Hamas on Jerusalem suffers additionally from its historical rhetoric in which the city’s significance is reduced to its religious symbolism of the overarching religious conception of the Islamic state. The struggle to maintain the Arab and Islamic character of the city, however, requires repeated references to international obligations and international law. In recent years, Hamas has been increasingly inclined to establish contact with foreign governments and express approval of specific U.N. resolutions favorable to the Palestinian position. But some specific U.N. resolutions, such as 242 and 338, have received much criticism because both overlook the necessity of Palestinian statehood. Hamas’ interaction with international organizations and its attendance at international forums, however, have been limited, which weakens its ability to defend the rights of Jerusalem’s population.

Since Hamas’ victory at the polls and its subsequent break with the PNA, its ability to exercise influence over the fate of Jerusalem has been severely curtailed. In the meantime, the general

condition of Jerusalem's Arab population continues to deteriorate, but no help is forthcoming either from the PNA or Hamas.

Arab Jerusalem seems to be destined to be the constant victim of Arab, and even Palestinian neglect. One writer recently commented that "if al-Aqsa was truly to collapse over the heads of its Muslim worshippers one day, Arab states would only send a memorandum of protest to the Security Council." It is also clear that responsibility for Jerusalem, or at least for the protection of its holy sites, is divided among many areas, including the PNA, the Jordanians, the OIC, the Saudis, the Arab League of States, and the United States. Continued violence in the city exposes it to many dangers, which forces us to recall the 1948 failed efforts of Jacques de Reynier, the International Red Cross representative, to declare Jerusalem a Red Cross city. Had this been done, the city may have been spared the amount of destruction which it suffered since its division and eventual absorption by the Israelis.



# Iraq and Iran



## NIE ties U.S. hands over Iran

An interview with Ilan Berman

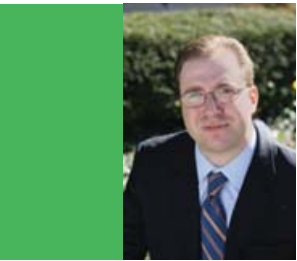


**International Affairs Forum: What is your assessment of the NIE report?**



**Dr. Ilan Berman:** The NIE is very problematic for a number of reasons. Over the last two decades, the regime has spent a lot of time, energy and money on the acquisition of WMD technologies. Yet one of the key parts of the NIE is that there is still a great deal we don't know about Iran's intentions. This is a key point because it shapes the rest of the report. The rest of the report, including the key judgment that Iran halted its nuclear weapons work in the fall of 2003, revolves around having an accurate understanding of what Iran is actually trying to do with its nuclear program. Given the Iranian regime's track record, given its acquisition of materials and its public and private pronouncements about the need for this capability in order to have a seat at the great power table, it suggests strongly that they are in fact looking for a weaponized capability. Yet the NIE is silent about the key driver of all these things which is the intentions of the Iranian regime itself.

A second issue is that the NIE specifically takes out of its scope of work is the idea of having a comprehensive overview of Iran's civilian uranium enrichment program. But that program is a necessary precursor to building nuclear capability. In order to have highly enriched uranium, you must first enrich uranium to civilian grade. It is then enriched further in order to make it weapons grade and usable for military applications. By not taking a comprehensive overview of the civilian nuclear program that the Iranian regime is continuing to pursue, its essentially left us without a benchmark about how quickly Iran can actually weaponize if it is indeed interested in doing so.



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### How has the NIE affected dealing with Iran?

The NIE has had a huge political effect. It's no secret that the Bush administration's efforts to cobble together serious economic pressure on the Iranians, and on the other hand to cobble together a durable coalition among the Sunni states in order to contain Iran militarily, has been an uphill battle for the last six to eight months. This is in part because the countries in the region are concerned about Iraq, our staying power in the region, and the upcoming Presidential elections. But in the aftermath of the NIE, these two paths have become impossible because it has taken off the table the credible threat of military force. Before, the White House was able to say to these countries: 'work with us because we're committed to stopping the Iranian regime by force if

necessary although we hope it doesn't come to that.' Now it's not able to say that credibly and, as a result, countries in the region are making other plans.

**U.S. Director of National Intelligence Director Michael McConnell recently said he thinks Iran will be technically capable of producing enriched uranium to produce a weapon between 2010 and 2015. There's also been new intelligence, dismissed by Iran, about testing rockets. How close do you think Iran is to being able to produce and deliver nuclear weapons?**

There are a couple of things in play here. The NIE's assessment that Iran is most likely to field a nuclear weapon between 2010 and 2015 hinges upon a rather dim view of how technically proficient Iranian scientists are. If their centrifuges are working at one hundred percent efficiency, it takes three thousand centrifuges spinning continuously for one year in order to generate enough HEU [highly enriched uranium] for one weapon. Meaning that if all goes according to plan, and since November 2007 Iran has that many centrifuges, by next November they could have enough HEU for a weapon. They may not, but they could. If their centrifuges break down, if there are technical problems, the timeline goes further out.

Interestingly, to the point of Mr. McConnell's testimony, there was recently a computer simulation carried out by the European Union's Joint Research Center which is based in Italy. It found that if Iran's centrifuges ran at just twenty-five percent efficiency, it could still generate enough highly enriched uranium to generate a bomb by 2010, which is far sooner than the outward estimate that is being floated by the intelligence community.

I think that there is a disconnect between what we think Iran can do and what Iran may be technically capable of doing. There's only one way to be surprised pleasantly. That's to assume that they are closer than further away.

The other issue is how they would deliver such a capability once it's generated. It's important to note that Iran has aggressively been pursuing a medium range ballistic missile program very successfully. The Shihab3 missile which is the mainstay of their strategic arsenal is very capable. They're working on refining accuracy and expanding the range of that missile. But they are also building an intercontinental ballistic military capability. Iran is the only country in the Middle East that is a space faring power. Iran has already launched one satellite into orbit about a year and a half ago and it is continuing to test space launch vehicles. The reason that is significant is that a space launch capability is essentially something that can be transformed and be easily married with a ballistic missile program to create the requisite propulsion for long range ballistic missiles.

So what is happening at the same time that Iran is maturing its nuclear program, Iran is maturing its ability to deliver that nuclear capability should it decide to build one.

**Has the Iranian nuclear issue had an influence on radical groups in the Middle East?**

How far away – or how close – Iran is to developing nuclear capability has had a very positive impact from the Iranian standpoint regarding exerting influence on radical groups. As the old saying goes, 'a rising tide lifts all boats.' So you have Iran, which is the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism acquiring these additional capabilities that give it greater freedom and latitude to provide aid, assistance, diplomatic cover for groups like Hizbollah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and even Hamas. In this context, it's important to point out that never before has a terrorist group had a strategic umbrella, particularly a nuclear strategic umbrella, that would provide it an insurance policy against external aggression. But this is the direction that we're heading. Hizbollah in Lebanon is Iran's chief terrorist proxy and very soon Hizbollah's activities may become substantially broader simply because its chief patron now has a nuclear capability it can provide as a deterrent to other countries to prevent them from attacking Hizbollah or bringing Hizbollah terrorists to justice for their international terror activities.

**In the past, you've advocated economic warfare as a good option of dealing with Iran. Do you still think that?**

I think that is the most realistic option, at least in the short term. But it's important to distinguish between economic pressure and economic sanctions. Economic sanctions that everyone is discussing tend to be those carried out at the multi-lateral level through the United Nations. Those are sanctions that, even if a third round does materialize as seems likely now, are not likely to have the requisite bite that will make the Iranian Ayatollah sit up and take notice. That's because the U.N. is not built for aggressive action. It's built for inertia. In addition, two of Iran's chief nuclear enablers, Russia and China, have veto power over any serious sanctions that emerge. If this round of sanctions doesn't work and Moscow and Beijing have allowed it to pass, it simply is not likely to make people in Tehran sit up and take notice.

There are things that can be done outside of the confines of the United Nations. Iran has a number of points of vulnerability in its economy ranging from a very centralized hierarchy of economic leadership, including families like the Rafsanjani family which control a great deal of national wealth, to the country's dependence on foreign refined petroleum. These are things that can actually be leveraged by the international community to bring Iran to the table. Iran is working very heavily to move its assets from European banks to banks that are less transparent in Asia; it's working to expand its refining capabilities so it doesn't have to import as much gasoline from abroad. So the window to use these levers is closing, it's not indefinite. Those are the most tangible points that can be activated in the near term, particularly because, in the aftermath of the NIE, the idea of military action – certainly military action spearheaded by the United States or its allies – seems less and less likely.

**There have been a number of conflicting statements and actions from Russia and China. China has said to Iran to respect the concerns of the international community about their nuclear program, Russia has said they will work towards economic sanctions against them if they don't become more transparent with the program. Yet there are growing economic projects and agreements between both countries and Iran. How resolute do you think China and Russia in respect of action against Iran?**

China and Russia are when it comes to Iran. Historically, Russia has had three things that tie it together with the Iranian regime. The first is this mutual defense-industrial arrangement. The relationship started in the late 1980's, early 1990's, when Iran was coming off of the Iran-Iraq War and needed new equipment. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was beginning to crumble and its defense infrastructure was falling apart. So there's that marriage of convenience that emerged from that, and now it encompasses nuclear technology as well. There's also good old fashioned anti-Americanism which both countries leverage in their relationship, and there's also the understanding in Moscow that Iran really has the ability to increase the threat of radical Islam by meddling in the Caucasus. This is something Russian officials are very concerned about. All of this means that Russia has a healthy distrust of the Iranian regime, but unless it sees the international community is serious about confronting Iran, it's much easier to accommodate Iran than it is to deal with it robustly on its own. This is very much a pragmatic calculation.

China is very different though. Iran is to China roughly what Saudi Arabia is to the United States in terms of energy supplies. Iran is the engine of China's economic growth. We've been asking China in a very unsophisticated fashion so far to simply divest from Iran with no ancillary benefit to them and with no ideas about where these energy supplies can be gotten from if they don't come from Iran. For Chinese officials who are concerned about maintaining robust economic growth, maintaining industrial innovation, these are non-starters. We can talk with the Chinese about having them begin to back off trading with Iran and using them as an energy partner, but we have to give them viable alternatives in order to enable them to do so. So far, we haven't and this is what has really married Beijing and Tehran.



## **What are the best tactics for the West to support and promote positive regime change in Iran?**

The issue of regime change in Iran is enormously problematic. Of course the best case scenario would be for a new regime in Iran to take power, for it to be more pro-West, more pluralistic, more benign, and more interested in integration with the world economy than regional hegemony. But the problem is we've had over the last decade and a half, precious little investment of any practical nature in building that grassroots capacity. Even today, the United States is spending very minuscule amount on promoting democracy within Iran. So it's not a surprise that there are stirrings of democracy within Iran, stirrings of a reform movement, stirrings of a more fundamental nature of people who reject this regime entirely. The problem is that they are unfocused and they are uncultivated. We've not spent nearly enough time and energy trying to harness them and creating an environment where regime change can flourish.

As Iran gets closer to a nuclear capability, I think we'll find that it will become less and less easy to do so, because as Iran draws closer to having an atomic capability, it will feel greater latitude to persecute its internal opposition without any fear of retribution from the outside. In a very simplistic sense, the path to a nuclear bomb in Iran and the path to democracy in Iran lead in opposite directions.



## Welcome to the new Middle East

by Leon Hadar

**M**ARKING ON MARCH 20TH THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY of the beginning of the Iraq war, U.S. President George W. Bush stated that the decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power was, and always will be, the right one, a view that is certainly not compatible with that of the majority of Americans who are citing the high costs in American lives and treasure and want to see the U.S. start pulling its military troops out of Mesopotamia.

But while admitting that the Bush administration's original justifications for going to war - including its assertions that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and that Iraq had operational links to Al-Qaida - have been repeatedly debunked or discredited, opponents of the idea of pulling U.S. troops from Iraq warn that such a move will not only play into the hands of Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups, but will also create the conditions for a bloody civil war in the country (involving the Arab-Shiites, the Arab-Sunnis and the Kurds) which will draw into it other Middle Eastern players (Iran; Saudi Arabia; Syria; Jordan) and which could ignite a major regional conflict. And the stay-the-course proponents advocate that American forces stay in Iraq until the country achieves some sense of political stability and internal security. That process, according to presumptive Republican presidential candidate John McCain, could take more than 100 years

Iraq War critics, including the two leading Democratic presidential candidates, counter that it was the ousting of Saddam Hussein that helped open the Pandora's Box of sectarian discord between the Shiites and the Sunnis in Iraq, igniting the current violence between the ethnic and religious groups in the country and turning it into new safe-heaven for terrorists from all around the Middle East. Al-Qaida was able to establish its presence in Iraq only in the aftermath of the collapse of Saddam's secular Ba'ath regime which had been one of the fiercest foes of Osama Bin Laden's radical Islamist terrorist group.

At the same time, the fall of Saddam Hussein's Sunni-led Iraq, which served to counter-balance the power of the Shiite-controlled regime in Tehran, ended-up helping to strengthen the power of Iran in the Persian Gulf. The government in U.S.-liberated Baghdad, which is composed of Shiite political figures and groups with close ties to Iran and the Hizbollah movement in Lebanon, which represents the growing Shiite community in Lebanon, have become part of what the pro-American Arab-Sunni regimes describe as a pro-Iran Shiite Crescent in the Middle East.

Indeed, historians of the future will probably conclude that the implementation of President Bush's neoconservative agenda in the Middle East - the toppling of the Saddam's secular Sunni



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regime; the resurgence of Iran and its Shiite allies; a series of U.S.-driven elections that strengthened the hands of Islamist parties in Iran, Lebanon and Palestine; the breakdown in the Israel-Palestine peace process – provoked a set of powerful revolutionary changes that are challenging the post-Cold War status-quo in the Middle East, and in a way that runs contrary to the interests of the U.S. and its traditional allies in the Middle East.

To be fair to President Bush and the neocons, these changes would have probably taken place at some point in the future, since the end of the superpower rivalry had also shaken the relative stability in the Middle East provided by the geo-strategic stalemate between Washington and Moscow in the region - with each side placing constraints on the power of their respective allies. With America emerging in the early 1990's as the sole hegemon in the Middle East, it was only a matter of time before the anti-status quo forces in the region – radical Arab-Sunni groups that opposed Saudi Arabia's alliance with America; radical Shiite organizations hoping to strengthen their power in Lebanon, Iraq and the Persian Gulf; an assertive Iran; Kurds seeking independence; Palestinians demanding an end to Israeli occupation - will dare to challenge U.S. power and invite a powerful American response.

In a way, President Bush's decision to invade Iraq and turn the U.S. as a major catalyst of change helped to fast-forward history by ten years, making it more likely that the transformation of the Middle East would not have to be postponed until 2015. Instead, the five years of the Bush War helped set in motion the most dramatic makeover of the Middle East since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Western takeover of the region after World War I. Some of the scenarios that could result:

- The possible break-up of Iraq into three mini-states, including a semi-independent Kurdish region, a Shiite area that would fall under Iran's sphere of influence, and a Sunni zone that would gravitate towards its Arab-Sunni neighbors led by Saudi Arabia.
- The emergence of Iran with nuclear weapons as a regional hegemon in the Persian Gulf that would spread its political and religious influence into other Shiite areas in the Middle East and try to either challenge or to accommodate the interests of the U.S. and its allies, led by Saudi Arabia.
- The flexing of the diplomatic, economic and military muscles of Saudi Arabia and other Arab oil-rich states in the Persian Gulf that could extend their influence into other Sunni parts of the Middle East, especially in Syria/Lebanon and Israel/Palestine, launch a drive to develop an Arab-Sunni nuclear bomb and strengthen ties with the European Union and China as a way of countering U.S. influence in the region.
- Growing regional and outside pressure to resolve the Israel/Palestine conflict as part of an arrangement that will include Jordan and perhaps even Egypt. Without such a resolution, the area of Israel/Palestine will gradually become a bi-national state.
- Lebanon will once again become a central arena for regional power struggles, with Iran and the Saudis trying to establish spheres of influence there, and Syria re-emerging once again as a central power broker there.

In Iraq, much of the conditions for a de-facto division of the country are already taking place through a process of ethnic cleansing, which explains why the violence seems to be going down. Some would argue that the civil war has already taken place and that mixed areas and neighborhoods are coming under the control of the Shiites or the Sunnis, with the Kurds enjoying almost complete political independence in northern Iraq.

Hence what the new U.S. President will have to do is to try to formalize this Iraqi "soft partition" as part of a regional agreement that will involve the leading outside players – Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria – along the lines of the 1995 Dayton Agreement that led to the establish-

ment of independent Bosnia and Herzegovina and the end of the civil war in the former Yugoslavia.

But such an agreement will require a readjustment of U.S. policy in the Middle East to the new balance of power in the region – which the Bush Administration helped to create – including a diplomatic dialogue with Iran (and Syria) and a willingness to cooperate with a more assertive Saudi Arabia. Unless the new administration take steps in that direction, the U.S. could find itself drawn into an even longer and costly conflict – probably a Ten Year War – after which the U.S. – not unlike after the five years of the Bush War – would be less secure and with less influence in the Middle East and around the world.





## Iraq: What next?

by Hazhir Teimourian

**I**N THE MONTHS PRECEDING THE WAR on Saddam Hussein's Iraq in the spring of 2003, I was in a small, largely academic team that gathered once a week at the Department of War Studies at King's College, the University of London, that tried to predict what might happen if an invasion really did take place. At the other side of the table were some of the senior British military who prepared for the political and economic aftermath of an invasion. The reports of our brain-storming quickly became highly prized in Whitehall, we were told, and they caught the attention of decision-makers across the Atlantic.

One day, I said that the Iraqi army's will to resist would dissipate the moment it saw on Al-jazeera television that American and British troops had crossed the border with Kuwait. That was easy enough. So was my other prediction that all Iraqi government officials, from judges to teachers, would flee southern and central Iraq before they were lynched by Shia mobs.

One of the generals across the table said: We call that 'catastrophic success'. We laughed. We hadn't heard that expression before, but, surely enough, that's exactly what happened. A vacuum of authority came into being that could only be filled by criminals and fanatics and Iranian agents from across the border who hated their fellow Shias in Iraq gaining a reasonably collective government and a free press to become a source of inspiration to their own disgruntled masses. That was, and still remains, a nightmare to Ayatollah Khamenei in Tehran. No wonder he tried so hard, alongside the French, Russians and Chinese, to keep Saddam, the hammer of his fellow Shias, firmly in place.

So, in that predictable vacuum of authority in south and central Iraq, the Americans, British and Australians were never going to have enough troops to rule every street. Nor was it possible to retain the hated old army. Even its Shia junior officers were seen as traitors. Later on, Shias and Kurds actually criticized the Americans for retaining the old army's uniform. Imagine what would have happened if their former tormentors still filled those uniforms. Surely that would have been seen as proof that the Americans meant to do what the British had done before them: reimpose minority Sunni rule over them.

Some big mistakes definitely were made. Due to the shortage of troops, the resentful, Sunni areas of western and north-western Iraq were left to their own devices for many months and junior members of the army who had fled there were allowed to keep their weapons, but had no jobs. Difficulties were compounded by the virtual destruction of civil society in 35 years of Baathist government.

But even if mistakes had not been made, some Sunni resistance was inevitable. There were too many war criminals on the run, many Sunnis missed the good old times of their supremacy dating back to the Ottoman caliphate, and some surviving top figures of the old regime possessed large



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sums of cash. Furthermore, Syria could be relied on to encourage Saudi and other Arab Jihadists to pass through its borders to join the fight, while Iran, thinking that America was tied down in both Iraq and Afghanistan, would pile on the pressure by allowing members of Al-Qaida free movement across from Afghanistan to reach Iraq.

At the time of writing (late March 2008), at last good news comes out of Iraq. Some 80 per cent of Iraqis say that they want American forces to remain in the country until their job is done and a majority of Iraqis tell pollsters that life in their local area has improved recently. This is because of the 'surge' in the number of American troops, the execution of Saddam, which has destroyed the hopes of his supporters to bring him back and the realization of Sunni tribal leaders that money could be made if they joined the new order. The remnants of Al-Qaida have been banished to the Syrian border, and such formerly forbidden towns as Fallujah are once again open to western reporters.

We must not raise our hopes too high. As someone who grew up in Iran, I do not believe that strongly Islamic societies can ever be democratic. Tolerance of dissent or the rights of ethnic minorities are not part of their culture. The best example is Turkey, with its abominable treatment of its large Kurdish citizenry. All that we can expect of Iraq is a semi-open state such as Kuwait in the south. This is because the collective memory of the horrors under Saddam Hussein and the pain of liberation will remain strong enough in the heart of the average Iraqi for at least a couple of decades. Furthermore, unlike largely Shia Iran next door, Iraq has three large segments to it that are determined to stand up for their rights. Any attempt to impose Shia'ism on the Sunnis and any return to the extremist Arab nationalistic ways of the Baath in Kurdistan will mean a large-scale terroristic backlash from the Sunnis and another resurrection among the Kurds.

This is not to say that the rise of a military dictator such as Egypt's Hosni Mubarak can be ruled out. In fact, it is likely that even a democratically-elected Shia-Sunni central government will, sooner or later, gang up together with the Turks, Iranians and Syrians to strangle, economically, the ever-suffering, land-locked Kurds merely because they will insist on a strong regional government of their own and a proportional share of the country's oil revenues. So the Kurds need wise and moderate leadership to remind them that they are surrounded by enemies. This is lacking at present. Their leaders ought to clamp down on the activities of the PKK so as not to provide the Turkish military with the excuses it seeks, and they need to cut all ties with Iran so as not to antagonize the only possible protector they have, the United States. It's not good enough saying to the Americans that they can have permanent military bases in Kurdistan and, at the same time, let Iranian Revolutionary Guards set up offices in Arbil in the guise of diplomats to plot blowing up American soldiers. This is not to say that the Kurds' fear of an eventual American betrayal is groundless. The Arabs, Turks and Iranians will always be more important to distant powers than such land-locked little peoples as Kurds and Armenians.

To sum up: I expect that in a few years' time, we shall still see a reasonably open society in Iraq, with the country becoming more prosperous with the development of the oil fields. There will also be at least several divisions of American troops in bases away from Iraqi population centers. Baghdad will plead for them to remain indefinitely to deter its unhappy neighbors. Iran will continue to dislike moderate Shias in Iraq setting an example to its own masses, and it will continue to seek imposing hegemony on the Arabs of the Persian Gulf. If America withdraws, Iraqi leaders will, for fear of Iranian-financed terrorism, feel forced to travel to Tehran regularly to appease it, and because they sit on the second largest oil reserves in the world, the consequences will affect us all. Iran will not be satisfied until it has turned Iraq into another Hizbollah country.



## Stabilizing Iraq from the Bottom Up

Statement by Dr. Stephen Biddle

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**W**HAT WILL HAPPEN TO IRAQ AS THE RECENT SURGE IN U.S. TROOP STRENGTH SUBSIDES? Violence fell in late 2007; will this trend continue, or was this merely a temporary lull created by an unsustainable U.S. troop presence? The last week saw a major spike in fighting as the Maliki government launched an offensive against militia fighters in Basra; is this a harbinger of future violence? And what do the answers imply for the U.S. posture in Iraq? Should we extend the ongoing troop reductions? Or should these be slowed or even reversed?

In fact the violence reduction was more than just a temporary lull. It reflected a systematic shift in the underlying strategic landscape of Iraq, and could offer the basis for sustainable stability if we respond appropriately.

But this will not yield Eden on the Euphrates. A stabilized Iraq is likely to look more like Bosnia or Kosovo than Germany or Japan. And like Bosnia and Kosovo, a substantial outside presence will be needed for many years to keep such a peace. If U.S. withdrawals leave U.S. unable to provide the needed outside presence, the result could be a rapid return to 2006-scale violence or worse. Nor can we afford to hold out for a less Balkanized Iraq that could control its own territory without U.S. in the near term: pushing too hard too soon for the ideal of a strong, internally unified Iraqi state can easily undermine the prospects for a lesser but more achievable goal of stability per se.

This is because the violence reduction of 2007 was obtained from the bottom up, not from the top down. Instead of a national political deal, the military defeat or disarmament of the enemy, or their conversion into peaceful politicians in a reconciled, pluralist society, violence fell because most of the former combatants reached separate, local, voluntary decisions to stop fighting even though they retained their arms, their organizations, their leaders, and often their ambitions. These decisions were not accidental or ephemeral – they reflected the post-2006 strategic reality of Iraq, which for the first time gave all the major combatants a powerful self-interest in ceasefire

rather than combat. This new self-interest in ceasefire creates an important opportunity for stability. But the decentralized, voluntary nature of these ceasefires means that peace would be fragile and would need careful and persistent U.S. management to keep it from collapsing, especially early on. The required U.S. presence would change from war fighting into peacekeeping, and U.S. casualties would fall accordingly. But a continued presence by a substantial outside force would be essential for many years to keep a patchwork quilt of wary former enemies from turning on one another – if we try to exploit the violence reduction to take a peace dividend by bringing American troops home too quickly, the ceasefire deals we have reached would likely collapse. And if we try to replace this patchwork quilt of local ceasefire deals with a strong central government that could monopolize violence in Iraq and allow us to leave, the result is much more likely to be the collapse of today's ceasefires without any effective central government to put in their place.

This is not what the Administration had in mind when it invaded Iraq. Reasonable people could judge the costs too high and the risks too great. But an Iraq stabilized from the bottom up in this way nevertheless offers a meaningful chance to stop the fighting, to save the lives of untold thousands of innocent Iraqis who would otherwise die brutal, violent deaths, and to secure America's remaining vital strategic interest in this conflict: that it not spread to engulf the entire Middle East in a regionwide war. No options for Iraq are attractive. But given the alternatives, stabilization from the bottom up may be the least bad option for U.S. policy in 2008.

I advance this case in four steps. First, I assess the causes of the recent decline in violence, and attribute this to a series of voluntary local ceasefires – not national political reconciliation, the destruction or elimination of the enemy, an exhaustion of violence potential as a result of sectarian cleansing, or improvements in Iraqi government forces. Second, I discuss the chances for these ceasefires to hold. If violence is down because the combatants have chosen to stop fighting, will they choose otherwise when the surge brigades come home? I argue that while voluntary ceasefires are inherently reversible, they do not always collapse. The new strategic landscape in Iraq creates an opportunity for a lasting ceasefire that outlives the surge, but does not guarantee this by itself. Third, I argue that to realize this opportunity requires a continuing military presence by an outside peacekeeper. This does not mean open-ended war fighting or the U.S. casualties that go with it, and it may not require the surge's troop count. But peacekeeping is labor intensive nevertheless – and the right posture for stability maintenance in Iraq is thus the largest force we can sustain in steady state for an extended stay. Finally, I assess the alternative of strengthening the Iraqi state to enable it to monopolize violence, control its own territory, and replace U.S. or other foreign troops with Iraqi security forces. I argue that for the foreseeable future, any attempt to replace local ceasefires with centralized state security is far likelier to destroy the gains bought at such cost in 2007. Iraq may eventually mature into a workable federal state. But this is a generational goal, not an immediate one. For a long time to come, stability in Iraq will require settling for what we can get, not holding out for what we once sought.

### **I. Why Did Violence Decline?**

The original idea behind the surge was to reduce the violence in Baghdad in order to enable Iraqis to negotiate the kind of national power-sharing deal we thought would be necessary to stabilize the country. Chaos in the capital, it was thought, made negotiated compromise impossible; by deploying more U.S. troops to the city and assigning them the mission of direct population security, it was hoped that a safe space could be created within which the national leaders of Iraq's Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds could afford to take the risks inherent in compromise.

The violence came down, but the compromise did not follow. Although some slow, grudging political progress has been made, the pace has lagged far behind the original intentions of the surge's designers. Many, prominently including the Democratic leadership on Capitol Hill, were prepared to declare the surge a failure given its inability to produce the reconciliation deal that was the whole point originally.

In the meantime, however, a completely different possibility arose – one that was neither planned nor anticipated nor intended when the surge was designed, but which has nevertheless become central to the prospects for stability in Iraq. This “Anbar Model” or “bottom-up” approach



began with a group of Sunni tribal sheiks in Anbar Province, then quickly spread to Sunnis elsewhere in Iraq and now to many Shiites as well. This model is built not around a national compact, but instead a series of bilateral contractual agreements in which particular groups of local Iraqis agree not to fight the United States or the government of Iraq, and to turn their arms instead on common enemies – initially Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI), and increasingly rogue Shiite militias as well. These local groups further agree to wear distinguishing uniforms, to patrol their home districts, to limit their activities to those home districts, and to provide Coalition forces and the Iraqi government with biometric data (e.g. fingerprints and retinal scans), names, and home addresses for all members. In exchange they receive recognition as legitimate security providers in their districts, a pledge that they will not be fired upon by U.S. or Iraqi government forces as long as they observe their end of the agreement, and a U.S.-provided salary of \$300 per member per month. (They do not, however, receive arms or ammunition from the United States – we are not “arming the Sunnis,” as many have alleged. Ceasefire participants use their own weapons and ammunition, of which they have plenty without our help.)

The parties to these local ceasefire deals have been variously termed “Awakening Councils,” “Sons of Iraq” (SOI), or “Concerned Local Citizen” (CLC) groups. As of March 2008, membership in these CLC organizations had grown from a baseline of essentially zero in early 2007 to more than 95,000 Iraqis under more than 200 such contracts across much of western and central Iraq. By way of comparison, the entire active strength of the British Army worldwide is about 100,000 – the growth in CLC membership in just a few months has been truly extraordinary.

For now, the CLC groups are disproportionately, though not exclusively, Sunni (about 80 percent of CLC members were Sunnis in January 2008). Many of the principal Shiite combatants, however, are observing their own ceasefires. In particular, Muqtada al Sadr directed his Jaish al Mahdi (JAM), or “Mahdi Army” militia to stand down from combat operations following an altercation with the rival Shiite Badr Brigade in Karbala in August 2007.

The result is that as of early 2008, most of the major combatants on both the Sunni and Shiite side were all observing voluntary ceasefires.

One would expect this rapid spread of local ceasefires to have an important effect in reducing violence in Iraq, and indeed it did. In fact it has been largely responsible for the dramatic reduction in violence by late 2007. In effect, most of the combatant factions that had been fighting the Americans and the government voluntarily agreed to stop. Moreover, the remaining hard core AQI and rogue militia holdouts had been seriously disadvantaged by the defection of their erstwhile allies: without the safe houses, financial support, intelligence and concealment provided by their coreligionists, AQI and militia rogues were exposed to U.S. firepower in ways they had not been previously. Guerrillas survive by stealth – their key defense from destruction by better-armed government forces is the government’s inability to distinguish fighters from innocent civilians. When their former allies agreed to finger holdout guerillas for U.S. engagement, AQI’s military position in western and central Iraq thus became largely untenable and they were forced to withdraw into the limited areas of Diyala, Salah ad Din, and Ninawa Provinces where CLC deals had not yet been reached. The net result was a dramatic reduction in opposition, a dramatic reduction in the number of enemy-initiated attacks, and a corresponding reduction in U.S. casualties, Iraqi civilian deaths, and ISF losses.

The violence reduction was not, by contrast, caused by our killing the enemy or driving them out of Iraq. AQI’s casualties were heavy in 2007, but AQI was never the bulk of the Sunni combatant strength, and violence in 2006 was increasingly attributable to Shiite militia activity. Neither of the latter has suffered nearly enough losses to explain a radical reduction in violence, nor have many such combatants fled the country.

Nor is the violence reduction attributable to sectarian cleansing. Many have argued that violence fell because there was no one left to kill: Baghdad’s once-mixed neighborhoods are now purely Shiite, they claim, removing the *casus belli* that once drove the violence. Yet significant Sunni populations remain in Baghdad – many fewer than in 2005, but significant all the same. More important, the relative incidence of mixed and pure, or Sunni and Shiite, neighborhoods in Baghdad correlates very poorly with the scale of sectarian violence. The killing has always been

concentrated at the frontiers between Shiite and Sunni districts, where, typically, Shiite militia fought to expand their control and Sunni insurgents fought to hold them off. As this unfolded, Sunnis were often forced out and city blocks would fall under Shiite control, but this simply moved the frontier to the next block, where the battle continued unabated. Cleansing thus moved the violence, but it did not reduce it. This can be seen in the casualty statistics for 2006, which hardly fell as the city's Sunni population shrank: all estimates show increasing civilian fatalities over the course of 2006, not the opposite. The only way this cleansing process could explain a radical drop in violence is if the frontiers disappeared as a result of Sunni extinction in Baghdad – but this has not occurred. And it is far from clear that even a total Sunni eviction from Baghdad would end the violence: the frontier would simply move on to the “Baghdad Belts,” the ring of heavily Sunni towns and suburbs that surround the city. In fact this had already started in 2006-7: both Sunni and Shiite combatants maneuvered extensively to improve their positions for continued warfare beyond the city by contesting control of key outlying towns. The violence did not simply run its course and ebb for lack of interest; regrettably, there remains an enormous potential for continued sectarian bloodletting in Iraq.

Nor is the violence reduction attributable to improvements in Iraqi government security forces. The ISF is better than it was, but its leadership, training, equipment, and logistics remain very uneven. Its key shortcoming, however, remains its politics rather than its proficiency. Predominantly Shiite or Kurdish ISF units are often distrusted by Sunnis and have great difficulty functioning effectively in their neighborhoods. Even Shiite ISF formations can have difficulty functioning in Shiite neighborhoods controlled by rival Shiite factions, as the recent fighting in Basra demonstrates. A few ISF units have established a reputation for even-handedness and can in principle act as nationalist defenders of all, but too few to secure the country. Much of the ISF, in effect, thus operates as the CLCs do: they defend their own. Local communities, whether Sunni or Shiite, accept defense by co-religionists they trust, but not by others – hence Iraq today is increasingly a patchwork of self-defending sectarian enclaves, warily observing the others but for now declining to use violence as long as they are left alone.

## II. Can the ceasefires hold?

Of course, a voluntary decision to stop fighting can be reversed. CLC members retain their weapons. Many are essentially the same units, under the same leaders, that fought Coalition forces until agreeing to stop in 2007. Many retain fond hopes to realize their former ambitions and seize control of the country eventually. The JAM has mostly stood down but not demobilized; they, too, could return to the streets. Many have thus argued that these ceasefire deals could easily collapse. And indeed they could. But this is not unusual for ceasefires meant to end communal civil wars such as Iraq's. These typically involve very distrustful parties; they often begin with former combatants agreeing to ceasefires but retaining their arms; and they are always at risk of renewed violence. Many fail under these pressures. But some succeed: in Bosnia, Kosovo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, for example, ceasefires of this kind have held and led to persistent quiet, if not warmth or deep reconciliation, between the former warring parties.

At least two requirements are needed to translate fragile deals into persistent stability. First, peace has to be in the perceived strategic self-interest of all parties. If one or several see warfare as superior to ceasefire, then any deal is temporary and will collapse at a more tactically opportune moment.

Until recently, Iraq failed this criterion. Sunnis feared Shiite domination, but believed they were stronger militarily than the Shiites; if only Sunnis could drive the Americans out, then a weak Shiite regime would collapse without its U.S. protectors and Sunnis could seize control. Hence fighting made sense for them. Shiites, by contrast, feared a Sunni restoration and saw warfare against Sunni insurgents as necessary to avert a takeover. Initially most Shiites were willing to let the government and its American allies wage this war for them. Eventually, however, they began to lose faith in either actor's ability to protect them, and thus turned to Shiite militias to wage war against the Sunnis on their behalf. Militia warfare offered Shiite civilians protection against Sunni violence. Fighting also offered Shiite militia leaders – and especially Muqtada al Sadr –

a power base they could not obtain otherwise, and a possible route to political control via military victory over the Sunnis, and eventually, over the Americans (who opposed Shiite warlord autocracy in favor of an unacceptable multisectarian compromise with the rival Sunnis). Shiites, too, thus preferred warfare.

Events in 2006 and early 2007, however, changed this strategic calculus fundamentally for both Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias. The key to this was the Sunni's military defeat in the sectarian Battle of Baghdad that followed the Askariya Mosque bombing of February 2006. Until that time, Shiite militias had fought mostly defensively and often stood on the sidelines in Sunni-U.S. combat. But when AQI destroyed the shrine, the Shiite militias entered the war in force and on the offensive. The result was a yearlong wave of sectarian violence in Baghdad pitting Sunni insurgent factions and their AQI allies against, especially, Muqtada al Sadr's Jaish al Mahdi. At the time, this wave of bloodshed was seen as a disaster – and in humanitarian terms it clearly was. The United States tried to stop it. But in retrospect, it may prove to have been the critical enabler of a later wave of ceasefires by changing fundamentally the Sunni strategic calculus in Iraq.

Before the Mosque bombing, Sunnis could believe they were the stronger side and would win an eventual all-out war. The Battle of Baghdad, however, provided a window into what such a war would mean for Sunnis, and they did not like what they saw. To Sunnis' surprise and dismay, the battle produced a decisive Sunni defeat: what had once been a mixed-sect city became a predominantly Shiite one as the JAM progressively drove the Sunnis out and shrank their remaining strongholds in the capital. With the Americans playing no decisive role, Shiites overwhelmed Sunni combatants in neighborhood after neighborhood. Sunnis who had harbored fond hopes of ruling the country by defeating the Shia in open warfare were now unable to call relatives in traditional Sunni strongholds because the JAM had driven them from their homes and replaced them with Shiite squatters. Neighborhoods that had been Sunni homeland for generations were now off limits, populated with and defended by their rivals. In a head-to-head fight, the Sunnis had been beaten by Shiite militias they had assumed they could dominate.

A second major development was a series of strategic errors by AQI. Americans have no monopoly on error in Iraq, and AQI's leadership seriously overplayed their hand in 2006. Al-Qaida in Iraq is exceptionally violent, and not only against Shiites and Americans. Fellow Sunnis whom AQI's leadership felt were not sufficiently devout or committed were also targeted with extraordinary brutality – including delivery of children's severed heads to the doorsteps of Sunni sheiks who failed to follow AQI preferences. The smuggling networks that many Sunni sheiks in Anbar Province had relied upon for generations to fund tribal patronage networks were appropriated by AQI for its own use. Before the Battle of Baghdad, most Sunnis tolerated these costs on the assumption that AQI's combat value against Shiites and Americans outweighed their disadvantages. As defeat in Baghdad became clearer, however, it also became clear that AQI could not deliver real protection. By late 2006 AQI's inability to prevent defeat in Baghdad and the costs it imposed on coreligionists had thus convinced many Sunnis that they needed to look for new allies. And the only possible choice was the United States.

At the same time, the surge made this realignment with the United States much easier and safer. Americans had sought political accommodation with Sunni insurgents for years; attempted openings to Sunni leaders had been a major component of U.S. policy throughout Zalmay Khalilzad's tenure as Ambassador, when the U.S. tried to broker compromise from both sides. These efforts made little headway, however, with a Sunni leadership that expected to rule Iraq if it instead held out and won the ensuing war. By 2007, however, Sunnis had become much more interested in American protection. And with the surge, Americans had more protection to offer. Any Sunni contemplating realignment against their nominal AQI allies surely realized that a massive AQI counterattack awaited them – no organization with AQI's reputation for brutality would stand back and watch while its allies changed sides and betrayed them. And in fact the initial wave of Sunni tribal disaffection in Anbar was met with an immediate campaign of bombings and assassinations from AQI against the leaders and foot soldiers of the rebel tribes. Previous rumblings of Sunni tribal disaffection with AQI in Anbar had been reversed by such counterattacks. Now, however, the rebel tribes approached American forces whose strength in Anbar and

Baghdad was growing, and whose mission was presence was strengthening with the arrival of the surge brigades in Sadr's home base of Baghdad, and those Americans were increasingly freed of the need to fight Sunnis by the growth of local ceasefires, posing an increasing threat to JAM military control in the capital.

Taken together, this created multiple perils for Muqtada al Sadr. In previous firefights with the Americans, he had sustained heavy losses but easily made them up with new recruits given his popularity. But Shiites' growing disaffection with his increasingly wayward militia, coupled with declining fear of Sunni attack, threatened his ability to make up losses with new recruitment. At the same time, tensions with other Shiite militias, especially the Badr Brigade in southern Iraq where JAM was weaker but where much of Iraq's oil wealth was concentrated, posed a threat from a different direction, and his weakening control over rogue elements created a danger of the organization gradually slipping out of his hands. When Shiites were unified by a mortal threat from Sunni attack and the Americans were tied down with insurgents and AQI, these internal problems could be managed and Sadr could afford to keep the JAM in the field and killing Sunnis and Americans. But as the Sunni threat waned, Shiite support weakened, the JAM splintered, and the Americans strengthened, Sadr's ability to tolerate a new battle with the U.S. Army was thus progressively diminished. Of course, Sadr is notoriously hard to read, and it is impossible to know exactly why he does what he does. But at least one plausible hypothesis is that the effect of Sunni ceasefires added to other mounting internal pressures to persuade Sadr that he had to stand down himself rather than taking another beating from the Americans. Hence the new circumstances drove the JAM, too, to observe a ceasefire.

The result was a major change in incentives for both the Sunni insurgency and the key Shiite militia. Of course, this decline in violence is still far from a nationwide ceasefire – hard fighting remains, especially in parts of Diyala, Salah ad Din, and Ninawa Provinces where AQI's remnants have taken refuge and where the CLC movement is still taking shape. But if the strategic logic described above holds, then there is at least a chance that the local ceasefires of January 2008 could continue to expand to cover the remaining holdouts. This does not mean sectarian harmony or brotherly affection in Iraq. But it does mean that cold, hard strategic reality increasingly makes acting on hatred too costly for most Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias – which has translated into a rapid spread of local ceasefires in accordance with the new interest calculus.

Yet this has not produced national reconciliation among Iraq's elected representatives in the capital. Why not?

In time it may. For now, however, the Maliki government's incentives differ from Muqtada al Sadr's. Sadr needs peace to avoid further deterioration in his internal position and to avert casualties he cannot replace in a costly battle with the Americans. Maliki, by contrast, is not fighting the Americans – the surge is no threat to him. On the contrary, U.S. reinforcements and weaker Sunni opposition reduce the cost of continued warfare for Maliki's ISF. For Maliki, moreover, peace is politically and militarily riskier than war. Reconciliation along American lines requires dangerous and politically painful compromises with rival Sunnis: oil revenue sharing with Sunni provinces, hiring of former Baathists, Anbari political empowerment, and other initiatives that Maliki's Shiite allies dislike, and which Maliki fears will merely strengthen his sectarian enemies changing to emphasize direct U.S. provision of population security through aggressive patrolling and persistent combat presence (as opposed to the previous mission of limiting U.S. exposure while training Iraqis to take over the fighting). After much initial wariness, the Americans decided to support this realignment and joined forces with the tribes against AQI in Anbar. With American firepower connected to Sunni tribal knowledge of who and where to strike, the ensuing campaign decimated AQI and led to their virtual eviction from Anbar Province. The result was a province-wide ceasefire under the auspices of the Anbar Awakening Council and the U.S. military.

This outcome provided a model for similar ceasefires elsewhere. Sunnis outside Anbar understood their Baghdad defeat's military implications at least as well as the western sheiks had. As the arrival of U.S. surge brigades and their extension of American security capabilities made it possible, more and more local Sunni leaders thus opted to stand down from combat against the Americans and to make common cause with them instead, enabling their new allies to hunt down



AQI operatives, safe houses, and bomb factories. The result was a powerful synergy: the prospect of U.S. security emboldened already-motivated Sunnis to realign with the U.S.; Sunni realignment as CLCs enhanced U.S. lethality against AQI; U.S. defeat of local AQI cells protected realigned Sunni CLCs; local CLC ceasefires with the Americans reduced U.S. casualties and freed U.S. forces to venture outward from Baghdad into the surrounding areas to keep AQI off-balance and on the run.

Ceasefires with Sunnis in turn facilitated ceasefires with key Shiite militias. These militias began largely as self-defense mechanisms to protect Shiite civilians from Sunni attack. But as Sunni insurgents ceased offensive operations and as AQI weakened, the need for such defenders waned and the JAM in particular found its support base among Shiite civilians weakening. This loss of support was exacerbated by the growing criminality of many militia members, who had exploited their supporters' dependency by preying on them with gangland control of key commodities such as cooking fuel and gasoline for economic extortion. Rising criminality in turn created fissiparous tendencies within the militias, as factions with their own income sources grew increasingly independent of the leadership and Sadr in particular. Meanwhile the American military militarily. A predominantly Sunni CLC movement adds to these fears. Sadr needs peace because war now risks his political status; Maliki, conversely, runs greater risks by compromising for peace than by standing fast and allowing the war to continue. Thus the Shiite government makes little progress toward peace even as Shiite militias stand down in ceasefires.

Worse, Maliki may have an incentive to overturn pledged ceasefires in order to seek political advantage against internal rivals. For most of his tenure, Maliki had been dependent on the Sadrist movement for his legislative majority. Recently, however, Maliki has realigned with Abdul Aziz al-Hakim's competing Shiite Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI). ISCI has been competing with Sadrists for control of the Shiite south, and especially the oil production and export centers around Basra and Um Qasr. ISCI now controls much of the local government and police there, but Sadrist gains among the region's dispossessed Shiite poor threaten this control, and the upcoming provincial elections scheduled for this fall could realign power in the south to Sadr's benefit and Hakim's disadvantage. Maliki now enjoys an unusual freedom of maneuver for his ISF by virtue of the combination of Sunni ceasefires and U.S. surge brigades. This offers him a potential window of opportunity to use the ISF to weaken Sadr in the south under the guise of suppressing illegal militias. By pressing an offensive against JAM elements in Basra now, Maliki has a chance to kill or arrest Sadrist gunmen who might otherwise be available to intimidate voters in the fall, arrest Sadrist officials, ransack Sadrist offices, and intimidate potential Sadrist voters. The ISF offensive in Basra that began on March 25 may well have sprung from such motives, though its apparent failure suggests that the government's ability to achieve such ends is very limited. Of course, events in Basra are ongoing and too little is yet known to establish with any confidence just what is happening or why; I discuss the possibilities in more detail in section IV below. But there is reason for concern that the Maliki government may now have less interest in ceasefire than its opponents do. If so, it is imperative that the United States act to prevent the government of Iraq from overturning ceasefires without being able to replace them with real security of its own (see section IV). And either way, the government has limited incentives to pursue costly, risky programs for national-level reconciliation via compromise.

This is not to deny any progress by the government. It has been distributing revenue to Sunni provinces even without a Hydrocarbon Law to require this. It recently passed a new de-Baathification law making it easier to hire Sunnis into some government jobs, and had been doing such hiring anyway even without a legal mandate. The result has been a modest degree of grudging movement toward compromise. Perhaps this will eventually produce an accommodation sufficient to resolve Iraq's communal differences politically.

But it is also entirely possible that the near to mid-term future could see a weak central government unable to monopolize violence, control its territory, or do much more than distribute oil revenue while the real dynamic of Iraqi security devolves to localities, where a patchwork quilt of local ceasefires in response to the shifting incentives of combatants in the field meanwhile produces an end to the fighting – for a time.

### III. What can be done?

This brings me to the second requirement needed for ceasefires to hold long enough to end communal civil wars. An outside party is typically needed to serve as a peacekeeper to enforce the deals.

This is because such deals are neither self-enforcing nor inherently stable. Even where peace is in the mutual self-interest of the majority on both sides, there will still be spoilers who will seek to overturn the ceasefire and renew the war. Rogue elements of Shiite militias, for example, profit from the fighting and will seek to restore the instability within which they flourish. And AQI has no interest whatever in stability. Though hurt badly and on the ropes in Iraq, AQI is not annihilated and even small numbers of committed terrorists can still bomb selected marketplaces or public gatherings. Such spoilers hope to catalyze wider violence by spurring the victims to take matters into their own hands and retaliate against the historical rivals that many will blame for such attacks. In an environment of wary, tentative, edgy peace between well-armed and distrustful former combatants, even a few such attacks can lead to an escalatory spiral that quickly returns the country to mass violence and destroys any chance of stability.

Alternatively, the central parties to the ceasefire may try to expand their area of control at the expense of neighboring CLCs or militia districts. Ambitious Sunnis with dreams of Baathist restoration may use the lull to build strength, probe their rivals for weakness, then launch a new offensive if they discover a vulnerability. Shiite militia leaders unsatisfied with a limited role in a weak government could push the limits of their accepted status at the expense of Sunnis or rival Shiite warlords.

In this context, outside peacekeepers play a crucial role in damping escalatory spirals and enforcing ceasefire terms. As long as the underlying strategic calculus favors peace, then an outside military presence allows victims of spoiler attacks to wait rather than retaliating – they can afford to delay and see whether the Americans will take action against the perpetrators rather than jumping to immediate violence themselves. This enables their historical rivals, in turn, to stand back from preempting them the first time a bombing takes place. The peacekeepers' ability to enable victims to wait and see thus reduces the virulence of the escalatory dynamic in the aftermath of the inevitable bombings and terrorist strikes.

Similarly, if CLC leaders and militia commanders know that a U.S. combat brigade is going to enter their district and arrest any leader whose followers violate the terms of the agreed ceasefire – and if the provision of biometric data and locating information for all CLC members means that the Americans know who the violators are and where to find them – then the underlying mutual interest in ceasefire is less likely to be tested. And if the victims of a rival's expansion know they can call on a U.S. combat brigade to penalize their assailants they will be less prone to retaliate themselves and incur the cost of unnecessary fighting and casualties to their own followers.

This is not war fighting. It does require troops who can fight if they have to. And some fighting would be needed, especially early on, to punish spoilers and ceasefire violators and thereby to discourage further violence. But success in this mission means that the parties quickly understand that continued wary tolerance suits their interests better than renewed warfare, making the foreigners' role one of maintaining a ceasefire rather than waging a war. Soldiers are needed – but the casualty toll of combat should not be.

Peacekeeping of this kind is, however, labor-intensive, long term, and would almost certainly have to be a U.S. undertaking, especially in the early years of a ceasefire. We are the only plausible candidate for this role for now – no one else is lining up to don a blue helmet and serve in a UN mission in Iraq. We are not widely loved by Iraqis; among the few things all Iraqi subcommunities now share is a dislike for the American occupation. Yet we are the only party to today's conflict that no other party sees as a threat of genocide – we may not be loved, but we are tolerated across Iraq today in a way that is unique among the parties. Nor are Iraqi attitudes toward Americans fixed or permanent: Sunni views of the U.S. role, for example, have changed dramatically in less than a year. Marine patrols in Falluja that would have been ambushed a year ago are now met with kids mugging for photos from Marines carrying lollipops along with their rifles. Of course, what goes up can come down; attitudes that change quickly for the better can change

just as quickly for the worse, and one should not misinterpret friendly words in English for real attitudes expressed only to intimates in Arabic. But it is at least possible nevertheless that the United States could play this role, whereas it is very unlikely that any internal party within Iraq could. And it is just as unlikely that any international actor other than the United States will agree to do so any time soon.

Whoever does this is going to have to do so for a long time: perhaps 20 years –until a new generation, which has not been scarred by the experience of sectarian bloodletting, rises to leadership age in Iraq. A U.S. role will clearly be important for at least part of this time, but it may not be necessary for the United States to do this alone the entire time. If 2-3 years of apparent stability makes it clear that the Iraq mission really has become peacekeeping rather than war fighting then it is entirely plausible that others might be willing to step in and lighten the American load, especially if they can do so under a UN or other multinational banner rather than a bilateral agreement with the United States or the government of Iraq. So we need not assume a 20-year U.S. responsibility alone. But a long term presence by outsiders of some kind will be needed. And it would be imprudent to assume that we can turn this over to others immediately. The number of troops required could be large. The social science of peacekeeping troop requirements is underdeveloped, but the common rules of thumb for troop adequacy in this role are similar to those used for counterinsurgency: around one capable combatant per 50 civilians. For a country the size of Iraq, that would mean an ideal force of around 500,000 peacekeepers – which is obviously impossible. But some such missions have been accomplished with much smaller forces. In Liberia, for example, 15,000 UN troops stabilized a ceasefire in a country of four million; in Sierra Leone, 20,000 UN troops sufficed in a country of 6 million. It would be a mistake to assume that such small forces can always succeed in a potentially very demanding mission; but it would also be a mistake to assume that because the United States cannot meet the rule-of-thumb troop count that the mission is hopeless.

Some now hope that lesser measures will suffice to stabilize Iraq's ceasefires. The U.S. leadership in Baghdad, for example, hopes that it can create a financial incentive for CLCs to behave by making them Iraqi government employees with the Maliki regime paying their salaries. The regime, however, is resisting this, and it is far from clear that Sunni CLC leaders would trust Maliki to pay them if the U.S. withdrew most of its troops. Nor would this solve the problem anyway: spoiler violence is inevitable even if the CLCs behave themselves, and without U.S. troops in sufficient force to respond effectively such attacks would be dangerously destabilizing.

Perhaps financial incentives alone will suffice all the same; certainly they would help. But to rely on them in the absence of a robust peacekeeping presence would be very risky. The strongest assumption is thus that more is better when it comes to the post-surge U.S. troop posture: the larger and the longer-term the peacekeeping presence, the greater the odds of success; the smaller and the shorter-term the presence, the weaker the odds. And this in turn means that if the United States reduces its troop levels in Iraq too quickly or too deeply, the result could be to endanger the stability prospects that have been bought at such cost in lives and treasure. We cannot afford to keep enough troops in Iraq to provide the ideal peacekeeping force. But to leave Iraq without an outside power to enforce the terms of the deals we have reached is to make it very likely that those deals will collapse in the face of inevitable spoiler violence, ambition, and fear. The right troop count depends on the technical details of just what the United States can sustain in Iraq given the demands of equipment repair, recapitalization, troop rest, retention, and recruitment. But the right number is the largest number that we can sustain given these constraints.

#### **IV. Overreaching for a Centralized Iraqi State**

This is clearly not an ideal prognosis. Americans want to bring the troops home, not maintain a peacekeeping mission of unknown duration and considerable cost in Iraq. It is widely hoped that a more effective Iraqi government with an improved security force can take the reins and enable American troops to withdraw. As the President once put it, as they stand up, perhaps we can stand down. To do this, however, would require a real monopoly of force and the ability to assert control over sub-state militias. The U.S. has in the past encouraged the Maliki government to do just this

– to use the ISF to suppress and ultimately disarm Iraq’s various militias, and especially the Shiite Jaish al Mahdi. For this reason, some Americans, including the President, applauded Maliki’s recent offensive against JAM elements in Basra and elsewhere. As I note above, this offensive is ongoing and its ramifications are as yet unclear. There are ways in which it could indeed enhance stability in Iraq. But it could also upset the system of ceasefires that largely produced the violence reductions of the last year. Even if well-intentioned, this offensive is a dangerous gamble. And it may not be well-intentioned. Either way, it illustrates the danger of over-reaching in pursuit of a strong, centralized Iraqi state that is unattainable for now.

The Administration and the Maliki government have described this offensive as aimed only at criminal, renegade elements of the JAM who have failed to observe Sadr’s announced ceasefire. If so, then this operation is nothing more than an extension of longstanding U.S. and Iraqi government efforts to crack down on “rogue JAM” cells that had broken away from Sadr’s control. These efforts have killed or captured large numbers of rogue cell leaders over the last year, and contribute to stability by eliminating factions unwilling to make peace, thereby rendering the JAM as a whole more amenable to a controlled ceasefire under Sadr’s command. Sadr has tacitly accepted such strikes in the past, as this actually benefits him as much as it does the U.S. or Maliki. And Sadr’s muted reaction to Maliki’s offensive suggests that he is, so far, interpreting it as aimed chiefly at rogue elements beyond his control: not only did Sadr not order the mainstream JAM to war, he recently ordered it explicitly to stand down from combat with the government or the Americans, effectively reinforcing his prior commitment to ceasefire. All of this is consistent with the notion of a limited offensive meant only to target rogue JAM in support of Sadr’s ceasefire.

It is also possible, however, that the Basra offensive’s motives may have been less pure or limited. As I noted above, the combination of upcoming provincial elections, Sunni ceasefires, and U.S. surge brigades created a potential incentive for the Maliki government to press a temporary advantage in order to weaken the mainstream Sadrist movement in Basra to the benefit of Maliki’s political allies in the competing ISCI bloc. If so, this would represent an empowered government unilaterally breaking a ceasefire with the JAM in order to exploit a window of opportunity for partisan internal political advantage.

If the ISF were actually strong enough to crush the whole JAM, such an offensive might offer an alternative route to stability in Iraq: a monopoly of force under the Maliki government. After all, the JAM has been Iraq’s strongest internal military force – it was largely the JAM that defeated the alliance of Sunni insurgents and AQI in the Battle of Baghdad. If the ISF could defeat the JAM, and if Maliki’s political interests now motivated him to fight them (which he had been unwilling to do heretofore), then perhaps the ISF would now be strong enough to beat Iraq’s other internal armies, too, and to centralize power accordingly.

But the evidence in Basra suggests otherwise. By all accounts, the ISF has been unable to defeat the JAM. After nearly a week of fighting, press accounts were reporting that less than a third of Basra was in ISF control. Even with Coalition air and artillery support and reinforcement by U.S. Special Forces teams on the ground, the ISF still proved unable to oust the JAM and secure the city. The ISF is apparently still not able to monopolize violence in Iraq – even with active Coalition support in the critical sector, and the passive support of 18 brigades of U.S. ground forces elsewhere to free ISF troops for offensive action in Basra. Stability under a strong central state is thus not forthcoming any time soon in Iraq.

Worse, a failed attempt to monopolize violence under Maliki could now have grave consequences for the entire country. Hopes for stability in Iraq today rest chiefly on the system of local ceasefires in which former combatants have voluntarily stopped shooting in exchange for a pledge that they will not be shot. But if the Maliki government is now seen as ignoring these deals and attacking piecemeal those who now observe them, starting with the JAM in Basra, then all such commitments will evaporate. Any faction who waits quietly until the ISF finishes off the others one by one before getting around to them is either foolish or suicidal; a truce that only one side observes will soon be observed by no one. The result would be a rapid return to the violent days of 2006 and early 2007 – but with declining U.S. troop levels, not increasing ones.



If we are to stabilize Iraq from the bottom up, via local ceasefires among willing factions, then we must be prepared to observe the terms ourselves and to compel the Iraqi government to do so, too. And that means accepting the continued existence and security of the local factions that agreed to stop fighting – unless they break the ceasefire terms themselves. To change the terms in the middle of the deal by trying to centralize power involuntarily over the objection of armed factions who cannot be destroyed at tolerable cost is to invite a return to mass violence as each strives to defend itself by attacking its neighbors once more. Bottom up stability and the pursuit of a powerful, centralized state by force of arms are thus incompatible.

We can and must strive to persuade Iraqi factions to join a unified Iraqi political process peacefully. In the long run this process may succeed. But if we try to short cut a glacial process of peaceful accommodation by disarming militias involuntarily in the meantime – or if we permit an Iraqi government to try this itself for whatever motives it may hold – the result could be a return to mass violence with neither bottom up nor top down reconciliation in the offing.

### **Conclusions and implications**

Iraq's system of local ceasefires may thus offer an opportunity to stabilize the country and avert the downside risks of failure for the region and for U.S. interests. To realize this opportunity will not be cheap or easy. And it will not produce the kind of Iraq we had hoped for in 2003. A country stabilized via the means described above would hardly be a strong, internally unified, Jeffersonian democracy that could serve as a beacon of democracy in the region. Iraq would be a patchwork quilt of uneasy local ceasefires, with Sunni CLCs, Shiite CLCs, and Shiite militia governance adjoining one another in small, irregularly shaped districts; with most essential services provided locally by trusted co-religionists rather than by a weak central government whose functions could be limited to the distribution of oil revenue; and with a continuing need for outside peacekeepers to police the terms of the ceasefires, ensure against the resumption of mass violence, and deter interference from neighbors in a weak Iraqi state for many years to come.

Moreover there are many ways in which such a peace could fail even if the United States and the key Iraqi factions play the roles described above. Long term peacekeeping missions sometimes succeed, but peacekeepers can also become occupiers in the eyes of the population around them. If the U.S. presence is not offset or replaced in time by other tolerable alternatives under a UN or other multinational banner, nationalist resistance to foreign occupation could beget a new insurgency and a war of a different kind. If spoiler violence or early challenges to the peacekeepers' authority are not met forcefully and effectively, then the volume of challenges could overwhelm the availability of enforcement and the effort could collapse into renewed warfare. If ongoing operations do not keep AQI from regrouping, or if today's growth of negotiated ceasefires does not ultimately spread through the remainder of Iraq, then the U.S. mission could remain that of war fighting without any peace to keep. If Sadr eventually loses patience with the Maliki government's offensive in Basra, or if he loses control of enough of the JAM splinter groups now under assault, then today's entire system of local ceasefires could unravel. There are no guarantees in Iraq. And given the costs and the risks of pursuing stability, a case can still be made for cutting our losses now and withdrawing all U.S. forces as soon as it is logistically practical.

But none of the options are cost or risk-free in Iraq, including withdrawal. A U.S. departure from an unstable Iraq risks an escalation in violence, the prospect of regional intervention, and a much wider war engulfing the heart of the Mideast's oil production – any responsible proposal for troop withdrawals in Iraq must contend with their risks, which are substantial. All U.S. options in Iraq thus remain unattractive.

But we must choose one all the same. And the case for cutting our losses in Iraq is weaker today than it was a year ago. The rapid spread of negotiated ceasefires and the associated decline in violence since then has improved the case for remaining in Iraq and paying the price needed to maximize our odds of stability. It will not be cheap, and it is hardly risk-free. But in exchange for these costs and risks we now have a better chance for stability – not a guarantee, but a better chance – than we have seen for a long time.

Elsewhere

## Hizbollah's public diplomacy

by Dr. Lina Khatib

**S**INCE THE INVASION OF IRAQ FIVE YEARS AGO, the notion of public diplomacy has come to invoke a certain discourse—focused on actions by the United States—that de-privileges political actors in the Middle East from this “Western” mode of operation. However, not only are states in the Middle East engaging in public diplomacy (Iran and Qatar being two examples); non-state political groups are also stepping up activities that only differ from those usually described as public diplomacy efforts by not having been initiated by a recognized state. Hizbollah in Lebanon is a prime example.

Hizbollah has had a dedicated media bureau almost since its inception. Throughout its existence, it has consistently used the latest technologies in its communication strategies (from cassette tapes in the 1980s to all forms of mediated visual and oral communication today). Following its war with Israel in 2006, it employed a public relations company to design its “Divine Victory” campaign. Its communication strategies are aimed at diverse audiences both in Lebanon and the Arab world. It is curious that several of its activities mirror United States’ public diplomacy ones: Both have made efforts to engage with Arab populations through educational, social and reconstruction programs. Both use the media as a mouthpiece in addressing Arab audiences: The United States has al-Hurra television and Radio Sawa; Hizbollah has al-Manar television and al-Nour radio.

Hizbollah’s communication strategies have largely been successful as they have enabled the group to sustain its presence as a key political player in the region. Part of this success is due to its choosing messages—whether visual (posters), rhetorical (speeches) or practical (social programs)—that resonate with its audiences. Another factor is that its messages are constantly evolving, changing in line with the political context, and consequently allowing the group to adapt its public image accordingly.

Starting in 1982 as an Islamist militia calling for the establishment of an Islamic state, Hizbollah soon presented itself as anti-Israeli resistance movement, first on the Lebanese and then the Arab scales, and later transformed into a key participant in Lebanese politics. In doing so, it has declared itself initially to be an Islamic group, then a resistance group, and later a national group. Since the 2006 war, Hizbollah has widened its network of audiences and developed itself as a heroic brand across the Arab world. The importance of this brand is that it has merged and streamlined Hizbollah’s different political transformations to lend the group credibility.

Examining Hizbollah’s communication strategies through the prism of public diplomacy reveals sophisticated processes in creating an image of the group that matches evolving political contexts, and in using a variety of methods to communicate this image to an audience outside one’s own. But perhaps most importantly, it reveals a fine balance between political adaptability and reliability, which in turn generates trust. This formula is perhaps the hardest to crack by anyone involved in public diplomacy efforts.



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## Has the season come?

by Mete Hatay

**W**HETHER IT IS DUE TO GLOBAL WARMING or this year's drought, spring arrived in Cyprus earlier than expected. Many of the newspapers, despite the dread of dry months ahead, did not mind using this early spring as a metaphor for the new possibilities opened up by the recent elections in the southern part of the island. The defeat of former president Tassos Papadopoulos in the first round of elections and the victory of communist leader Dimitris Christofias in the second round reminded many observers of five years earlier, when Turkish Cypriots had rebelled against their own hardline nationalist leaders. That rebellion had changed the parameters of politics on the island; it is now hoped by many that this early "spring" will do the same.

The "spring" that the current changes reference was set to song during the so-called Jasmine Revolution, which began in late 2002 with the deliberate or accidental leakage of a new and comprehensive United Nations proposal to reunite the island. "Finally the Season Has Come" became the anthem of a movement motivated by the announcement of what came to be known as the Annan Plan, the first really tangible hope for reunification since the island's division in 1974. The plan proposed a new state of affairs based on a bizonal, bicomunal federation and the political equality of both communities. It was the final product of three long decades of negotiations, yet immediately after its announcement, long-time Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş rejected it outright. In response, many Turkish Cypriots flooded the streets of the northern part of the island with a demand for the continuation of negotiations based on the plan.

For Turkish Cypriots, there were both sticks and carrots propelling them to protest. The collapse of the north's banking system and a severe economic crisis in Turkey at the turn of the millennium capped thirty long years in which the north and its inhabitants had been isolated in every way from the rest of the world. But by the time of the Annan Plan's announcement, young people were already using the internet to access the world in new ways, while many were ambitious to take advantage of the Republic of Cyprus' promise of European Union admission and become part of Europe. Businesspeople were beginning to see the economic necessity of becoming part of a wider market, while consumers desired the products of a global economy. In addition, Turkey's eagerness to join the EU, and its rapprochement with Greece, made it clear that Turkish Cypriots, heavily dependent on Turkey, would have a hard time sustaining their break-away mini-state.

The result of Turkish Cypriots' protests was a thaw in thirty years of frozen relations. The rebellion forced the separatist administration in the north to open the checkpoints that divide the island and which had remained closed for almost three decades. The checkpoints' opening



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destroyed many of the nationalist myths claiming that Greek and Turkish Cypriots could not live together, and it created a new state of political affairs. The rebellion also later paved the way for pro-peace forces, and especially the socialist Republican Turkish Party (CTP), to take over all administrative posts in the north in the ensuing couple of years. One of the immediate victories of the rebellion was the eviction of Rauf Denktaş from the position of main negotiator in upcoming negotiations. Ironically, this victory was accomplished with the aid of a new, more conciliatory, government in Turkey.

But while many people hoped that this thaw would lead to the flowering of spring, a cold wind was already blowing over the island with the election by Greek Cypriots of a staunch nationalist leader, Tassos Papadopoulos, as president of the Republic and the new negotiator for the south. Again there was an irony, in that Papadopoulos was elected with the support of communist party AKEL, which had long supported a federal solution to the island's division. Although AKEL and party propagandists tried to convince the public that Papadopoulos had changed and desired a federal solution, his attitude during negotiations and subsequent outright rejection of the plan suggested otherwise. When the Annan Plan went to referendum in April 2004, Turkish Cypriots' pro-peace movement achieved a solid victory with 65% of the vote, while Greek Cypriots followed their negotiator and brought an end to the efforts of the United Nations, rejecting the plan by an overwhelming 76%. Even more disappointing than the overall "no" vote of Greek Cypriots was AKEL's decision to reject the plan, joining forces with Papadopoulos in a move that disappointed many Turkish Cypriots. They ridiculed Christofias when he tried to justify AKEL's decision by suggesting that their 'no' vote was, in his words, "intended to cement a 'yes'" in the future.

Following the referenda, the spring mood was immediately replaced by the cold politics of non-solution and the continuation of the frozen conflict. Only one week after the Annan Plan's failure, the stalemate gained a new dimension when the Greek Cypriot-controlled Republic of Cyprus entered the EU as a full member representing the whole of Cyprus but having no control over its northern part. Moreover, Turkish Cypriots and Turkey tried to capitalize on their "yes" vote by demanding that all international isolations exercised on the northern part of the island be lifted. In the meantime, Greek Cypriots utilized their EU membership to impede Turkey's EU accession process and continuously created obstacles for Turkey and Turkish Cypriots in Brussels's corridors.

Cypriot politics soon entered a deep freeze characterized by a rhetoric of blame. Turkish Cypriots blamed the government in the south for not creating any space for reconciliation activities and for rejecting EU proposals to ease the economic situation of the north, such as opening the north to direct trade. In reply, the Greek Cypriot president and his government launched a campaign to demonize the Annan Plan as an Anglo-American plot intended to assist Turkey in its attempt to legitimate its 1974 military offensive in Cyprus and continuing presence in the island.

The freeze was most deeply felt, however, at the level of the citizen and intercommunal relations. Although the opening of the checkpoints had brought increased interaction, the post-referendum period was one of increasing polarization amongst the ordinary people of Cyprus. The number of crossings to the "other side" dropped drastically. While Turkish Cypriots were disappointed by the 'no' vote of the south, Greek Cypriots were angered by a massive construction boom on their properties in the north. Nationalism was on the rise in both sides of the island, and the peace warriors who had stepped forward prior to the referendum were dispirited and exhausted. Many of those who had worked in support of the plan were convinced that they had lost "their last chance," and Turkish Cypriots were especially disheartened that it had been destroyed by AKEL, their most trusted comrades in the south.

It should be understandable, then, that AKEL's win in the south was met with skepticism in the north, even as many people dared to ask, "Has the season finally come?" AKEL was part of the same Papadopoulos government that, over the past few years, saw its status in the EU decline as it used its membership to block Turkey and any EU initiatives in the north. Many Turkish Cypriots had begun to feel that the status quo—a "cold peace" situation—might not be such an unacceptable position, after all. And what many saw as the looming partition of the island was brought home more squarely by Kosovo's declaration of independence. This declaration, coming immediately before the election in the south, no doubt swayed many undecided voters who saw that

Papadopoulos' politics were destined to hit a dead end at the wall of partition.

In this very dry spring, Christofias brought a few drops of hope when he filled his cabinet with moderates, met with Turkish Cypriot president Mehmet Ali Talat, and announced that the wall dividing Ledra Street, an important artery through the center of Nicosia, would be opened. Even though Christofias continues rhetorically to reject the Annan Plan and claims that the new plan will be a "Cypriot plan," he does not dismiss the body of work that was the basis for the Annan Plan. Christofias has asked that the international community keep its distance, which it so far has done. But in doing so, Christofias has also created greater pressure internally, since he has few scapegoats left if negotiations fail.

A few drops of rain do not a spring make, and just as they are anxiously watching the skies, so Cypriots are anxiously waiting to see what the next months will bring. The beginning of negotiations is scheduled for June, by which time technical committees filled with technocrats from both sides of the island presumably will have hammered out many of the tricky details of creating a federal government and ensuring the rights of that new government's citizens. Although hope is in the air, Cypriots' hopes have also dried out many times before. If drought is this year's environmental destiny, let's hope that it's not also its political one.



## Syria playing role in destabilizing region

An interview with Prof. Barry Rubin

**Q:** International Affairs Forum: Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell said that internal Hezbollah groups or Syria may be to blame for the killing of Hezbollah commander Imad Mughniyeh. Your thoughts?

**A:** Professor Barry Rubin: His statement has been widely misinterpreted. What he actually said was that the United States did not know who did it. If it spreads distrust between Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria, that is not a bad thing. But I don't believe the Syrians did it. For one thing, Mugniyah was too important, he was a key liaison between the three allies, he was Iran's man. And for another, if the Syrians had done it they would have told the United States so, in order to claim some reward. So I just don't believe Damascus was responsible.

**Hezbollah leader Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah promised “open war” against Israel outside the “natural battlefield” of Lebanon in response to the assassination. If Hezbollah does strike Israel with assistance from Syria and Iran, what do you think Israel's response will be towards them?**

It depends what they do, but people in the West often have trouble grasping a very simple fact: Hezbollah tries to carry out the maximum terrorism at all times. They don't need a special incentive. Also note the importance of this statement as Hezbollah, and various Western “experts,” have constantly denied that Hezbollah engages in international terrorism. Of course they do, and Mugniyah was a key figure in that apparatus.

**To what degree has the Assad regime in Syria been instrumental to the instability of the Middle East? Why isn't there more external pressure for Syria to cease its actions?**

To a huge extent. I cover this in detail in my book, ‘The Truth About Syria’ (Palgrave-Macmillan). Briefly, they are the key sponsor of insurgency in Iraq (and note that this means they are working with Al-Qaida there), the main sponsor of Palestinian terrorism by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and the main sponsor of unrest in Lebanon through Hezbollah and assassinations. To a lesser extent, they are probably involved in trying to subvert Jordan.

As to the lack of pressure, there are the usual reasons—a belief that appeasement will work, a reluctance to take risks or expend assets, and so on. The Syrians, helped by foolish or bad-



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intentioned people in the West, have been masterly at pretending to be moderate in order to counter pressures. Members of the U.S. Congress, European officials, and others constantly rush to Damascus and argue against pressure. Barack Obama has already signalled that if he is elected president he will reduce the pressures. The Syrians are waiting for the next president to make concessions to them and meanwhile will continue all their radical and subversive activities.

**The potential of nuclear proliferation in Iran is a continuing issue. What are your thoughts on the existence of nuclear weapons development?**

It is an enormous threat as I have discussed especially in an article in MERIA Journal, Iran's Nuclear and Syria's Iraq Adventures," <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2007/issue4/jv11no4a5.asp> and more briefly in the "Middle East's Nuclear Dark Age," [http://www.gloriacenter.org/index.asp?pname=submenu/articles/2007/rubin/11\\_11.asp](http://www.gloriacenter.org/index.asp?pname=submenu/articles/2007/rubin/11_11.asp).

The key problem is that even if Iran does not use the weapons in a military way—by firing them at Israel or at U.S.-related targets—it will gain an enormous, actually much larger, advantage by using them for strategic leverage. No Arab or Western state is going to cross an Iranian regime that has nuclear weapons. Radical Islamist groups, especially pro-Iranian ones, will have a huge increase in membership. U.S. options will be restricted. Iranian influence in Iraq will skyrocket.

In short, it will be disastrous, even apart from any effect on Israeli security, and will usher in a whole new era in the region.

**What are Iran and Syria's intentions in the region?**

Iran wishes to become the hegemonic country in the region as a whole and especially in the Persian Gulf. It also wishes to spread pro-Iranian Islamist groups and revolutions. This does not mean Iran is going to invade any other country. It doesn't have to because indirect methods are working pretty well. Such a situation will also give Iran relative control over oil prices which it wants—and needs—to keep high.

Syria wishes to become the dominant Arab state, with control over Lebanon and the Palestinian movement along with influence in Iraq, and to some extent in Jordan. In the Syrian case, there is more of a "defensive" component since the regime's first goal is to maintain its support at home, which it does by portraying itself as simultaneously ferociously Arab nationalist and pro-Islamist.

It should be noted that both Iran and Syria want to achieve these gains without any serious costs, that is by neutralizing Western opposition. For them, "engagement" with the West is that the West gives them what they want and they make no concessions. They think that is a realistic goal and it is possible they are right.

**What effect, if any, has America's war in Iraq and its presence there had on the Israeli-Palestinian situation? And Iran's agenda in the Middle East?**

If you're referring directly to Iraq, I think it is clear—if we sweep away all the statements made without evidence or analytical logic—that it has had little or no impact on Israeli-Palestinian issues.

Regarding Iran's agenda, it has had no effect on Tehran's policy but of course has opened the door for more Iranian influence in Iraq, though whether this would be enough to turn Iraq into an Iranian satellite eventually is still quite an open question. Without making any judgment on the rights or wrongs of a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, one can say analytically that this prospect is making Gulf Arab states feel nervous and driving them toward appeasing Iran.

**What do you think the prospects are for continued peace talks between Israel and Palestine?**

The prospects for continued peace talks are great. The prospects for reaching any serious or actual agreement is zero.





Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which went into effect in May 1947, states:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

“In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

On July 26, the Japanese Diet passed the Special Measures Bill for Iraq, enabling the Japanese Government, including the Self Defense Forces (SDF) “to contribute to the international efforts in humanitarian assistance to Iraqi people, reconstruction of Iraq, and ensuring security in Iraq.”

The dispatch, which followed that of the Maritime Self Defense in December 2001 for refueling operations in the Indian Ocean in support of counter-terrorism action in Afghanistan, has prompted debate in Japan over the nation’s right to engage in such activities. Prof. Tomohito Shinoda, author of “Koizumi Diplomacy: Japan’s Kantei Approach to Foreign and Defense Affairs,” explains the background to the recent controversy over the Self Defense dispatches and the implications for Japanese forces in the future.

## The view from Japan

by Tomohito Shinoda



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**I**N THE FALL 2007 DIET SESSION, the legislation to continue the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) refueling operations to support maritime inspections in the Indian Ocean became a major political issue. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s sudden resignation made it logistically impossible to extend the existing Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law by the expiration date of Nov. 1. The administration of current Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda introduced new legislation which would limit the SDF activities to the refueling operations.

Main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Ichiro Ozawa publicly announced his opposition to the legislation. Ozawa argues that Japan’s personnel contribution to international security should be only made with authorization of the United Nations. Instead, he proposed an alternative idea to promote Japan’s participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) on the soil of Afghanistan which had been formed by the United Nations. Because of the strong opposition from the DPJ, the Fukuda cabinet used the rarely-used constitutional rule (Article 59) to pass the legislation with a two-third majority in the lower house in order to override the rejection by the upper house.

The debate on the new Anti-terrorism Legislation involved two somewhat separate issues. One was whether the Maritime Self-Defense Forces (SDF) mission in the Indian Ocean for anti-terrorism activities should be continued or not. The other issue was how Japan should contribute to international security and peace.

As for the first issue, Japan's refueling mission in the region had been highly appreciated by the international community. Refueling operations were essential to support maritime inspections to prevent the inflow and outflow of terrorists, their weapons and other materials such as narcotics from and to Afghanistan.

Among four supply ships operating in the Indian Ocean, Japan's SDF vessel was the only one which provides fuel and water "for free." By taking advantage of Japan's service, Pakistan participated in anti-terrorism activities in and around Afghanistan. Pakistan's participation was symbolically important to demonstrate a broad international support against terrorism as it was the only Islamic country participating in the mission.

Furthermore, Japan's support for U.S.-led anti-terrorism activities helped to strengthen the Japan-U.S. alliance. Under the uncertain conditions in East Asia including the North Korean nuclear problem and China's military expansion, strengthening the alliance with the United States is the only realistic choice for Japan's future security.

The second question is more important. Although the new anti-terrorism legislation was enacted, it will be very difficult to extend it when it expires in one year. Japan should show how it will join international partners to fight against terror.

When the Defense Agency was upgraded to the Ministry in December, 2006, the SDF Law was revised to add the maintenance of international peace and security to the list of its main activities. However, there is only one permanent law in this area: the 1992 PKO Cooperation Law which allows SDF participation in UN-led peacekeeping operations.

The Defense Ministry is now preparing new permanent legislation which would enable Japan to dispatch the SDF overseas anytime for other overseas missions. The enactment of such legislation will certainly take much time and discussion in the Diet, and will be politically difficult especially with the DPJ's ongoing attack on the Defense Ministry over the collision between the SDF Aegis destroyer and a fishing vessel. However, Japan should do its best to introduce a permanent legal framework for its contribution in order to show its attitude on maintaining international peace and security.

