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ISRAELI – PALESTINIAN ISSUES

Death on the Beach

Time

By Phil Zabriskie

6/26

The explosion happened in an instant. Late in the afternoon of June 9, on a beach in Beit Lahiya, a blast of heat and shrapnel killed seven members of a family who had gathered there for a picnic: Ali Ghaliya, five of his children and his second wife. His first wife and four more of his children were wounded, as were dozens of other people. A Ramattan News Agency cameraman rode to the scene with an ambulance. After arriving, he filmed Huda Ghaliya, 10, stumbling through the carnage, wailing and beating her chest, calling out for her dead father.

Within days, that searing image was published around the world, becoming a touchstone for the wider conflict between Israel and the Palestinians--and setting off a rancorous dispute about who is responsible for the deaths in Huda's family. In the immediate aftermath of the blast, Palestinians blamed the deaths on an Israeli shell, and Izzadine al-Qassam, the military wing of Hamas, the Palestinian Authority's ruling party, abandoned a 16-month cease-fire with Israel. In the ensuing series of reprisals, rockets fired into Israel by Palestinian militants injured one Israeli civilian, and an Israeli air strike killed 11 people, including two militants.

Yet even as the violence escalated, the truth about what happened on June 9 remains elusive. Israeli officials initially expressed sorrow over the incident and halted shelling in the area pending an internal investigation of the incident. But last week the Israelis revealed that a probe led by Major General Meir Kalifi has absolved Israel of blame. According to Kalifi, the Israel Defense Forces (I.D.F.), on the basis of aerial surveillance, have fixed the time of the explosion at between 4:57 p.m. and 5:10 p.m. In response to Qassam rocket attacks by Palestinian militants, the I.D.F. fired six artillery shells toward the beach from 4:32 to 4:51, which would make it almost impossible for one of them to have caused the explosion. The report also found that a piece of shrapnel taken from the body of one of the wounded, who was being treated at an Israeli hospital, did not match the 155-mm shells the I.D.F. use. "I state clearly that we still regret the incident," says I.D.F.'s chief of staff, Lieut. General Dan Halutz, "but we are not responsible for it."

Then who is? Kalifi speculated that unexploded ordnance fired at an earlier date might have caused the blast but that it was more likely to have been caused by an explosive device manufactured by Palestinian militants and planted at the beach. That hypothesis is disputed by investigators from Human Rights Watch (HRW) who arrived at the scene the day after the incident. According to the organization, witnesses say Ali Ghaliya gathered his family to leave the beach after the first shells hit, to the north. Two survivors told HRW they heard the sound of an incoming projectile and saw a blur of motion in the sky before the explosion. Computerized hospital records show the first patients were admitted at 5:05 p.m.--which, given the time it takes for an ambulance to drive to and from the scene, suggests that the explosion might have occurred during the time the I.D.F. acknowledge they were shelling.

Investigators also discovered shrapnel and pieces of a copper ring that they identified as fragments of a 155-mm artillery shell. HRW senior military analyst Marc Garlasco, a former official at the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, says, "It's absolutely clear to me that this has to be from a 155 shell." And while it's possible that the shell was planted, the preponderance of head and torso wounds rather than lower-body injuries casts doubt on the theory that the blast came from the ground.

So who is right? The Israeli government is unlikely to reopen the probe or permit another team of independent investigators to examine the evidence. Defenders of the army's practice of shelling Palestinian targets in response to rocket attacks say responsibility for civilian deaths lies with Palestinians who refuse to prevent violence against Israel. But, as other Israelis point out, shelling a densely populated region with imprecise munitions cannot help putting civilians at risk. Huda Ghaliya now lives with her mother and a brother who survived the blast. "She has a masked face, no emotions," says Eyad Sarraj, founder of the Gaza Community Mental Health Clinic. "She will never forget."

The Gangs of Gaza

Newsweek

By Kevin Peraino

6/26

At first, the threats trickling in to the Palestinian intelligence headquarters in Gaza seemed like childish pranks. Operatives chuckled about a Hamas-run Web site featuring a caricature of their boss, intel chief Tareq Abu Rajab: the Islamists had digitally grafted an image of a dog's head onto the Fatah loyalist's body. But then intelligence agents eavesdropping on a Hamas radio frequency intercepted a transmission that seemed deadly serious. "On Friday," a voice crackled in Arabic, "the dog will die."

Abu Rajab's security detail kept the boss away from the office that Friday. But the next morning, May 20, the intel chief stepped into his private elevator and punched the button for the fourth floor. A moment after the doors clamped shut, at 10:10 a.m., a bomb blast ripped a hole in the elevator's steel doors, spewing fire and a dense cloud of ash into the hallway. Choking on the stench of burning hair, Haitham Hamid, one of Abu Rajab's bodyguards, crawled toward the elevator. He discovered the corpse of another bodyguard dangling from his ankles in the shaft. Abu Rajab himself had survived the explosion, tumbling down the well to the ground floor, where he was injured but somehow still alive. As a convoy later rushed Abu Rajab to the hospital, Hamid glimpsed a blur of bearded militants spraying the cars with gunfire. "I knew immediately," Hamid later recalled to NEWSWEEK, "this could only be Hamas."

Abu Rajab is still recovering in a Cairo hospital. But in the month since the bombing, the conflict between Fatah security officials like Abu Rajab and their Islamist antagonists in Hamas has grown increasingly bloody. More than two dozen security personnel have been killed in civil violence over the past month, and last week the International Crisis Group issued a dire report predicting that Gaza is one step from "all-out chaos." If assassins succeed in killing even one high-ranking political figure, then "you'll be able to hear the bullets in the States," says a senior Palestinian intelligence official, who requested anonymity in order to avoid becoming a target himself.

Israeli officials have left little doubt about which side they back. Israel's goal is "to topple [Hamas], to bring about regime change," according to a senior Israeli security source, who requested anonymity in order to keep his job. Last week Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced that he had approved the shipment of small arms--reportedly hundreds of American-made M-16 rifles--from Jordan to President Mahmoud Abbas's Force 17 guards. Reuters reported that Abbas's guards had also received four new armored vehicles, worth roughly \$100,000 each. (Abbas aides deny receiving any weapons or vehicles.) "We want to strengthen Abu Mazen so that he will be able to cope with Hamas," Olmert told reporters in London. "We are running out of time."

Yet at least some Israeli officials worry that war preparations sometimes develop a ruthless logic of their own. Once unleashed, chaos is hard to rein in. "If Hamas falls, who exactly is going to take over?" asks the Israeli security official. Publicly endorsing arms shipments to Abbas only reinforces the view that Fatah politicians are corrupt tools of Israeli masters--one of the issues that brought Hamas to power in the first place. "We have to be very careful ... not to present [Abbas] as an Israeli collaborator," says Ami Ayalon, a former director of Israel's Shin Bet intelligence agency. Talking openly about arms shipments is a "huge mistake," he says. "I do not understand this logic."

Fatah and Hamas are still engaged in talks to avert a civil war and reach an agreement on how to deal with Israel on terms that will satisfy the international community. Popular sentiment is behind that process, and many in Gaza believe that tribal and family ties will help prevent a full-blown conflagration. Khaled Abu Hilal, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry, insists that "every family has members of both Fatah and Hamas." Yet Abu Hilal also keeps a 9mm Smith & Wesson in his desk drawer--just in case. And a Palestinian arms dealer in Ramallah, who wished to remain anonymous as he offered to sell NEWSWEEK an unsolicited MP5 submachine gun, says that the price of a U.S.-made M-16 on the black market has doubled, from \$5,000 to \$10,000, since Hamas took power. "Hamas is buying like crazy," the dealer says.

Both sides have been beefing up their militias and making other preparations. NEWSWEEK has learned that Abu Rajab's intelligence directorate has begun training 500 elite new troops recruited from the ranks of Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, a militia loyal to Fatah. The Gaza-based security unit, known as the secret-police "executive force," will be tasked with protecting the organization's leaders, as well as

gathering intelligence, according to three Palestinian intel sources who didn't want to be identified discussing operations.

The current conflict began in earnest just one week after the new Hamas government took power in late March. Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh had tapped Hamas loyalist Said Sayam to be the Palestinian Authority's Interior minister, technically in command of the PA's best security forces. But just a week later, on April 6, Abbas appointed his own man, Rashid Abu Shbak, to the newly created position of "director of internal security"--essentially making him a shadow Interior minister. Hamas responded by deploying its own militia in Gaza, which quickly began clashing with Abu Shbak's Preventive Security forces.

Assassins came for Abu Shbak the morning after the failed attempt on Abu Rajab at intelligence headquarters. It wasn't the first time somebody had tried to kill Abu Shbak, but "I never get used to it," he told NEWSWEEK later, as he sat slumped in a big leather chair in his Gaza City office. The window shades were tightly drawn, presumably to blind the same would-be assassin who buried a massive roadside bomb beneath a mound of sand near the end of Abu Shbak's driveway on May 21. This time the security chief's bodyguards discovered and defused the device before his attacker could trigger a remote detonator. But the determination of this latest stalker had Abu Shbak on edge. The 150-pound charge was "enough to blow up a tank," he said.

Abu Shbak may not like being a target, but his Preventive Security men are well known for using hardball tactics, too. A squad of Preventive Security troopers who harass people in Gaza has become known popularly as the "death squad." Hamas members believe the unit was formed specifically to crack down on them. Twenty-year-old Salah Gdeih, a member of Hamas's Izzedine al-Qassam militia, says he was walking with fellow militants last month in the Gaza neighborhood of Khan Younis when 10 masked men jumped him. They put a black bag over his head, stuffed him and his cousin Salem into the trunk of a car, and drove off. Once the car reached a secluded grove, the kidnappers, whom Gdeih believes were members of Preventive Security, forced him to lie on his stomach. Then they beat him with pipes, hammers and a thick hose. "They were hitting me and cursing at the same time," Gdeih later recalled at his home in a Khan Younis refugee camp. The men then broke his cousin Salem's jaw before they shot him dead.

By the time Gdeih finished telling his story to a NEWSWEEK reporter, a crowd of several dozen relatives had gathered to listen. A discussion broke out about Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi, killed that morning in Iraq. The family patriarch, 58-year-old Abdullah Gdeih, denounced the Qaeda leader, criticizing the terrorist for killing fellow Muslims. But then a younger man poked his head into the room. Twenty-three-year-old Fadi Gdeih said he disagreed with the older man. "We need somebody like that here," Fadi said of Zarqawi. "Somebody who slits throats." There are some who think that a Hamas-led government is as bad as it gets. They might want to think again.

Superimposing a Solution

Foreign Policy

By Mathias Mossberg

6/27

What if Israelis and Palestinians forgot about borders and security fences? What if the long and bloody road to creating a two-state solution was abandoned in favor of a new concept of statehood? It's called a "dual state," and it's more realistic than you may think.

For more than half a century, Israelis and Palestinians have been fighting over the same tracts of earth. Numerous proposals for dividing the land have come and gone, and none has proved workable. Israel's most recent effort to end the territorial stalemate by pulling out of Gaza and dismantling some of the West Bank settlements has drawn criticism for being too little, too late. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has outlined plans to finalize the country's boundaries by 2010, but as long as the Palestinians demand a return to the 1967 borders, few expect the deadlock to be resolved. With Hamas unlikely to meet conditions for talks and the controversial Israeli security barrier still under construction, a peaceful and mutually agreed-upon two-state solution remains elusive.

But in today's world, control of geographic territory doesn't mean as much as it once did. Statehood has become less about territory, and more about access to markets, technology, and the rule of law.

What if the Israelis and Palestinians were able to separate somehow the concepts of statehood and territory and explore new ways of living together? What if both peoples were given the right—at least in principle—to settle in the whole area between the Mediterranean and Jordan?

I'll admit that it might not be the easiest thing to imagine. When we think about states, we naturally think about borders—real, specific, definable borders that you can plot on a map. What I have in mind is utterly different, and no doubt somewhat far-fetched. (That said, given the failure of all the “realistic” solutions of the past 50 years, forgive me for suggesting it may be time to consider other possibilities.)

You might call it a “dual state.” Instead of the familiar formula in which two states exist side by side, Israel and Palestine would be two states superimposed on top of one another. Citizens could freely choose which system to belong to. Their citizenship would be bound not to territory, but to choice. The Israeli state would remain a homeland for Jews, and at the same time, become a place in which Palestinians were able to live freely.

This basic administrative structure has worked elsewhere, for example, in the cantons of Switzerland. There, people of different origins and beliefs, speaking different languages and with different allegiances, live together side by side. In the Israel-Palestine dual state, smaller territorial units could be given the right to choose which state to belong to, based on a majority vote. At the same time, individuals will be able to choose citizenship for themselves, regardless of where they live. A person living in a canton that has opted to belong to Palestine could continue to be a citizen of Israel and vice versa.

An Israeli and a Palestinian living side by side in, say, an Israeli-administered area would share many of the same rights and live by many of the same laws. They would both be free to move about within the area now occupied by Israel and the territories. They would share a common currency, participate in the same labor market, and contribute common taxes for a number of shared services. Civil disputes could be settled by independently appointed arbitrators. Parents would be free to send children to the schools of their choice, and government funding for education could be allocated on a proportional basis. Neighbors would vote for separate leaders in separate elections, but these elected representatives would harmonize legislation on a number of matters, such as traffic laws, taxation, and criminal law.

There would be no need for security fences or barriers, no need for corridors or safe passages, and no need for checkpoints. A joint defense force could secure the borders, and a joint customs service could ensure one economic space. Both states could keep their national symbols, their governments, and their foreign representation. Local affairs would be dealt with by canton administrators on a majority basis, while individual human rights and freedoms could be guaranteed by the two states in cooperation.

It is not difficult to imagine a Jewish-majority area consisting largely of present-day Israel, plus a number of major settlements. That area would be under Israeli jurisdiction but remain open to Palestinians who wish to live under Palestinian jurisdiction. Similarly, one can imagine a core Palestinian area, consisting of the West Bank and Gaza, and perhaps even parts of Israel where Israeli Arabs are the predominant population. The whole of this area would also be open to Jews living under Israeli law. Jerusalem could be subject to the same principle. The demographics of neighborhoods would not change overnight—for example, the divisions between East and West Jerusalem would linger for some time—but there would at least be the opportunity for people to move and live freely.

To be sure, the road to such a “dual-state” solution would create its own challenges. But, to a large extent, it could build on present realities and proceed one step at a time. Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, accompanied by the development of credible and lasting Palestinian institutions, could ignite the process. At some point, direct talks about shared economic, civil, and defense responsibilities could begin to build the architecture for this new type of state.

Again, is this proposal completely unrealistic? Perhaps. But present realities are far from sane and sound. There is a crucial need for new thinking if the peace process is to take root. Perhaps by re-envisioning how statehood can exist outside the traditional notions of who owns what strip of land, Israel and the occupied territories can produce the first modern embodiment of the globalized state, where the intangibles of the 21st century can solve the most intractable territorial conflicts of the 20th

century. Such a state would be an innovation in world politics, international law, and constitutional design. But it would in many ways be a codification of the new world in which we already live, where our lives are no longer tied to the land in the same way they once were. For Israelis and Palestinians, forgetting about the land may be the only way they both will ever be able to live on it.

Mathias Mossberg is vice president for programs at the EastWest Institute. He served as Sweden's ambassador to Morocco from 1994 to 1996.

On the Strip

National Review
An NRO Symposium
6/29

As Gaza flares up with tension, violence, and rumors of worse, National Review Online gathered a group of Mideast experts asking them: Can anything be done to prevent more violence? Is there anything constructive to be done -- and by whom?

Michael Freund Less than a year after pulling out of Gaza, Israeli forces are back again, hunting down Palestinian terrorists and attempting to rescue one of their kidnapped comrades.

The only thing surprising about the return to Gaza is that it took this long to occur. Ever since the withdrawal, the Palestinians have been firing rockets on a near-daily basis into southern Israel, making life unbearable for tens of thousands of Israeli citizens.

Israel's retreat created a vacuum, which al Qaeda and other Islamist terror groups quickly set out to fill, paving the way for Hamas to take control. The flow of weapons smuggled in from Egypt has soared, and Gaza has rapidly become the perfect launching pad for enemies of Israel and the West.

At this point, the best thing Israel can do is to stay put in Gaza, flushing out the terrorists while creating and patrolling permanent security zones adjoining the frontier, such as the Philadelphia Corridor along the Gaza-Egypt border.

Only by maintaining an enduring physical presence in the area can Israel ensure that Gaza does not become a hotbed of fundamentalist strife. And only by reasserting its control can Israel provide its citizens with the security they rightly deserve.

-- Michael Freund served as deputy director of communications under former Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. He is currently a syndicated columnist for the Jerusalem Post.

Dore Gold

When I used to spend a great deal of time with Ariel Sharon between 2000 and 2003, he would always say to me: "Never put yourself in a position that you only have two choices when you are under a threat: going to war or doing nothing."

But that is precisely Israel's situation today. Israel's southern town of Sdeirot and the Western Negev have been struck with over 500 Qassam rockets -- in a blatant escalation of unprovoked attacks since Israel withdrew lock-stock-and-barrel from the Gaza Strip. Clearly this escalation did not come about because of some political "grievance" against Israel due to its Gaza presence, which had been removed, but rather from the sense of victory that Hamas and the forces of jihad sensed from Israel's decision to pull out last August. In the meantime, the Gaza Strip has become a new center for global jihadi groups including Hezbollah and al Qaeda.

The situation cannot be alleviated then by diplomatic initiatives, and the illusory hope that internal Hamas led by Ismail Haniyya is a potential peace partner if he and his colleagues break away from Khaled Mashaal's branch of Hamas in Damascus. Gaza Hamas, in fact, expressed its regrets for the loss of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and is cut from the same ideological cloth as Hamas overseas. Additionally, deterrence of terrorist groups hiding in densely populated areas does not work; the civilian casualties that can be caused are simply untenable. There is no stable deterrence balance when there is no responsible government on the other side.

But there is what strategists used to call deterrence by denial: cutting off the enemy's capabilities. In this sense, stabilization will only be achieved by isolating Gaza, and preventing its further reinforcement from the supporters of global jihad, whether by suitcases full of cash or Katyusha rockets. Syria must be made to understand that it will pay a price if it continues to harbor the Hamas leadership and to reinforce the Sunni insurgency in Iraq. These are hard but necessary measures. Diplomacy should press Egypt to be more forceful in blocking the Sinai-Gaza border. Indeed, increased Egyptian responsibility in Gaza and Jordanian responsibility in the West Bank may be the only long-term effective option instead of the Palestinians' own failed political system, particularly if the Hamas regime collapses. In the meantime, it is necessary to recognize the errors of the past that occurred with Gaza disengagement and not just repeat them again in the West Bank.

-- Dore Gold was the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations in 1997-99. His book, *Hatred's Kingdom* exposed Saudi Arabia's financial ties to Hamas and international terrorist groups.

Emanuele Ottolenghi

The flare-up in Gaza was to be expected, given that the Palestinian leadership lost yet another opportunity, after the Gaza disengagement, to halt its self-destructive course. Ultimately, there are two ways to read the current situation and interpret its causes. One claims that the 2000-01 attempt to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict failed because there is no genuine Palestinian partner for Israel and there are not going to be chances for peace in this generation. Given that conflict is inherent to the Palestinian-Israeli arena, disengagement was meant to create militarily, demographically, and politically more defensible lines for Israel and allow Israel to fight more effectively in a protracted conflict. If this interpretation is correct, the latest flare-up in Gaza confirms the need for Israel to redeploy and disengage from the Palestinians, given their hopeless devotion to Israel's destruction. The second view claims that the violence erupted after the Camp David failed summit in the summer of 2000 is a hiccup in a historical process that will eventually lead to peace. In this light, Israel's unilateral disengagement thwarts the chances of meaningful negotiations because it rewards Palestinian rejectionism and its violence. The latest flare-up, in this light, is evidence that Palestinian terrorism was emboldened by Israel's withdrawal and seeks to provoke Israel to further undermine its deterrence. In this sense, the Gaza disengagement appears a failure, rather than a success.

Whatever the reading, Israel fell in a trap by going into Gaza with massive force. Upping the ante with targeted killings would prove more effective because it leaves the option open to invade later. Threatening to kill Hamas ministers if the kidnapped soldier is not returned would have been a better measure. The invasion allows the Palestinians yet again to play victims in the stage of world opinion.

-- Emanuele Ottolenghi teaches Israel studies at Oxford University.

Daniel Pipes The Bush administration sees the United States at war with Islamic radicalism; has not the time come for it to see other theaters of this same war -- Russia's with the Chechen rebels, India's with the Kashmiri insurgents, Israel's with Hamas -- as we see our own, and work for the defeat of the Islamists?

Instead, in the Israeli case at least, Washington urges understanding, restraint, compromise, management of the problem, and other half-hearted and doomed remedies. The result is an ever more exhilarated and aggressive Palestinian population that believes victory within reach.

Washington's mistaken approach goes back to the Oslo accords of 1993, when Yasser Arafat seemingly closed the existential conflict in writing to Bill Clinton that "The PLO recognizes the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security." But Arafat's assurances were fraudulent and the Arab effort to eliminate Israel remains very much in place.

Israel, with U.S. support, must defeat this foul ambition. That implies inflicting a sense of defeat on the Palestinians, and winning their resignation to the permanent existence of a Jewish state in the Holy Land. Only then will the violence end.

-- Daniel Pipes is director of the Middle East Forum and a prize-winning columnist.

Danielle Pletka

In the last week, Hamas has kidnapped two Israelis, a soldier and a teenage settler, and threatens to kill both unless its demands are met. The al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, affiliated with "moderate" Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party, announced it could now manufacture chemical and biological weapons. Can anything be done to prevent the use of those weapons and brake accelerating Palestinian violence?

The answer isn't as complicated as many suggest. Hamas and Fatah are terrorist organizations and they must be treated as terrorists, and crushed with all means necessary. They are no more entitled to violence than al Qaeda. Foreign Ministers from London, Washington, and Cairo have bleated that diplomacy must be given a chance, but President Bush has inveighed repeatedly against negotiating with terrorists.

And what of the Palestinian people? Let us remember, they elected Hamas. Perhaps next time they will choose more wisely. We can help them by immediately ending fruitless efforts to appeal to "moderates" like Abbas (who was useless in his long stewardship of the PA), wholeheartedly support Israeli actions to eliminate terrorists, and throw our political and financial support behind the idea of new Palestinian political leaders more interested in serving the needs of their people than they are in killing and kidnapping.

-- Danielle Pletka is the vice president for foreign- and defense-policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

Nissan Ratzlav-Katz Once upon a time, the Palestine Liberation Organization would send out terrorists under the operational name Black September, so as to maintain "plausible deniability" for actions that might not play well in the West. Today, however, the freely elected Islamists governing the Palestinian Authority feel no need even to use pseudonyms.

Hamas leaders announced that the recent assault on an IDF base in pre-1967 Israel, in which two Israelis were killed and one taken hostage, was the action of Hamas "militants," of which they had no knowledge.

Yet, Hamas is publicly and officially dedicated to destroying Israel and killing Jews. Furthermore, in the ten months since Israel unilaterally withdrew its military and 8,000 civilians from the Gaza region, PA-based groups, including Hamas, have fired more than 1,000 rockets at Israeli cities and have carried out several other terrorist attacks.

Given this, future violence can only be prevented by eliminating the causes of current violence. And those causes are the Arab terrorist groups running the PA -- Hamas and Fatah. After more than a decade of concessions and dialogue, Israel must now destroy in order to create -- destroy the terrorists' autonomy in order to create a chance for peace.

-- Nissan Ratzlav-Katz is opinion editor of www.IsraelNationalNews.com.

Saul Singer Palestinian terrorism will stop when the international community decides to hold the Palestinian leadership fully accountable for its aggression and to vocally support Israel's right to self defense.

The U.N. Security Council, which has frequently condemned Israeli defensive actions, has not condemned the firing of hundreds of missiles against Israeli civilians. A U.N. resolution unequivocally condemning Palestinian terrorism and affirming Israel's rights under Article 51 of the U.N. charter, followed if necessary by the threat of sanctions, would induce the Palestinians to advance their interests by other means.

In addition, the U.S. and Israel should not just speak of the need for two states, Israel and Palestine, but of the true obstacle to implementing that vision: the continuing Arab refusal to accept a Jewish state in this land.

If the Arab states truly accepted the two-state solution, why did they recently fight tooth and nail against welcoming Israel and Palestine into the International Committee of the Red Cross? Why do they foment boycotts and rabid anti-Semitism? Why do the leaders of states that are ostensibly at peace with Israel refuse to visit here? And why does the international community accept such behavior without comment?

-- Saul Singer is editorial-page editor of the Jerusalem Post and author of *Confronting Jihad: Israel's Struggle and the World After 9/11*.

Plan B

New Republic

By Yossi Klein Halevy

7/3

In April 1986, Israeli peace activists convened in the West Bank city of Hebron. Their aim was to rally support for a negotiated settlement, and they invited left-wing Knesset members and Palestinians to join them. But the event turned out to be dominated by a group of people they hadn't invited--settlers who beat and cursed the activists, blocked a road leading to the hotel where the meeting was to take place, and smashed the windshield of a Knesset member's car, eventually requiring the Israeli army to break up the melee. Allegedly orchestrating the violence, according to criminal charges later filed by two Knesset members, was a man named Otniel Schneller, the head of the Yesha Council, the umbrella organization of Jewish settlers. "We wanted to show that this kind of meeting--Jewish people meeting with the PLO and talking about how to throw the Jewish people from Israel--we think is very, very dangerous," he said, according to the Los Angeles Times.

Two decades later, it is Schneller who is devising plans to, as he might once have put it, throw the Jewish people from Israel. Now a Knesset member for the centrist Kadima Party, Schneller has been entrusted by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert with preparing maps for unilateral withdrawal in the West Bank. Schneller, whose knitted skullcap fits bowl-like on his balding head, still considers himself "very right-wing" and still lives in Michmash, a settlement between Ramallah and the Judean desert. That, combined with his past, might make him seem an odd advocate for unilateral withdrawal. But, for those Israelis who want their government to vacate large parts of the West Bank, Otniel Schneller has emerged as an unlikely--and fortuitous--ally.

A colonel in the reserves, Schneller, 54, moved to the territories in 1982. He came for security--not religious--reasons: He was convinced that preventing a Palestinian state was an existential Israeli interest. The first hint of Schneller's political transformation came during his nearly three-year tenure as secretary-general of the Yesha Council in the mid-'80s. Concerned that the settlers hadn't devised a plan for dealing with the Palestinian population, he proposed granting municipal autonomy to West Bank towns, a move he believed could forestall a Palestinian state. "The right only knew what it didn't want," he has written. "The lack of a political plan meant that we were dooming Israel to either endless war or a binational state." Fellow settlers, however, saw the proposal as a near-betrayal.

Several years later, the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin suggested that the real existential threat to Israel wasn't a Palestinian state but rather left-right divisions within Israeli society. Seeking dialogue with the left, Schneller found a partner in Professor Yair Hirschfeld, one of the initiators of the Oslo process. Last year, the two co-authored a book called *Bridge of Paper*, which offered a series of proposals seeking to unite the Zionist left and right around unilateralism. Peace, they agreed, wasn't an end in itself but a means to ensuring Israel's Jewish majority and Jewish identity. To achieve that end, Schneller conceded, Israel would need to withdraw from much of the West Bank. He even declared his readiness to "give up my home" for the sake of national cohesion.

While Schneller won't divulge the outlines of his map, it's clear he wants to retain at least 30 to 40 percent of the West Bank during the next withdrawal. That includes, according to Schneller, the strategic Jordan Valley, as well as Jewish enclaves inside the West Bank city of Hebron. (He envisions linking those enclaves with the nearby Jewish town of Kiryat Arba.) If that is indeed the future of unilateralism, we need to forget everything we've been told by the press about the West Bank security fence determining the border. And we also need to forget what we have been told by Olmert himself, who just last week declared in London that he aims to withdraw from 90 percent of the territories in an interim agreement with Mahmoud Abbas. That statement was hardly convincing: Olmert, whose foreign minister dismissed Abbas as irrelevant after Hamas's electoral victory, was probably just trying to prove he had exhausted the diplomatic option before moving forward unilaterally.

Compared with Olmert's vision of a 90 percent withdrawal, Schneller's more modest map makes sense, both politically and strategically. Olmert, after all, faces a public increasingly skeptical of unilateralism.

According to a recent poll, only 37 percent support the plan. While Olmert almost certainly lacks the clout to uproot the 70,000 settlers who will find themselves on the wrong side of the security fence, he may be able to manage Schneller's plan, which calls for uprooting "isolated" settlements whose residents probably total no more than 20,000 settlers.

There are strategic virtues to Schneller's proposal, as well. With the rise of Hamas--along with the ongoing shelling of Israeli communities bordering Gaza--even many Israelis who backed withdrawal in Gaza now question the wisdom of withdrawal in the West Bank, which borders Israel's main population centers and infrastructure. Moreover, writing in Haaretz, journalist Ari Shavit, once an ardent unilateralist, recently pointed out that, if Olmert implements his plan, "the Palestinians will have sovereignty over the entire Gaza Strip and some 91 percent of the West Bank"--precisely Israel's offer to the Palestinians at Camp David in July 2000--"and all this without recognizing Israel and without ending the conflict." In other words, terrorism pays. Schneller's scaled-down map, by contrast, grants Palestinians considerably less than what they would have gotten had they opted for negotiations. It thereby dispenses with the absurd diplomatic consequences of Olmert's proposed 90 percent withdrawal, which would leave Israel with almost no territory to bargain over should final-status negotiations ever resume.

For Schneller, the key to his plan's success lies in winning support from the settler community--which he calls "my community." That won't be easy. What many settlers really think of Schneller's plan may have been best captured by a recent cartoon that appeared in the right-wing weekly Makor Rishon, which played on the fact that Schneller was one of the last people to visit Ariel Sharon before his stroke: As Schneller reveals his withdrawal map, Sharon collapses.

Indeed, Schneller's self-appointed role as guardian of settler interests irks many of his former allies. "Otni constantly refers to himself as a settler from Michmash," says one neighbor. "But who gave him permission to speak in our name? Otni doesn't represent anyone but himself, but he uses us for his purposes." Longtime friends have distanced themselves, while others have called for more drastic measures: In a recent radio broadcast, radical Rabbi Dov Lior urged settlers to bar Schneller from their communal prayers. "A healthy body vomits out unhealthy elements," declared Lior.

A second roadblock facing Schneller's plan comes from the international community. Schneller believes that the key to persuading uprooted settlers to leave their homes peacefully is international support for Israel's right to remove the largest remaining settlement blocs--two near Jerusalem and the third centered around the West Bank town of Ariel--from any future negotiations and to continue construction in those areas. "That," he says, "is what will make it possible for Israel to withdraw with national consensus." Yet American--let alone European--support for Israel's right to build within those settlement blocs is hardly a given. After releasing its 2004 letter to Sharon affirming Israel's right to remain in some settlement blocs, the Bush administration promptly equivocated and explained that the final borders would be resolved only through negotiations.

The toughest sell, however, is also the one Schneller is best positioned to make: persuading his old settler allies to give up their dream of Greater Israel in order to save the Jewish state. He is convinced it can be done. When settlers "see the benefits of building and developing within the blocs, most will accept it," he says. "Maybe the fringes will resist, 5 percent, no more. And then the Israeli schism will be over." Which, after all, is the real peace agreement Otniel Schneller is seeking.

Remember What Happened Here

Time

By Charles Krauthammer

7/5

Israel Invades Gaza. That is in response to an attack, from Gaza that killed two Israelis and wounded another, who was kidnapped and brought back to Gaza ...which, in turn, was in response to Israel's targeted killing of terrorist leaders in Gaza...which, in turn, was in response to the indiscriminate shelling of Israeli towns by rockets launched from Gaza.

Of all the conflicts in the world, the one that seems the most tediously and hopelessly endless is the Arab-Israeli dispute, which has been going on in much the same way, it seems, for 60 years. Just

about every story you'll see will characterize Israel's invasion of Gaza as a continuation of the cycle of violence.

Cycles are circular. They have no end. They have no beginning. That is why, as tempting as that figure of speech is to use, in this case it is false. It is as false as calling American attacks on Taliban remnants in Afghanistan part of a cycle of violence between the U.S. and al-Qaeda or, as Osama bin Laden would have it, between Islam and the Crusaders going back to 1099. Every party has its grievances--even Hitler had his list when he invaded Poland in 1939--but every conflict has its origin.

What is so remarkable about the current wave of violence in Gaza is that the event at the origin of the "cycle" is not at all historical, but very contemporary. The event is not buried in the mists of history. It occurred less than one year ago. Before the eyes of the whole world, Israel left Gaza. Every Jew, every soldier, every military installation, every remnant of Israeli occupation was uprooted and taken away.

How do the Palestinians respond? What have they done with Gaza, the first Palestinian territory in history to be independent, something neither the Ottomans nor the British nor the Egyptians nor the Jordanians, all of whom ruled Palestinians before the Israelis, ever permitted? On the very day of Israel's final pullout, the Palestinians began firing rockets out of Gaza into Israeli towns on the other side of the border. And remember: those are attacks not on settlers but on civilians in Israel proper, the pre-1967 Israel that the international community recognizes as legitimately part of sovereign Israel, a member state of the U.N. A thousand rockets have fallen since.

For what possible reason? Before the withdrawal, attacks across the border could have been rationalized with the usual Palestinian mantra of occupation, settlements and so on. But what can one say after the withdrawal?

The logic for those continued attacks is to be found in the so-called phase plan adopted in 1974 by the Palestine National Council in Cairo. Realizing that they would never be able to destroy Israel in one fell swoop, the Palestinians adopted a graduated plan to wipe out Israel. First, accept any territory given to them in any part of historic Palestine. Then, use that sanctuary to wage war until Israel is destroyed.

So in 2005 the Palestinians are given Gaza, free of any Jews. Do they begin building the state they say they want, constructing schools and roads and hospitals? No. They launch rockets at civilians and dig a 300-yard tunnel under the border to attack Israeli soldiers and bring back a hostage.

And this time the terrorism is carried out not by some shadowy group that the Palestinian leader can disavow, however disingenuously. This is Hamas in action--the group that was recently elected to lead the Palestinians. At least there is now truth in advertising: a Palestinian government openly committed to terrorism and to the destruction of a member state of the U.N. openly uses terrorism to carry on its war.

That is no cycle. That is an arrow. That is action with a purpose. The action began 59 years ago when the U.N. voted to solve the Palestine conundrum then ruled by Britain by creating a Jewish state and a Palestinian state side by side. The Jews accepted the compromise; the Palestinians rejected it and joined five outside Arab countries in a war to destroy the Jewish state and take all the territory for themselves.

They failed, and Israel survived. That remains, in the Palestinian view, Israel's original sin, the foundational crime for the cycle: Israel's survival. That's the reason for the rockets, for the tunneling, for the kidnapping--and for Israel's current response.

If that history is too ancient, consider the history of the past 12 months. Gaza is free of occupation, yet Gaza wages war. Why? Because this war is not about occupation, but about Israel's very existence. The so-called cycle will continue until the arrow is abandoned and the Palestinians accept a compromise--or until the arrow finds its mark and Israel dies.

The Last Word: Elie Wiesel

Newsweek

By Michael Meyer

Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, born in Romania in 1928, was 15 years old when he and his family were deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz. The experience defined his life. A philosopher, teacher and founder of the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, he has dedicated his life to ensuring that the world never forgets the Holocaust--and to championing the cause of the downtrodden everywhere, from Nicaragua's Miskito Indians to the victims of famine and genocide in Africa, apartheid in South Africa and war in the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East. He is the author of more than 40 books of fiction and nonfiction, including "Night," the famous account of his death-camp years, published in 30 languages. He spoke with NEWSWEEK's Michael Meyer. Excerpts:

MEYER: You've just hosted a conference of 30 Nobel Prize winners and other world leaders in Petra, talking about threats to humanity--from Darfur to global warming. What did you hope to accomplish?

WIESEL: [To] change the world, actually. I am a teacher, a writer. My goal is to sensitize the desensitized, world leaders first among them. To be sensitive to people's pain, fears and hopes. I think that accomplishes quite a lot.

I imagine you see a great deal of insensitivity in the world at this point, particularly among its leaders.

There's a reason for that. It's called politics. It's sad, because to be in politics in ancient times was a great compliment--to work for the city, the republic, some common good. Today, if you say a person is a politician, it's an insult. The problem is the moral dimension. It's missing, in so many quarters. What to do? I don't know. Maybe elected officials should be sent to seminars for a month!

So who came to Petra?

Among others, [Israeli Prime Minister] Ehud Olmert and [Palestinian Authority President] Mahmoud Abbas.

Did they meet?

Not one on one, but in conversation with other laureates and later at a breakfast hosted by King Abdullah. Very intimate; only eight people. Abbas arrived first, then Olmert. I feared some embarrassment, but no. Their handshake turned into a hug. The ice was broken! We spoke mainly of economies at first, Israel's and Palestine's, then it was all World Cup. The whole table could only talk soccer. Except me. I finally said, "Listen, this is all very nice but a decision must be made now for a second meeting." And it was accepted! Olmert later announced they would meet again in a few weeks for formal talks. I came back more optimistic than I left.

What do you hope for, exactly?

That they will listen to one another, talk as human beings. With hope--not fear of the repercussions. My impression is that Olmert will go far. He'll follow Sharon's footsteps, this man who was so hated. In Europe, they carried banners, Sharon=Hitler. Yet all of a sudden he opposed his own party, his ideology and tried to do what is best.

And was felled by a stroke. If God exists, he works in mysterious ways.

Unfair ways. Yet great generals occasionally become messengers of peace.

Do you think Olmert's wall is the way to peace?

Sharon always told me the answer is security. He said, "Let terrorism stop, and we can have peace." So with Olmert. I think he wants to attain peace. How he does it is for him to decide.

Does he have a partner?

Not with Hamas. If it were not for Hamas, I think we would be very far into a peace process. The main item for them is the destruction of Israel, as it always has been. Hamas has not been able to grow into its new role in government. They had more power simply as Hamas.

Is Washington correct to deny Hamas any financial resources?

I don't know. One thing I do know: I do not want Palestinians and their children to suffer from this policy. So I would first double, triple, quadruple the budget and give it to NGOs to go help every child, every family, every hospital. I would do whatever I could to mobilize funds all over the world. People should not suffer.

What about Fatah and the Palestinian Authority?

America and other civilized countries have a duty to support Abbas at this time. See what happened recently, with the shootings and the assault on Parliament. The two sides have stopped killing Jews; now they're killing each other. I hope they can avoid civil war. Much depends on the July 26 referendum [called by Abbas], which would recognize Israel and accept a two-state peace. I think that it will ultimately topple Hamas.

And Iran?

This man Ahmadinejad is crazy. He is the No. 1 Holocaust denier in the world yet, absurdly, says that there will be one--and he will do it. Of course we should do something to prevent it. But we should use force only if all other means fail.

It Takes One to Terrorize

National Review
By Bridget Johnson
7/6

Ever since the June 25 kidnapping of Israeli Cpl. Gilad Shalit -- and the abduction and murder of 18-year-old Eliyahu Asheri in the West Bank -- Israel has been poised to open a can of whup-ass on the Gaza Strip. While that thought may make Ramsey Clark want to sob in his soy, some of us see action in Gaza in a much more positive light.

Yes, war is bloody and ugly. But so was the Popular Resistance Committees' threat that Asheri would be "butchered in front of TV cameras" if the Gaza operation to rescue Shalit did not stop. So was the raid in which Shalit was wounded and snatched, and two other soldiers killed. And so was every ensuing vicious ultimatum. And the fact that Hamas's military wing keeps aiming for distance records with their Qassam rockets, two last night in the coastal city of Ashkelon and one there Tuesday night that hit a school parking lot. Enough is enough.

Frankly, it made my day when Israel nabbed dozens of Hamas parliamentarians and cabinet ministers, and when Israeli forces did a not-so-friendly flyby over the abode of Hamas babysitter and Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. I considered the 2 A.M. Sunday airstrike on Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh's office a bit of redecorating. Never mind that rampaging Fatah backers already redecorated the place just a few weeks ago -- when Israel does it, it's considered evil.

"This total war is proof of a premeditated plan," Haniyeh ran around saying the past week. Has he missed all of the internal jockeying within Israel over peace plans and unilateral withdrawals, the go-rounds with Likud, Kadima, and Labor? Was he pretending not to have seen Israel pulling screaming settlers out of Gaza in some vain hope that the Palestinians could actually run the state and that it would somehow quench their jihad lust?

While it's just so touching that Hamas, Fatah, and various other delinquents have turned their attention from shooting each other in the streets to presenting a unified front against their Zionist aggressors, it's even more heartening to see the terrorist coalition get stared down by a column of tanks. Because enough is enough.

To many, though, Israel setting one tank tread in Gaza is naked aggression worth a thousand mind-numbing U.N. Security Council meetings. And it's not just the usual "die Zionist" protests throughout the Middle East. Try writing a pro-Israel column sometime, and watch the nasty mail pour in from all types, ranging from arrogant intellectuals to housewives on CNN overload to people claiming anti-Semitism is overblown and so is Hamas's terror resume.

To put it differently, way too many people view Israel as satanic oppressors of the Palestinians, and way too few give a damn about the men, women, and children shot into mass graves under the regime of Saddam Hussein.

They're usually the same people who think the murderer Tookie Williams should be canonized for writing kids' books, who would have Mumia Abu-Jamal to their dinner party, and who are protesting an invasion of Iran before it's even a twinkle in a general's eye. They may be the ones who get giddy at news of the Haditha murder investigations or other blows to the U.S. military, who think Hugo Chavez is a misunderstood genius, or who called in sick to work and lay in bed depressed the day Karl Rove didn't get indicted.

A giant chunk of logic is lost on these folks: cause and effect. As in, Palestinians using a hostage to try to extort outrageous demands from Israel has the effect of Israel taking the means necessary to get their man back. The Palestinians pulling such a stunt does not cause the Israelis to roll over.

And it's not just about an enemy that provokes a fight, but one that demonstrably cannot and should not be trusted. The Popular Resistance Committees -- one of the groups that took Shalit -- held a press conference last week, waving young Asheri's identity card and demanding concessions for his return, but the kid was already buried in a Ramallah field with a bullet in his brain as the PRC mugged for the cameras.

But Israel is apparently so wicked that it merited the first special session of the United Nations' new Human Rights Council -- and we are so blessed to have Algeria, Saudi Arabia, China, Cuba, Syria, Iran, Sudan and Libya, who all participated in the Wednesday debate, spelling out human rights for us. The council will be voting Thursday morning on a draft resolution to slap Israel around and send an investigative team to Gaza -- no doubt poised to agree with Special Rapporteur John Dugard, who Wednesday said Operation Summer Rain violated a prohibition on "measures of intimidation and terrorism" and nabbing the Hamas legislators fell under the "taking of hostages" in the Fourth Geneva Convention. (Hey, U.N., there's this guy named Gilad...)

I hate to break it to all those -- within the U.N. and without -- envisioning the Palestinian struggle to be a great stand for humanity, but the aggression is pretty one-sided. Israel does not sit around fantasizing about turning the Middle East and beyond into a Jewish theocracy. Young Israelis aren't strapping bombs to their midsections -- like a wannabe "martyr" whose attack was foiled just yesterday in central Israel -- and blowing up restaurants, buses, and other gathering places for Palestinians. Israeli kids aren't given textbooks that deny the existence of Palestinian territories and aren't brainwashed about the glory of martyrdom.

"If Israel gives in to the kidnapers' demands, the kidnapping might become a new fashion in Arab states, which ... is happening in Iraq and now in the Palestinian Authority," an Egyptian source told Haaretz on Monday.

And those sympathizing with the Palestinian government and its not-so-distant terrorist cousins had better wake up, because what happens in Israel does not stay in Israel.

-- Bridget Johnson is a columnist at the Los Angeles Daily News. She blogs at GOP Vixen.

IRAN

How Does That Translate in Persian?

National Review

By Kathryn Jean Lopez

6/14

On May 31, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced that the United States would negotiate with Iran if they agreed to stop uranium enrichment. If Iran did not agree to the sit-down on those conditions, there would be sanctions from the likes of Europe, Russia (who adamantly have not been fans of sanctions against Iran)--and the United Nations. President Bush seemed hopeful, confident that "this problem can be solved diplomatically."

We really have no business negotiating with the leader of a nation who considers us an enemy and wants one of our dearest allies in the Middle East wiped off the map. However, reasonable people must debate these proposed diplomatic tactics. There really are no easy answers when it comes to Iran. But one cannot help but wonder: How was Rice's announcement received by the oppressed of Iran?

Most likely as confusion.

As our new Iranian policy was announced (immediately available in Persian translation on the State Department's website) the human rights group Reporters Without Borders released an alert that it was "very worried" about the well-being of one particular student blogger in Tehran. Abed Tavancheh had been unreachable by his family and friends after pro-democracy demonstrations on his campus. On his blog, translated as "in the name of man, justice, and truth," Tavancheh often posts photos from these daring protests. The last post before Reporters Without Borders announced their concern included the text of a letter by an imprisoned lawyer who unwisely spoke out on behalf of families of journalists and others killed in a 1998 crackdown by the Iranian regime.

For folks like Tavancheh and his family, the offer from Washington had to sound like the rhetorical and moral equivalent of a punch in the gut -- and thus a crushing blow to our eyes and ears on the inside. Tavancheh and other democracy activists may be our best hope in Iran and the region, so crucial to fighting the war on terror. Like Lech Walesa and Solidarity in Poland before the fall of the Soviet Union, many experts point to Iranian labor unions and largely pro-Western students--in a country where about 70 percent of the population is under 30--as the soldiers of a democratic revolution. They're the Iranians we want to be negotiating with, lending a hand to.

The Bush administration has had a somewhat consistently confusing policy regarding Iran--in the first term, one senior State Department official inexplicably publicly referred to the oppressive regime as a "democracy" -- which it is most definitely not. But with the high-on-freedom talk the president used to ring in his second term, and this administration's occasional messages and commitments to dissidents, there has been reason for Iranian people to believe they had a friend in America. Just last year, President Bush proclaimed, "All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you. Democratic reformers facing repression, prison, or exile can know: America sees you for who you are: the future leaders of your free country." But with America's policy concerning negotiations with Iran in constant flux, some oppressed future leaders must wonder what exactly friends are for.

It's not just Iranian dissidents who got punched in the gut by Secretary Rice's announcement. In Egypt, blogger Alaa Seif al-Islam sits in jail for criticizing the government there. What does America's agreement to negotiate with a regime that clearly does not stand with us say to voices for freedom like him? Our words and policies can have a chilling effect on world events--and on the hearts of true freedom fighters, the type of person who is willing to put his life at risk to blog or otherwise tell some truth about the regime he suffers under, giving support to his fellow dissidents, and clueing the rest of us in.

In the days after his second inaugural address, even conservative supporters of President Bush criticized him for being a bit too pie-eyed in his freedom talk. The least we could be doing, however, is lending more support, rhetorical and otherwise to our real friends. The continued mixed signals, however, that negotiation offers to a regime of terror masters, is not the way to contribute to any freedom project.

-- Kathryn Jean Lopez is the editor of National Review Online.

How to Isolate Iran

Time

By Elaine Shannon

6/19

Iran's resumption of uranium enrichment last week could not have come at a better time for the Bush Administration. The U.S. sees Iran's defiance--which came as European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana landed in Tehran to offer incentives in exchange for the suspension of suspect nuclear

activities--as new ammunition in its battle to persuade the European powers, Russia and China that only harsh sanctions can impede Iran's quest for the Bomb. If, as U.S. officials anticipate, Iran refuses to suspend enrichment and return to the negotiating table, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will demand sanctions from the U.N. Security Council. Russia and China have pledged not to veto if Iran refuses to cooperate.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has pursued another diplomatic track, building a "coalition of the willing" to isolate Iran. U.S. officials say they are finding some success, especially with Japan, which, because of its dependence on oil from the Middle East, has long maintained neutrality there. According to senior U.S. sources, Japan, the top buyer of Iran's oil and a nonpermanent Security Council member, was closely consulted on the incentives package. On the day Iran restarted its enrichment activity, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso called his counterpart in Tehran to urge acceptance of the package.

Japan's uncharacteristically venturesome moves reflect growing global consensus on isolating Iran. U.S. diplomats say Italy, another of Iran's top trading partners, has been "very supportive," as have the governments of several Persian Gulf states where Iran does much banking. The U.S. is also seeking private-sector support: Treasury officials are talking with international financial institutions about what a top U.S. diplomat calls the "reputational risks" of handling funds for Iran. The tactic seems to be working: European diplomats report that letters of credit that facilitate Iran's foreign trade are drying up.

The Iranian Street

National Review

By Jason Lee Steorts

6/19

Locked up somewhere in Tehran's Evin Prison is a man named Mansour Osanlou. The number of Westerners who know his name is probably extraordinarily small, but he is extraordinarily important. He -- and others like him -- may be our best hope of neutralizing the threat posed by Iran's nuclear program.

Osanlou rose to prominence last December when, as president of a bus drivers' syndicate in Tehran, he helped organize a protest against the drivers' work conditions. The protest was mild: Drivers showed up on the job but refused to collect tolls, giving free rides to their passengers. Iran's rulers nevertheless arrested several of the drivers' leaders, including Osanlou.

In doing so, they sparked a second, and much more serious, round of protests. These took place in January, when hundreds of bus drivers went on strike, paralyzing the city. Tehran's residents, though inconvenienced, seemed to be on the strikers' side. Motorists turned on their headlights in a sign of solidarity. The regime mobilized its militia as substitute drivers, but many people refused to ride the buses. A group of subway workers showed their support by cutting power to one of the subway lines, and statements encouraging the strikers came in from various organizations of workers and students. The regime, sensing that what had begun as a labor complaint was on the brink of becoming a political movement, cracked down. It arrested the ringleaders, dispatched its goons to beat the protesters, and fired many of the drivers. Osanlou remains jailed, having been neither charged with a crime nor given access to a lawyer.

What's noteworthy about all this is that it isn't noteworthy. The Western press picked up the story for a few weeks but forgot about it by February. This created the impression that the drivers' protests were an aberration, and that, apart from a bit of smashed glass, the streets of Tehran were back to normal. The reality is far more tumultuous. Not only did the protests continue through the spring, but the drivers' discontent is emblematic of a much wider phenomenon. To put it simply, Iran's workers are mad as hell at the regime -- and they are ready to do something about it.

"There's probably not a day when some workers' organization is not demonstrating outside some government building somewhere in Iran," says Iran scholar Michael Ledeen. These demonstrators work in many industries -- from textiles to mining to sugar processing -- but they have a common grievance: They aren't getting paid. Banafsheh Zand-Bonazzi, a native of Iran who writes frequently about events in that country, estimates that "there are somewhere between 8 and 11 million workers who have not been paid for anywhere between three and 25 months." Many are employed by state-

owned enterprises; others work for "factories owned by people close to the regime." These workers are aware of Iran's staggering oil wealth. They see the opulent lifestyle of the ruling clerics. Not surprisingly, they direct their anger at the regime.

To take just a few more examples of the unrest: In February, 200 miners who had gone without pay for a year traveled to Tehran to protest in front of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's office. In November of last year, 1,000 textile workers who hadn't been paid for eight months demonstrated in front of Iran's parliament building. And a group of glass workers recently got so mad that they set their factory on fire.

Such concentrated anger presents an opportunity for the West. What we should notice is that the bus drivers' strike is not terribly different from what happened at Poland's Gdansk Shipyards in August 1980. That is of course when Solidarity was born. In July of that year, the Polish government had decided to raise prices while slowing wage growth. This triggered protests and led to the firing of Anna Walentynowicz, a crane operator at Gdansk. In response, the shipyard workers went on strike under the leadership of the electrician Lech Walesa.

Could Mansour Osanlou, or someone like him, be another Walesa? It's impossible to say for sure, but the idea isn't far-fetched. Like the Iranians, the Polish workers began to protest because they were dissatisfied with their work conditions; the goal wasn't to smash Communism so much as to put food on the table. But their activities brought them in conflict with Poland's rulers, who, in trying to suppress the protests, politicized them. Something similar would almost certainly happen in the event of sustained labor unrest in Iran. Indeed, the tendency of the protesters to target institutions of the regime suggests that they already view their complaints as political. The mullahs have shown themselves willing to imprison strike leaders and deal violently with the strikers. They have also forbidden workers to organize. (The bus drivers' syndicate, for example, has been illegal since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. There are state-approved labor organizations, but these are viewed by most workers as deeply tainted by their affiliation with the regime.) There is every reason to think the workers will eventually conclude that their problems cannot be solved as long as the mullahs are in power.

But they will need our help. Solidarity's transformation from obscure labor group to history-shaping political movement did not happen in a vacuum. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher gave constant rhetorical support to Walesa, and the CIA provided funds. Iranian workers would gain much if the U.S. devoted similar efforts to them. As a practical matter, financial assistance would make it easier to organize strikes. Even though many workers aren't being paid, they are still reluctant to walk out on the job, for fear of being fired and losing any hope of future payment. If American funds were there to meet their necessities -- or even to pay their back wages -- they would be more inclined to take to the streets. Some people fear that open American funding would cause the regime to deal more severely with the workers, but the U.S. wouldn't need to publicize its support. It could instead channel funds to the workers by way of non-governmental labor and humanitarian organizations.

As for rhetoric, statements of Western solidarity could have a significant impact. Restrictions on speech within Iran make it difficult for dissidents to spread their message, but the foreign press has a way of eventually reaching the Iranian masses. So it has been with President Bush's declarations of support for Iranian democrats. Amir Abbas Fakhraei, a prominent dissident, recently told me that "the people of Iran, especially the youth," have noticed Bush's "siding with the people of Iran rather than the government of Iran." Zand-Bonazzi calls Bush's rhetoric "excellent" and says that "as an individual, he's gotten it."

But his administration could do more. It could begin by taking a more active hand in the programming of Voice of America and Radio Farda (Radio Free Europe's Farsi service) for Iran; the current broadcasts do little to plead the cause of Iran's democrats. And the administration's public diplomacy could do a much more effective job of echoing the president's message. "It's astonishing," says Ledeen, "that the only people in the U.S. supporting the bus drivers were John Sweeney [the president of the AFI-CIO] and Rick Santorum [the Pennsylvania senator]." One could quibble with him: The State Department did issue a statement saying it "condemn[ed] the Iranian Government's forcible suppression of peaceful demonstrations by bus drivers in Tehran." And the administration's request for \$75 million to fund the activities of expatriate and dissident Iranians suggests the beginning of a more serious attempt to undermine the regime. But it has been four long years since Bush named Iran part of the Axis of Evil. What took so long?

In three words, the State Department. The bureaucracy there has been reluctant to embrace a policy of regime change, preferring instead to follow the EU-3 in its fruitless negotiations with the mullahs. One senior administration official says that, when it comes to providing direct support for dissidents inside Iran, "the State Department's bureaucracy rejects it almost reflexively." That needs to change. People can debate the merits of promoting democracy as a general rule, but if there is any country where the overthrow of tyranny would advance our interests, it is Iran. The problem with nuclear weapons is the regimes that own them -- and as far as regimes go, it doesn't get much worse than a terrorist-sponsoring Islamist theocracy. Air strikes against the nuclear facilities could delay Iran's acquiring nuclear weapons by several years, but the mullahs would surely seek them again. Is it not far preferable, for both humanitarian and strategic reasons, to see Iran's people -- the most educated, moderate, and pro-Western Muslims of the Middle East -- break the chains of their oppression?

The lamentable reality of foreign policy is that morality and self-interest need not align. In the case of Mansour Osanlou, they do. It's time we did something about that.

Power in The Shadows

Time

By Azadeh Moaveni

7/3

The most powerful man in Iran avoids the gilded trappings of office. While many of the officials who serve under him build Caspian Sea villas and travel in caravans of shiny new SUVs, Ayatullah Ali Khamenei, the country's supreme religious leader, conducts himself with the modesty of a small-town mullah. He receives visitors in spare, undecorated offices in downtown Tehran and often runs meetings seated on the floor and wearing a plain black robe. Billboards with his portrait are ubiquitous in the capital, depicting Khamenei more as a rumpled civil servant than a revolutionary, with thick glasses and rough, checkered scarf. "When you talk to him, you feel you're dealing with a worldly man," says a senior Iranian official. "And everything is in his hands, now more than ever."

To much of the outside world, the dominant face of the Iranian regime is that of its President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who since his election last June has set off reverberations by threatening Israel, questioning the Holocaust and defying demands that Tehran halt its suspected quest for nuclear weapons. Ahmadinejad's excesses have raised anxieties that he may someday draw the country into war with its longtime adversary, the U.S. But for all the bluster, Ahmadinejad's powers are constrained. The legal structure of the Islamic Republic places ultimate political authority in Khamenei, 66, who became Iran's religious leader in 1989 after the death of Ayatullah Ruhollah Khomeini. Because the Iranian Constitution grants the Supreme Leader veto power over the President's decisions, it is Khamenei who has the final say in high matters of state. As a result, the low-profile cleric--he shuns interviews with journalists--is the figure who will probably determine whether the nuclear dispute is resolved peacefully or hurtles Iran toward a confrontation with the U.S. and its allies.

Those who know Khamenei say he believes in Iran's right to nuclear power but also wants to avoid punishments that could cripple Iran and shake the theocratic regime's hold on power. "He's pragmatic, and in the end he makes decisions based on national interest," says a high-ranking official close to Khamenei. "He may well be the way out of this current impasse."

Khamenei's pragmatism may explain why the regime is now showing more willingness to negotiate than it has in months. A Western diplomat and Iran expert believes that Khamenei "definitely" had a hand in Ahmadinejad's letter to U.S. President George W. Bush last month, the first effort at a direct high-level contact between the two countries since 1979. After the U.N. Security Council permanent five plus Germany and the E.U. presented Tehran with a package of incentives aimed at persuading Iran to stop enriching uranium, Khamenei authorized the President to call the proposal a "positive step." Ahmadinejad said last week that Iran plans to respond to the West's offer by mid-August, but that's too slow for the Bush Administration, which wants an answer by the end of June. Analysts close to the regime say Khamenei may agree to suspend uranium enrichment for a fixed period but will quibble on specifics in hopes of prolonging talks and forestalling action by the U.N. Security Council. "Iran won't say no," says Saeed Laylaz, a former government official. "But it won't say yes immediately either. The answer is not going to fix anything in one go."

So what does Khamenei want? In Tehran, speculation about the cleric's ambitions and the future of his

partnership with Ahmadinejad is a parlor game of government insiders. Though Khomeini's doctrine of velayet-e faqih grants Khamenei divine right to rule, Khamenei is a breed apart from most Shi'ite mullahs, who still abide by premodern strictures. "He wears a watch," says an intimate, to illustrate how Khamenei differs from his fellow clerics. He hikes in jeans in Tehran's Alborz Mountains and plays the tar, a traditional Iranian stringed instrument. On religious issues, Khamenei is a conservative in the mold of his predecessor, Khomeini. Khamenei considers the West morally bankrupt and has appointed officials hostile to women's rights and freedom of expression. But when it comes to his health, he places his faith in--along with God--medical doctors trained in the West.

What he lacks is Khomeini's populist charisma, which suggests why he has embraced Ahmadinejad's role of fire-breathing agitator. The two meet one evening a week, and intimates of Khamenei describe their interactions as those of a disciple with his leader. Khamenei praises the President regularly in his speeches and offers criticism in private. Ahmadinejad, for his part, has suppressed dissent and marginalized political opponents whom Khamenei considers a threat. Officials and outside analysts say Khamenei has never felt so in control. "Khamenei feels the President shares his values, so he sees the government as stronger and more stable than before," says Amir Mohebian, an analyst with close ties to prominent conservative officials.

The cleric's allies are sensitive to the perception that Ahmadinejad's celebrity has caused a decline in the Supreme Leader's public profile. "He's not being overshadowed at all," says the official with close ties to Khamenei. But a senior Iranian official and a Western diplomat say Khamenei reprimanded Ahmadinejad for his declaration that Israel should be "wiped off the map," and analysts in Tehran say Khamenei is worried about Ahmadinejad's uneven management of domestic affairs. The Western diplomat says Ahmadinejad is still "on probation"; some Iranians speculate that his unpredictability may force Khamenei to replace him. Says Hamidreza Jalaipour, a professor at Tehran University: "It's hard to tell how long this relationship is going to last."

Khamenei isn't likely to consent to giving up Iran's nuclear prerogatives without a price. The Bush Administration's agreement to join European-sponsored negotiations with Tehran is seen by Iranians as a major coup for Khamenei's hard-bargaining strategy. Those close to the cleric say he may ultimately be willing to agree to limits on Iran's nuclear program if direct talks with the U.S. lead to security guarantees and a lifting of the U.S. embargo on Iran. "The regime is dying to negotiate," says Jalaipour. Now Khamenei needs Washington to show it feels that way too.

EGYPT

Into Egypt - A Country Invites the World, and Its Scrutiny

National Review

By Jay Nordlinger

6/19

Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt The World Economic Forum holds its Annual Meeting in Davos, high up in the Swiss Alps. That glamorous talkfest takes place in January. But every spring, the WEF comes to the Middle East, for a three-day conference focused exclusively on this crucial region. For the last three years, the conference has been held in Jordan, on the Dead Sea. But this year, the conference has come to Sharm El Sheikh, the famous Egyptian resort on the Red Sea. There is much discussion here about which site is preferable. I can't help framing it this way: Better Dead than Red, or better Red than Dead?

Egypt is proud to have snatched the conference away from the Jordanians (who, regardless, will get it again next year). And this is a critical period for Egypt. Almost every day, the country makes worldwide news, most of it bad: democrats jailed; judges threatened; protesters beaten up. And terror still strikes. In April, bombs went off in Dahab, just north of here. About 20 people were killed. And last summer, about 65 were killed in Sharm El Sheikh itself. In the last year and a half, some 120 people have lost their lives to terror in this Sinai region. But Klaus Schwab, founder and leader of the WEF, refused to cancel or move the conference. For him, he explained in a memo to participants, it was a matter of solidarity, defiance, and determination.

If anyone was deterred from coming here, it doesn't show: Attendance is robust and enthusiastic. And security is tight, not to say stifling. You can hardly turn around without being checked, whisked, or

otherwise examined. Indeed, you can hardly turn around. We are in a mini-police state -- but I imagine most people are reassured, even as they, as we, chafe.

Egypt may be having problems on the political front, but they are making big strides on the economic front. And they're happy to trumpet it. On the roads to Sharm El Sheikh's Congress Center -- specially built for this conference, in under eight months -- are signs: "Egypt: Open for Business"; "Egypt: Open for Competition"; "Egypt: Open for Growth"; "Egypt: Open for Change." These are not empty claims, for the facts back them up. Tariffs, taxes, and other barriers are falling; GDP is rising (by a projected 6 percent this year). Inflation has been subdued. Foreign investment is pouring in, and the Egyptians are asking for more.

This burst of liberalization has been overseen by what the country's publicists call a "dream team," a "handful of reformist ministers." They are led by the prime minister himself, Ahmed Nazif. He is the face of what you might call the New Egypt.

Old Egypt, of course, is represented by Hosni Mubarak, president and boss of this country for 25 years now. He officially opens the conference, with a speech in Plenary Hall. Though nearing 80, he seems in blooming health, full of vigor. He looks like he could go on and on, through elections fair and foul. He also looks like a thug -- unkind to say, but true. It's not his fault if he looks like a thug; it's his fault only if he acts like one. His speech to us is nothing much: full of platitudes, banalities, and little jabs at the United States. But he concludes with some nice poetry about the Sinai, and its importance to history: Moses and the Ten Commandments; Joseph and Mary's flight with their baby; and so on.

Mubarak takes no questions; but Nazif certainly does, over breakfast with journalists. The prime minister is stubbornly optimistic about his country's future. "There's no turning back," he says -- no turning back from the reformist course that Egypt has set. "Some people are scared of change. But I'm not." A full transformation will take time, to be sure. "But we have time. We're not in a hurry." For years, Egypt was "a closed environment," but now it's opening up. "We're not used to it." Habits of democracy will have to be developed. But they will be. Overall, Nazif's message to this inky assemblage seems to be, Have a little patience, and a little perspective.

And, like many another politician or government official, Nazif complains about the media, particularly the foreign media. They portray Egypt as a glass half empty, he says. They ignore the good that has been accomplished. And, in any case, "we're filling in the other half!" A reporter attending the breakfast asks about presidential succession: Will Gamal Mubarak, now a big in the ruling party, replace his father? Nazif bristles a little at this. "We are an institutional country," he says, with established processes for such matters. This is not a banana republic, he seems to be saying (or a fig-and-date republic). He goes on to say -- if I may again interpret -- If Gamal becomes president, it will be in the manner of Bushes and Adamses, not in the manner of the Syrian Assads.

COMPUTER SCIENCE AND POLITICAL SCIENCE Later, I interview Prime Minister Nazif one on one. He's an impressive-looking man, in his mid-50s, tall and solid, with a full head of gray-white hair. And he speaks like the intellectual he is. His Ph.D. is in computer engineering, from McGill, and his research was in computer vision. "What's that?" I ask. "In the simplest possible terms, it's making computers understand pictures, images." And "it is a beautiful science." A mark of Nazif's interests and inclinations is his membership in the American Association for Artificial Intelligence.

He spent most of the 1970s in the West, returning to Egypt in the early 1980s. As he tells it, the country had experienced the '73 war, the peace accords with Israel, the assassination of Sadat, the rise of Mubarak -- "and we were all thinking, 'Where do we go from here?'" The message from the government was clear: Rebuild the country. And Nazif was intrigued with the idea of using computers to lift the country up, or aid it in some way. He worked in academia, business, and government. He co-founded the Internet Society of Egypt, among other organizations. And he served as Egypt's first-ever minister of communications and information technology, from 1999 to 2004. Then he became prime minister.

When you listen to Nazif -- and I have heard him on several occasions -- you think that you're listening, not to an Egyptian official, much less the prime minister, but to an oppositionist, a dissident. With his talk of markets, democracy, and freedom in general, he sounds like a chair-holder at the American Enterprise Institute. I ask whether he considers himself a liberal democrat. He says he does. And "one thing I've always done is challenge what exists. I'm pro-change, and I'm a builder by nature. Some people criticize in order to find faults; I criticize in order to remove faults, and that's a big

difference."

I ask what he thinks of socialism. "It depends on how you interpret it. Socialism in the sense of Egypt in the 1960s, I'm completely opposed to. Because the idea then was, everyone is equal irrespective of their efforts, irrespective of what they give in return. But if by socialism you mean that we have to have some sort of redistribution of wealth to help the poor -- yes. Again, though, how do you help the poor? How do you make them change their status? If you give a subsidy with no expectation of return whatsoever, you're just encouraging the poor to stay poor. There's no incentive. But if you demand something in return -- self-improvement -- then you are getting somewhere."

Inevitably, our talk turns to Ayman Nour. He is the democrat who challenged Mubarak in last year's presidential election, and who now finds himself in jail. The charges are absurd, or so many of us find: They have to do with forging signatures on petitions. Nazif gives no quarter on the subject of Nour. Speaking at length, he insists that the judicial process has taken its course, with no interference from "the government" (meaning, Mubarak et al.). He further says that, though the Nour case is a cause in the West, it is no such thing in Egypt, because it is better understood here. (Indeed, I find evidence at the conference that Arab journalists are put out by attention to Nour. One woman sniffs that the case has been "taken out of proportion." Like others, she is most interested in why Americans aren't hollering about the Egyptian government's treatment of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic fundamentalists.)

And how about Judges Mekki and Bastawisi, who were subjected to disciplinary hearings when they pointed out fraud in recent elections? Again, Nazif makes no apologies, saying that appropriate procedures have been followed in these cases, too, and that they have been badly misunderstood in the West. He maintains that the judiciary has long enjoyed independence in Egypt. "This is not something that must now materialize."

Nazif is not at his most encouraging on these highly sensitive matters. But, on a range of issues -- such as Sudanese refugees, the Palestinians, and America's role in the Middle East -- he is thoughtful, if not entirely persuasive. I think of a phrase popular, or once popular, in American culture: "as good as it gets." Nazif and his allies are as good as it gets in the Arab world, at least among ruling elites. What can an outsider do but root for them?

As I'm parting from Nazif, I remind him of the breakfast discussion about presidential succession. Would he himself be interested in running for the post? Like most any other politician, he smiles and demurs: "I think it's too early even to think about something like that, but I don't see the presidency in my future." I think of another American expression, this one from politics, which I adapt: Egypt could do worse, and probably will.

SONS AND SAVIORS Will it be Gamal Mubarak who succeeds the incumbent? He is head of the policy secretariat of the National Democratic Party, or NDP. He has just come back from meetings in Washington, including with President Bush and Vice President Cheney. At Sharm El Sheikh, he talks a very good game -- a reformist and liberal game. Whether he is for real remains to be seen. I have observed Saif Qaddafi, the Libyan dictator's son, at Davos. Gamal seems the more promising character, I must say. And Robert Zoellick, the deputy secretary of state, weighs in interestingly. In a session with journalists, Zoellick says that Gamal seems intent on overhauling his party, while "what I will politely call the more traditional NDP leaders I have met" exhibit no interest in change whatsoever.

Zoellick notes that the Egyptian government has made a number of "mistakes" lately. Like what? "Like beatin' people up," when they have taken to the street to protest. But, he says, we should not overlook the changes that have already occurred in Egypt. Five years ago, citizens would not have demonstrated -- it was too dangerous. It's still dangerous, manifestly, but less so. And a major Egyptian businessman, M. Shafik Gabr -- chairman of the Arab Business Council -- says something memorable, in a panel discussion. "When I talked about privatization 15 years ago, I was called a traitor to the Egyptian government." Not anymore. Privatization is the policy of the government. And Gabr may be the first person I have ever heard use the phrase "trickle down" underisively.

On this same panel is another apostle of change in the Arab world, or rather, the Muslim world: Shaukat Aziz, the prime minister of Pakistan. He is a smooth, smooth operator, a former executive with Citibank. He remembers being "an armchair critic, sitting in my office in Manhattan" -- but he went home in the late 1990s, to participate in his country's hoped-for revival. He lists the elements of a country's success: "liberalization, deregulation, privatization, transparency, improvement in

governance." This is sweet music, and you could call it the World Economic Forum's theme song. Aziz spends some time on resistance to change -- "a natural human trait." In his telling, the entrenched interests in Pakistan have resisted change fiercely. But they have not been successful. "Globalization is upon us," says Aziz, "it is not a cliché." Having said that, he cites a cliché, and a true one: "Globalization is a tidal wave: You can either ride it, and go far; or resist it, and be swept away."

He emphasizes the need to explain to people what you are doing, as you go. In many parts of the world -- Reaganites will have a hard time believing this! -- "deregulation" is a dirty word. People interpret it to mean an abdication of governmental responsibility, a laying bare to predators. This mindset must be amended. And the prime minister tells several illustrative, and amusing, tales from Pakistan. For example, do you know what it's like to inform the communications ministry that it is no longer running the phone company? What? Not running the phone company? But that's why we exist! That is why they used to exist.

Yet another reformer is Bassem Awadallah, formerly finance minister of Jordan, now director of King Abdullah's office. He makes the point that, "if reform were easy, it would have happened a long time ago." Governments don't reform on their own, out of some moral awakening; they do so when crisis is upon them. And that opens the way for "a culture of meritocracy, the rule of law, freedom of expression." Some countries are moving faster than others (and some are not moving at all). But pace of change matters less than that "the train is moving in the right direction." Like many others at this conference, Awadallah stresses that governments must make room for legitimate parties, a legitimate opposition. People must have choices other than the status quo or radical Islam; otherwise stalemate or disaster is ensured.

BEHOLD AN ARAB BLOG NETWORK One bright morning, I moderate a panel on new media in the Arab world, and it has a title: "The Revolution Will Be Televised." There is no doubt that new media are making a difference in this region. Cable television is prominent, yes. But the Internet is increasingly a factor, and so are cell phones: on which text messages are sent. These messages fly around the Middle East (for purposes vile or wholesome). Young journalists are present at this discussion, and they are encouraging: moderate, enlightened, reform-minded. The best of them have no desire to work for state-run media, and no desire to be bosses in them. They want independence, and a multiplicity of views.

A Palestinian says that taboos are being broken down. For example, in the territories, it used to be impermissible to discuss sexual harassment; now it is possible. And it's a pleasure to be introduced to iToot.net. This is an Arab blog network, run by a young Jordanian, Ahmad Humeid. On this network, freedom of expression is not merely an abstraction; it's a fact. And this is something fairly new under the Middle Eastern sun. Governments can always crack down, and some of them already have. But people, in general, are getting bolder. Someone on the panel suggests that there is all too much information on the Internet. Someone else counters, "Too much information! The thought of it makes my heart glad!"

What there is no debate over, really, is whether Muslim countries can become democratic. Rightly or wrongly, it is taken for granted. One afternoon, I decide to put the question to the Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. "Some people say that Islam and democracy are incompatible. What do you say?" Erdogan answers that his response need not be verbal; he can simply point to his country, Turkey. "We are a country in which 98 percent of the people happen to be Muslim. And we are a democracy, in which the rule of law, secularism, and the fundamental rights of liberty are held dear." Erdogan makes the common observation that Turkey is "a bridge between the Arab world and the West." And since many eyes are on Turkey -- if I'm interpreting the prime minister correctly -- "we are condemned to success." An arresting phrase, that: "condemned to success." Turkey cannot afford to fail, he seems to be saying; it needs to set an example.

Bob Zoellick says that, when he comes to the Middle East, he can sense the old order breaking down. He had the same kind of feeling in the last years of the Cold War. Not that the two situations are identical. He paraphrases Mark Twain: History doesn't repeat itself, but sometimes it rhymes. And Zoellick has little patience for those who say that democracy has no chance here. He recalls being a teacher in Hong Kong, in 1980. And his Chinese students said, "Oh, democracy's not for us -- not for us Asians. They have democracy in Japan, in some odd form. But that's an exception." And now, says Zoellick, we see democracy in South Korea and Taiwan. And, to varying degrees, in other East Asian countries as well. "I don't believe anyone is immune to democracy."

Depending on what you choose to emphasize, you can say that the Middle East is going brilliantly, or going abysmally. We are all under the influence of the last person we have met, or the last article we have read. The truth is, all the good news is true; and all the bad news is true. Which is more important, and which will win out in the end? In Egypt, there are bright faces, like Ahmed Nazif, and that "dream team." And then there is Muhammad Abd al-Fattah, a member of parliament, who recently said that "9/11 was carried out by American agents," so that "Bush would have a pretext to declare war on Islam." But I have a feeling that these people -- the authoritarians and the nut jobs -- are yesterday's men. And that the liberals, or relative liberals, I have met are tomorrow's men. That train that Bassem Awadallah mentioned? Whatever its pace, it seems to be moving, and not backward, either.

After the Pharaoh

Newsweek

By Christopher Dickey

7/3

During his recent weeks in prison, one of Egypt's best-known bloggers, Alaa Abdel Fateh, had a terrible fantasy. What would happen to him if Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, 78, the man he loves to hate, passed away while Abdel Fateh was in the slammer? "I'm sure millions are actively praying for his sudden death," he wrote in one of several postings that were smuggled out. "Normally I'd be happy. But now that I'm in jail it's a scary thought."

His nightmare scenario? That it would take months for order to be established, with who knows what result. The 24-year-old blogger wrote from the four- by six-meter cell he shared with five other prisoners: "Most likely no one but our immediate family will remember us until it is over. In my mind most people will continue living their lives normally. The huge bureaucracy will chug along, but all security organs will be paralyzed. No officer will wake up the next day and head for his post. Which means [the] prison will be abandoned." What might follow, he dared not imagine.

The irony of Egypt today is that many people, even those who detest Mubarak, share Abdel Fateh's misgivings about a future without the man who has been their ruler, their protector and some would say their jailer for almost 25 years. No matter how much they want to be rid of him, they cannot imagine, quite, who will be in charge and how order will be maintained. Will they be liberated? Or locked down even tighter than they were before? Will power pass from the father to the son, the suave 42-year-old Gamal Mubarak, as many expect? Or to the military? Or to the Islamists? Or will the country descend into chaos as all the contenders compete? The stability of the region, and what's left of the fragile U.S. policy there, depends on an orderly transition. But so much political dust has gathered in Egypt that, once it's kicked up, years could pass before it settles.

Just last summer, a contagious excitement about democratic change was sweeping the Middle East, encouraged and sometimes inspired by Bush administration policies and rhetoric. There had been a massive turnout for Iraq's first elections, then huge protests that drove Syria's troops out of Lebanon. In Egypt, Mubarak decided to allow opposition candidates to run against him for the first time in presidential elections.

But since then, the Iraqi quagmire has deepened. Lebanese politicians now live in terror after a long string of assassinations. Mubarak's leading opponent in last year's vote, Ayman Nour, languishes in prison with no further chance of appeal; Egyptian parliamentary elections were cut short and the results shamelessly rejiggered to limit the gains of the Muslim Brotherhood; new municipal elections have been postponed. Judges who rebelled at being forced to endorse the parliamentary fraud were prosecuted, reprimanded or reined in. The opposition has not been silenced, but fear hangs heavy in the air.

At the slightest hint of street protest, cohorts of riot police seal off whole sections of Cairo. Hired thugs with police protection are let loose on the dissidents. Mahmoud Hamza, a judge who tried to film one such crackdown in April, was left with internal bleeding and a broken arm. "I believe I am under surveillance and my phone is tapped," he says, adding that his cell phone was taken and the calls on it traced. Hundreds have been arrested. Most are members of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is outlawed but also tolerated as a useful political enemy by a government that wants the threat of Islamism to be the only alternative. The Brothers are now the second largest party in Parliament, with 20 percent of

the seats.

For many in Egypt, last year's dreams, this year's bare-knuckled beatings, and the coming years' growing uncertainties resemble the magical realism of Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez, whose works are popular throughout the Middle East. In his "Autumn of the Patriarch," a decaying dictator has an "irrepressible passion to endure," but dies just the same. So now for Cairenes. "You feel like you are walking in its pages," says Ibrahim Issa, an outspoken columnist in the daily *Al-Dustour*. "There is a political culture of uncertainty." Ghada Shahbender, an English teacher who cofounded the dissident Web site *Shayfeen.com* last year, worries about who, or what, might replace Mubarak. "If there is 'divine intervention'," she asks, employing a euphemism for the dictator's death, "what can we fall back on? Will it be the military? The judicial system? Or chaos?"

Searching for a road map to the post-Hosni Mubarak future, intellectuals and businessmen in Cairo are talking about models that might guide Egypt's course. As they mull over the China model, the Turkey model, the Algeria model, the Mexico model and so on, they sometimes sound like blind men trying to describe an elephant, each touching some separate part and coming up with a wildly different picture of the beast as a whole. Yet, from each description one learns something significant about the elephant--about Egypt and about the whole notion of democratic experiments in the Middle East.

"The Chinese model," for example, is shorthand for a system in which the government remains strongly authoritarian while opening up its economy and profiting from free markets. With a little well-polished discourse about a "process" of political reform, this is essentially the design put forward by Gamal Mubarak, who now heads up the politburo of his father's National Democratic Party. The reformist cabinet he helped install two years ago has won praise from the international financial community, and the numbers look good. The economy is growing at almost 6 percent a year. Foreign investment has tripled to \$6 billion in three years. Tourist facilities have improved. A recent conference of the World Economic Forum in Sharm el-Sheikh was a showcase for Egyptian modernity and efficiency.

But there's a major problem with the Chinese analogy: Egypt is not China. On the one hand--and this is good--even with the crackdowns in Cairo, the Egyptians allow more freedom of speech than Beijing. On the other hand, while Egypt may be a big market in the Arab world, it's puny compared with the powerhouses of the East. The United States and Europe are not going to excuse Egypt's political repression, as they basically do China's, because of the potential to make enormous riches in the world's biggest market. In fact, there's a joke, repeated often in Cairo's financial circles, about Mubarak chatting with Chinese President Hu Jintao before a state visit to Beijing. Hu asks him how many people he has. Mubarak replies: "70 million." "Ah, well, then," says Hu. "Bring them along!" The bitter truth for Egyptians is that the world economy has not discovered any pressing need for what they have to offer. "In America there are Chinese goods everywhere you look," says Issa. "Do you see any Egyptian goods?"

Many members of the Egyptian elite hope (indeed, some pray) that the military will be the great stabilizing force in Egyptian life if politics takes a sharp turn toward Islamism or chaos after Hosni Mubarak dies--especially if Gamal tries, and fails, to succeed him. "Gamal is weak, he has no credentials," says Hisham Kassem, editor of the independent daily *Al-Masri al-Yom*. "A civilian cannot run Egypt right now."

The military analogy many people talk about is Turkey, where the uniformed services form what's been called "the deep state," the bedrock of stability. But there are problems with this model, too. For starters, even if you accept such a role for the brass, Turkey's generals are wedded to a secular ideology, while the Egyptian military has no central idea to hold it together. (There are also concerns that the ranks may have been penetrated by Islamists like the ones who killed Mubarak's predecessor, Anwar Sadat, during a parade in October 1981.) Moreover, the jealous rule of Hosni Mubarak, an Air Force general, has badly weakened the officer corps. There is no known equivalent of Pakistan's Gen. Pervez Musharraf ready or able to step forward, and almost any Egyptian general who starts to look popular finds himself retired to a governorship, or worse. Field Marshal Abdul Halim Abu Ghazala, who saved the regime 20 years ago by rolling tanks into the streets to stop a mutiny by the riot police (yes, the riot police, who burned several hotels near the pyramids), has spent most of his time since then under what some of his friends describe as virtual (if comfortable) house arrest.

In the Algerian precedent, political liberalization was embraced by a would-be reformer at the top in the early 1990s, then crushed by the generals when Islamists scored massive victories at the polls.

The civil war that followed cost hundreds of thousands of lives: not a very happy prospect for Egypt, but not a completely implausible one, either. As in Algeria, the military and security leadership might try to keep a low profile, pushing various civilians to the foreground. In Algeria during the worst fighting, people wouldn't even name top generals. They referred to them collectively as "le pouvoir," the power.

A few people make analogies between Egypt's developing party dictatorship, based as it is less on ideology than on patronage, and the long-running rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico. From the 1930s to the 1990s, all Mexican political life, such as it was, took place within the party. Any external threat, like the far left in the 1960s, was quite literally slaughtered. But one saving grace of the Mexican system was the commitment to one and only one term for any given president. That kept the political dynamic inside the party, at least, from becoming fatally rigid. Egypt has no such provision. Far from it.

Ultimately, of course, Egypt is Egypt, where the model of the pharaohs' dynastic rule goes back 5,000 years. The machine is getting ready to put Gamal in power if Hosni can ever be persuaded to give up his throne. Yet Gamal, like most young pharaohs, has been guarded by the palace priests for so long that he may have very little idea how the Egyptian people live or act or think. His entourage is a nomenclatura of consumerism, comfortable in and with the West, but deeply unpopular on the street. His National Democratic Party (NDP) is a tired machine bereft of ideas that bases its power on thuggish coercion and shameless patronage. A party ought to have structured cadres, training, discipline, loyalty and a good feel for the grass roots, says American researcher Joshua Stacher: "The NDP is as legal as it gets, and the Muslim Brotherhood is about as illegal as it gets, but the NDP has none of these things and the Muslim Brothers have all these things."

While Gamal Mubarak continues to cultivate his image in the West as a business-friendly leader, the opposition forces are discovering and cultivating each other--in prison. Soon after the long-haired, leftist Alaa Abdel Fateh was released on June 22 he told NEWSWEEK that he'd developed a great rapport with his fellow inmates, the Muslim Brothers. "It was a really incredible thing for me--the solidarity we experienced," he said. "We were all arrested together supporting the same cause." No longer willing--or able--to depend on Hosni Mubarak's irrepressible passion to endure, Egyptians are, by design and default, shaping their own model for the future. Whatever that may turn out to be.

IRAQ

Spinning Zarqawi

Weekly Standard

By Thomas Joscelyn

6/13

NOW THAT ABU MUSAB AL ZARQAWI IS DEAD, perhaps the American press can also lay to rest the biggest myth about the mass murderer: that he had nothing to do with Saddam's regime prior to the war. It is not clear where this claim originated, but it is widely accepted. In the cover story for this month's Atlantic Monthly, for example, Mary Anne Weaver writes, "In his address to the United Nations making the case for war in Iraq, Powell identified al-Zarqawi--mistakenly, as it turned out--as the crucial link between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's regime."

Similar statements can be found throughout the coverage of Zarqawi's barbarous life. But this says more about the desire to keep Saddam's reign separated from the rise of al Qaeda in Iraq's terror network than it does about the actual facts.

There is abundant evidence that Saddam's regime, at the very least, tolerated Zarqawi's existence in regime-controlled areas of Iraq prior to the war. Moreover, at least three high-level al Qaeda associates have testified to Saddam's warm welcome for Zarqawi and his associates.

Consider what a top al Qaeda operative, Abu Zubaydah, told his CIA interrogators after his capture in March 2002. According to the Senate Intelligence Report, Zubaydah said "he was not aware of a relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda." But, he added that "any relationship would be highly compartmented and went on to name al Qaeda members who he thought had good contacts with the Iraqis." Zubaydah "indicated that he heard that an important al-Qaida associate, Abu Mus'ab al-

Zarqawi, and others had good relationships with Iraqi intelligence."

Zubaydah's testimony has since been further corroborated by a known al Qaeda ideologue, Dr. Muhammad al-Masari. Al-Masari operated the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights, a Saudi oppositionist group and al Qaeda front, out of London for more than decade. He told the editor-in-chief of Al-Quds Al-Arabi that Saddam "established contact with the 'Afghan Arabs' as early as 2001, believing he would be targeted by the US once the Taliban was routed." Furthermore, "Saddam funded Al-Qaeda operatives to move into Iraq with the proviso that they would not undermine his regime."

Al-Masari claimed that Saddam's regime actively aided Zarqawi and his men prior to the war and fully included them in his plans for a terrorist insurgency. He said Saddam "saw that Islam would be key to a cohesive resistance in the event of invasion." Iraqi officers bought "small plots of land from farmers in Sunni areas" and they buried "arms and money caches for later use by the resistance."

Al-Masari also claimed that "Iraqi army commanders were ordered to become practicing Muslims and to adopt the language and spirit of the jihadis."

Just as Saddam ordered, many of Iraq's senior military and intelligence personnel joined or aided Zarqawi's jihad. Many of the more prominent supporters and members of Zarqawi's al Qaeda branch, in fact, came from the upper echelon of Saddam's regime. Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri (aka the "King of Clubs") and his sons allied with Zarqawi, as did members of Muhammad Hamza Zubaydi's (aka the "Queen of Spades") family. Zarqawi's allies included Muhammed Hila Hammad Ubaydi, who was an aide to Saddam's chief of staff of intelligence, and some of his more lethal operatives served as officers in Saddam's military, including Abu Ali, "Al-Hajji" Thamer Mubarak (whose sister attempted a martyrdom operation in Jordan), Abu-Ubaidah, and Abdel Fatih Isa.

THESE BAATHISTS, and others, have spilled much blood in Zarqawi's name. Their attacks were among "Zarqawi's" most successful, including an assault on the Abu Ghraib prison and the first attack on the U.N.'s headquarters. The latter strike was among al Qaeda's earliest, killing Sergio de Mello, the U.N.'s special representative in Baghdad, in August 2003.

In addition to Abu Zubaydah and Muhammad al-Masri, a third high-ranking al Qaeda associate has explained Saddam's support for al Qaeda prior to the war. Hudayfa Azzam, who is the son of one of al Qaeda's earliest and most influential leaders, Adullah Azzam, gave an interview with Agence France Presse in August 2004 in which he explained Saddam's support for al Qaeda's members as they relocated to Iraq:

"Saddam Hussein's regime welcomed them with open arms," Azzam explained, "and young al Qaeda members entered Iraq in large numbers, setting up an organization to confront the occupation." Al Qaeda's terrorists "infiltrated into Iraq with the help of Kurdish mujahideen from Afghanistan, across mountains in Iran." Once in Iraq, Saddam "strictly and directly" controlled their activities, Azzam added.

Curiously, in all of the coverage of Zarqawi's death there has been no mention of Abu Zubaydah's, Muhammad al-Masri's, or Hudayfa Azzam's comments. This is not entirely surprising. Many of the basic facts surrounding Zarqawi's early days in Iraq have been muddled by those vested in the notion that Saddam's Iraq never supported al Qaeda.

Even when al Qaeda terrorists themselves admit that Saddam offered them safe haven and support, their words fall on the mainstream media's deaf ears.

--Thomas Joscelyn is an economist and writer living in New York.

No Posthumous Victory for Zarqawi

Weekly Standard

By William Kristol

6/19

ON WEDNESDAY, June 7, U.S. military forces, in President Bush's words, "delivered justice to the most wanted terrorist in Iraq," Abu Musab al Zarqawi.

Before considering the possible implications for the war in Iraq and the global struggle against terror, we should pause to celebrate so striking an instance of injustice avenged, and justice vindicated. The unjust--even the barbarically unjust--prevail all too often in this world. It is good for civilized people to see, as Marshall Wittmann put it, that "evil has suffered a setback." In the blunt words of Paul Bigley of the United Kingdom, whose brother Ken was captured and beheaded by Zarqawi, the terrorist "deserved what he got and may he rot in hell."

One might also pause to point out that if we had followed the advice of those who want to pull out from Iraq, Abu Musab al Zarqawi would today be alive and well, and triumphant.

What are the implications for the war in Iraq? That depends on some factors that we can't yet know with any confidence--the resilience of al Qaeda's leadership in Iraq, for one thing, and the true sentiment among the Sunnis of Iraq. But it also depends on what we do. Do we take advantage of this opportunity politically and militarily? Do we pursue the enemy aggressively now when it may be rattled and divided? Or do we do look on this as an excuse to begin to get out--as John Kerry and many others are already advocating? If we do the latter, we will give Zarqawi a victory in death that he could not achieve in life.

What needs to be done now seems clear: a renewed offensive to wipe out what remains of Zarqawi's organization and to defeat the insurgency. We highly recommend the strategy laid out three weeks ago in these pages by Frederick W. Kagan (see "A Plan for Victory in Iraq," May 29) for a comprehensive execution of the clear/hold/build approach in the Euphrates Valley, to be accomplished by Iraqi and U.S. forces working together--something that cannot be accomplished if we draw down U.S. forces. Some counterinsurgency experts would put a priority on sending additional troops to establish order in Baghdad.

But whatever operational choices are made, now is the time to take our best shot at really improving the situation on the ground in Iraq. If this requires 90 percent of the president's time, if it requires stressing the Pentagon and shaking up business as usual elsewhere in the administration--so be it. There is no other successful path forward for the Bush administration than victory in Iraq.

It is also the time to revisit the case for the war. Zarqawi is a perfect reminder of why we had to fight in Iraq. Would we be safer if he were living there, under Saddam's protection, securely planning attacks around the world and working on his chemical and biological weapons projects? Zarqawi's life and death remind us that we are engaged in a global struggle. When he died, Palestinian foreign minister Mahmoud al-Zahar, a leader of Hamas, linked the "resistance" in Iraq to that against Israel, deploring what he termed the "assassination" of Zarqawi. As Saul Singer noted in the Jerusalem Post, we are "witnessing the seamlessness of jihad. Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and al Qaeda come from different sides of the Sunni-Shiite divide, but they agree on the need to wage jihad against the West, particularly Israel and the United States. The death of Zarqawi saddens all of them, just as it causes encouragement for free peoples everywhere."

Zarqawi was a cunning and effective leader of the forces of jihadist terror. His brutality against civilians--Shiites mostly, but also Sunnis who wanted to work to create a new Iraq--helped push Iraq dangerously close to a sectarian civil war and ethnic cleansing, and gravely endangered Iraq's brave experiment in democratic federalism and freedom. But he did not succeed, though the threat he helped create is very much with us.

Al Qaeda's top priority remains what it was in Ayman al-Zawahiri's letter to Zarqawi last July: "Expel the Americans from Iraq." To which, surely, Americans must respond: No posthumous victories for Zarqawi.

Their Man in Baghdad

Weekly Standard

By Stephen F. Hayes

6/19

THE LAST QUESTION to General Bill Caldwell at his briefing last Thursday on the death of Abu Musab al Zarqawi came from New York Times reporter Richard Oppel, who wanted to know about Abu al-Masri,

an Egyptian whom many expect to replace Zarqawi as the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq.

Said Caldwell: "Yeah, al Masri, Egyptian Arab. He's not an Iraqi. Born and raised in Egypt. He was trained in Afghanistan, went through his training there. We know he has been involved with IEDs and making here in Iraq. Probably came here around 2002 into Iraq, probably actually helped establish maybe the first al Qaeda cell that existed in the Baghdad area."

Huh? Doesn't Caldwell understand that there were no al Qaeda terrorists in Iraq before the U.S. invasion of March 2003? Everyone knows that terrorists flocked to Iraq only after the war began.

Reading the coverage of Zarqawi's death in the mainstream press one can understand why that myth persists. Many journalists either don't know or choose not to report the fact that Zarqawi was in Baghdad with two dozen al Qaeda associates nearly a year before the war.

It is a fact not seriously in dispute: Colin Powell cited it in his presentation at the United Nations before the war; the Senate Intelligence Committee confirmed it in its bipartisan review of Iraq war intelligence; General Tommy Franks noted in his book about the Iraq war that Zarqawi "had received medical treatment in Baghdad"; and the Jordanian government provided detailed information on Zarqawi's whereabouts to the Iraqi regime in June 2002, as Amman has since acknowledged.

Why, then, in its 35-point bulleted list of "Key Events in the Life of al-Zarqawi," did the New York Times fail to include the terrorist leader's time in Baghdad? And why, in his reflections on Zarqawi in Newsweek, did reporter Christopher Dickey mention that the Jordanian terrorist linked up "with a group of radical Islamists in the rough mountains of the Kurdish north, outside Saddam's control" but say nothing about his time in Saddam's Baghdad?

A Times news account by its superb Baghdad bureau chief, John Burns, noted Caldwell's answer to Opel. But many news stories simply left out the fact that Zarqawi and his associates were operating openly in Baathist Iraq for months before the U.S. invasion in March 2003. Others went further. Associated Press writer Patrick Quinn suggested that Bush administration claims that Zarqawi was a link between Iraq and al Qaeda were deceptive.

"The myth-building around al Zarqawi began even before the war started in March 2003," he wrote. "A month earlier, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell told the U.N. Security Council that al Zarqawi's presence in Iraq was proof of Saddam Hussein's links to al Qaeda.

"That claim was later debunked by U.S. intelligence officials."

That's wrong. Not only was the claim never "debunked," it was confirmed by the Senate Intelligence Committee's July 2004 review of pre-Iraq war intelligence. On February 5, 2003, Powell told the Security Council that the United States was concerned about "the sinister nexus between Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network, a nexus that combines classic terrorist organizations and modern methods of murder. Iraq today harbors a deadly terrorist network headed by Abu Musab al Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda lieutenants."

Powell described Zarqawi's training in Afghanistan, his experience working with chemical weapons, and a chemical weapons facility Zarqawi set up in northern Iraq.

Powell continued:

those helping to run this camp are Zarqawi lieutenants operating in northern Kurdish areas outside Saddam Hussein's controlled Iraq.

But Baghdad has an agent in the most senior levels of the radical organization, Ansar al-Islam, that controls this corner of Iraq. In 2000 this agent offered al Qaeda safe haven in the region. After we swept al Qaeda from Afghanistan, some of its members accepted this safe haven. They remain there today.

Zarqawi's activities are not confined to this small corner of northeast Iraq. He traveled to Baghdad in May 2002 for medical treatment, staying in the capital of Iraq for two months while he recuperated to fight another day.

During this stay, nearly two dozen extremists converged on Baghdad and established a base of operations there. These al Qaeda affiliates, based in Baghdad, now coordinate the movement of people, money and supplies into and throughout Iraq for his network, and they've now been operating freely in the capital for more than eight months.

Iraqi officials deny accusations of ties with al Qaeda. These denials are simply not credible. Last year an al Qaeda associate bragged that the situation in Iraq was, quote, "good," that Baghdad could be transited quickly.

We know these affiliates are connected to Zarqawi because they remain even today in regular contact with his direct subordinates, including the poison cell plotters, and they are involved in moving more than money and materiel.

Powell noted that Zarqawi associates captured after the assassination of U.S. AID employee Laurence Foley, in Jordan, said they received arms from Zarqawi. And much of that operation was planned from Zarqawi's safe haven in regime-controlled Iraq.

The Senate Intelligence Committee found that "the information provided by the Central Intelligence Agency for the terrorism portion of Secretary Powell's speech was carefully vetted by both terrorism and region analysts" and that "none of the portrayals of the intelligence reporting included in Secretary Powell's speech differed in any significant way from earlier assessments published by the Central Intelligence Agency."

In fact, the CIA had known of Zarqawi's relationship with Iraqi Intelligence since March 2002, when al Qaeda operations chief Abu Zubaydah volunteered that information to interrogators in a debriefing upon his capture. Zubaydah said in the interview that Osama bin Laden opposed a "formal alliance" with Saddam Hussein, though he conceded that he would not necessarily know if such a relationship existed. In that same debriefing, however, Zubaydah told the Americans that Zarqawi had good relations with Iraqi Intelligence.

Zubaydah would know that. Zubaydah had known the Jordanian terror leader for years, and together they had plotted to bomb the Radisson Hotel in Amman, Jordan, popular with Americans, on the millennium. They were both later tried in absentia for the thwarted attack.

Zarqawi ran a terrorist training camp in Herat, Afghanistan, before moving to Iraq after the U.S. invasion. Operatives from Jordan's intelligence service, the GID, followed him. The Senate Intelligence Committee, referring to the Jordanians as a "foreign government service," discussed these events in its July 2004 report. "The Iraqi regime was, at a minimum, aware of al Zarqawi's presence in Baghdad in 2002 because a foreign government service passed [redacted] information regarding his whereabouts to Iraqi authorities in June 2002." The Senate report confirmed Powell's claims that Zarqawi was operating in regime-controlled Iraq. "Al Zarqawi and his network were operating both in Baghdad and in the Kurdish-controlled region of Iraq."

More recently, a "Jordanian security official" spoke to the Washington Post. "There is proof that he was in Iraq during that time," the official said. "We sent many memos to Iraq during this time, asking them to identify his position, where he was, how he got weapons, how he smuggled them across the border."

The Post account continues:

Hussein's government never responded, according to the official, who added that documents recovered after its overthrow in 2003 show that Iraqi agents did detain some Zarqawi operatives but released them after questioning. Furthermore, the Iraqis warned the Zarqawi operatives that the Jordanians knew where they were, he said. After he recovered from his injuries, Zarqawi continued to cross borders in the region frequently, using disguises and fake passports to stay one step ahead of the Jordanians.

Why would the Iraqis detain Zarqawi associates only to release them with a warning that the Jordanians were on their trail? According to former and current U.S. military officials, the foreign jihadists were swept up in a broader crackdown on Iraqi religious extremists. But that was not the end of the story. The foreigners were soon released following a directive issued by the office of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein. (Most leaks to the media about the detentions apparently omitted that

interesting fact.)

The death of the savage fanatic Zarqawi reminds us why we are fighting. A look back at his career after Afghanistan reminds us why we are fighting in Iraq.

--Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

Now for the Bad News

Weekly Standard

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

6/19

ABU MUSAB AL ZARQAWI is among the least interesting Islamic terrorists since modern Islamic terrorism took shape in Iran and Egypt in the 1950s and '60s. Compared with Osama bin Laden, with his elegant prose, his appreciation for redolent historical Muslim narrative, his seemingly conscious imitation of the Prophet Muhammad, and his refined, almost feminine movements, Zarqawi was Islamist trailer trash, a crude man whose love of violence was unvarnished, organic, perhaps perversely sexual. But Zarqawi was a man of his age: He is a big red dot on the graph charting the Islamic world's moral free fall since modernity began battering traditional Muslim ethics, with ever-increasing effectiveness after World War One.

It is by no means clear that Zarqawi is near the bottom of this plunge. His joy in massacring infidels--along with all the Muslims the extremists deem apostates--could even become the defining feature of bin Ladenism in the future. Zarqawi's death is a cause for jubilation, especially among Iraq's Shiites, whom he zealously slaughtered. No single man did more to bring on the sectarian strife that is crippling Iraq. If the Shiites give up on the idea of Iraqi brotherhood--which grows ever more likely as half-hearted, undermanned American counterinsurgency strategies continue to fail--and grind the Sunni Arab community into dust, possibly provoking a vicious duel among Sunnis and Shiites across the region, Zarqawi can posthumously and proudly take credit.

Zarqawi was tailor-made for post-Saddam Iraq: a barbaric, very modern Sunni fundamentalist in a society pulverized and militarized by Saddam Hussein. Through oppression and support, Saddam had energized Sunni militancy. Starting in the late 1980s, the Butcher of Baghdad became one of the great mosque builders of Islamic history, and under his domes, Islamic fundamentalists increasingly gathered. Long before Saddam fell, a reinvigorated Sunni Islamic identity was replacing the desiccated, secular Baath party as a, if not the, lodestone of the Sunni community. Always looking outward toward the larger Sunni Arab world (and away from the Shiite Arabs and Sunni Kurds, who comprise about 80 percent of Iraq's population), Iraq's Sunni Arabs were playing catch-up with their foreign brethren, who had already downgraded, if not buried, secular Arab nationalism as an inspiring ideology and given birth to bin Ladenism.

Zarqawi lasted as long as he did in Iraq because he had many sympathizers, probably even among those who were revolted by his gruesome tactics, often aimed at Shiite women and children. Zarqawi and his men were regularly, so it is said, obliged to move their headquarters and areas of operation because of Iraqi Sunni resistance to his methods and his overbearing ways. This may well be true. But Iraq's Sunni insurgents could have easily killed him and his foreign and Iraqi jihadist allies. Their numbers and means dwarfed his. They could have betrayed him long ago, to either his American or his Iraqi enemies. Sunni Arab Iraq is a region of villages, towns, and cities surrounded by great swaths of desert where city kids, like Zarqawi and his foreign holy warriors, cannot sustain themselves. (Important rule about modern Islamic holy warriors: They are urbanites who know not camels.)

The Sunni will to power is deep-rooted and ferociously strong in Iraq. Underestimating this force and failing to confront it head on early in the occupation remains perhaps the single greatest analytical error of the U.S. military, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Coalition Provisional Authority under Ambassador L. Paul Bremer. It distorts and has so far defined the ethics of the Iraqi Sunnis as a community.

Their belief in Sunni supremacy has made mincemeat of those Americans and secularized Iraqis who were certain that Iraqis thought of themselves as Iraqis first, without reference to sectarian loyalties. Sunni hubris has made compromises with the Kurdish and especially the Arab Shiite communities

extraordinarily difficult. Whether it be dividing oil wealth, assigning senior positions in government, or striking the balance between purging and tolerating the former Baathists, Iraq's Sunnis could surely have cut a better deal without the Sunni insurgency. More than any other factor, the insurgency has converted Iraq's traditional Shiite clergy from hostility to federalism in Iraq to neutrality or even sympathy. Zarqawi understood the dynamic here and did all that he could to ensure that sectarian sensitivities were inflamed after Saddam's fall.

It would be comforting to believe that Zarqawi's atrocities have made the Iraqi Sunnis more reflective. The Jordanian holy warrior forced them to look into the abyss. Certainly, killing Zarqawi is both a tactical and philosophical triumph. Contrary to much left-wing mythology, there is not an endless supply of operational talent in third-world "liberation" movements, be they religiously or secularly based. Chop the head off military organizations, even when they are fairly rag-tag, and you can damage them severely, perhaps mortally. The ongoing political process in Iraq, which is drawing in more Sunnis, may have had something to do with Zarqawi's death.

His demise will give Iraqi Sunnis a moment to pause, reflect, and perhaps helpfully rewrite their own history. It would be too much to ask for the leaders of this community to confess the extent to which they contributed to the Zarqawi phenomenon in Iraq; certainly the surrounding Arab Sunni world seems quite willing to accept that decent men and women should experience frissons whenever bin Laden launches lethal attacks on the United States.

Few Sunni Arab intellectuals have responded with joy to the news of Zarqawi's death. Many seem uncomfortable with the tactics Zarqawi used (so, too, it appears, were bin Laden and his Egyptian second, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the tactically sensitive moral conscience of al Qaeda). Far fewer appear to be uncomfortable with Zarqawi's overall objective--humbling the Americans, the Shiites, and the Kurds. We will see in the coming weeks whether a serious, critical discussion of Zarqawi's barbaric treatment of the Shiites develops and who abstains from calling him a martyr.

If the Iraqi Arab Sunnis can stop speaking sympathetically of foreign jihadists, then they might be able to begin to question the ethic of martyrdom that fuels their insurgency against the new order in Iraq. If they can stop using the specter of violence as a negotiating strategy, then they might even be able to abort the growing Shiite violence against them before it consumes the country, destroying the clerically backed effort to create a functioning democracy. This may already be impossible, now that Shiite militias are terrifying the Sunni community. Again, Zarqawi knew what he was doing: Reconciliation would be brutally difficult once the Shiites started doing to Sunnis what the Baathists and the Sunni insurgents and holy warriors had been doing to the Shiites for years.

The dimensions of Zarqawi's possible success are thus enormous--greater than what bin Laden accomplished on September 11. Zarqawi was the right man, with the right tactics, at the right moment. In all probability, he would not have mattered if the United States had actually occupied the Sunni Triangle after the deposing of Saddam Hussein, thereby giving the fallen Sunni Arab community a chance to breathe before they became sentimentally and physically enmeshed by the homegrown insurgency and imported holy war.

But Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld chose not to send more troops to Iraq after the fall of Saddam, even after it became blindingly obvious that the insurgents, not the Americans, controlled the roads throughout the Sunni Triangle. General John Abizaid, the commander of American forces in the Middle East, married Rumsfeld's mania for new-age warfare and his lack of interest in post-Saddam Iraqi society with a very new-age, "light footprint" approach to counterinsurgency.

As this thinking has it, American forces, if deployed in large numbers, are more likely to provoke trouble than secure the peace. We are, as General Abizaid likes to say, "antibodies" in the Muslim Middle East. This is an odd position to hold after three years of ever-worsening insurgency--especially when violence has dropped in Iraq every time the Bush administration has increased U.S. troop levels for a national election. It's an odd position to hold after the victory in Tal Afar, where the American command saturated the town with U.S. troops, and the freed Sunni Arab residents were thankful.

It may well be that the manner of Zarqawi's death will send the wrong signal to the U.S. military, which seems determined to continue its "intelligence-driven" counterinsurgency. Good intelligence was followed by laser-guided munitions--just the kind of action that warms Secretary Rumsfeld's heart. But neither we nor the Iraqis are going to find salvation through good intelligence and smart bombs.

If we continue on this "easy" path, we will only guarantee that Abu Musab al Zarqawi's name will endure. Odds are decent that a historian looking back on our sojourn in Mesopotamia and the Iraqis' valiant effort to create a democracy on the ruins of Saddam's totalitarianism will find on our epitaph some tribute to Zarqawi, our monument no doubt safely inside the Green Zone, far from the carnage that this most savage of terrorists fathered.

--Reuel Marc Gerecht is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

Funeral for Evil

Time

By Mike Allen and James Carney

6/19

Sometimes even presidents have to wait for the news. George W. Bush was meeting with aides in the Oval Office last Wednesday when he turned to National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley for an update on Iraq. "Do you have news for me?" Bush asked. Hadley did. "Sir, I'd like to talk to you alone," Hadley said, clearing the room of other aides. When one of them returned, Bush let the aide in on the secret: "I think we got Zarqawi."

If he sounded a little stunned, it wasn't surprising. The Commander in Chief hasn't had much practice in positive developments in the past nine months. And so, as White House speechwriters went to work on the remarks the President would deliver from the Rose Garden during breakfast news shows, they tried to strike a tone of "tempered optimism," according to an aide who worked on the speech. When Bush appeared before the cameras, he sounded muted, speaking of his hope that the death of Abu Mousab al-Zarqawi would allow Iraq's infant government to "turn the tide" of a war that could still mar Bush's presidency. "Zarqawi is dead," Bush said, "but the difficult and necessary mission in Iraq continues."

It has been 39 months since the U.S. invaded Iraq, and after so many turned corners that have led to dead ends, Bush wisely shunned any predictions about how much good would come from al-Zarqawi's elimination. But the sense of elation in the U.S. command was impossible to contain. With his penchant for videotaped beheadings, spectacular suicide mass killings and Houdini-style escapes from U.S. pursuers, the Jordanian-born al-Zarqawi had become the face of the Sunni insurgency in Iraq, complete with a \$25 million bounty on his head. Bush had all but branded him Hitler, referring to him more than 100 times in speeches as wanting to "sow as much havoc as possible" and "destroy American life." After two 500-lb. bombs pulverized his hideout north of Baghdad last Wednesday evening (10:12 a.m. in Washington), the terrorist managed to hold on briefly, mumbling and struggling as he died in the ruins on a stretcher brought by soldiers. His death was a desperately needed break for the White House and the U.S. military. But is it a turning point or just a temporary reprieve from Iraq's seemingly interminable bloodletting? "No one knows," says a Bush aide. "But it's a good problem to have."

The reality is that the removal of al-Zarqawi may unearth as many new dilemmas as it solves. The hit has forced the Administration to confront a messy breach emerging among top aides. While some officials believe the U.S. should maintain its troop strength for the foreseeable future, others have argued that the Administration should capitalize on any improvements in the situation to accelerate the handover to Iraqis. Administration aides tell TIME that West Wing officials had hoped to reduce the number of troops in Iraq from today's 129,000 to about 100,000 by the end of the year, and possibly before the midterm congressional elections. But the country's slide toward an all-out civil war in recent months had begun to convince them that a drawdown anytime soon would not be feasible. Aides say the White House still wants to preserve the option of eventually saying the Iraqis are prepared to assume greater responsibility, allowing the U.S. to "stand down," as Bush puts it in speeches. That's why Administration officials continue to credit the Baghdad government with every incremental bit of progress in the country. It was no coincidence that U.S. commanders highlighted the relatively passive participation of Iraqi forces in the al-Zarqawi raid and that Administration officials praised new Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki for naming his last three government ministers--even though it took the Iraqis almost two months to agree on them. "The only way they can ever bring down the troop number is to make a strong case to the American people that the people of Iraq are doing well," a former senior Administration official says.

For the moment, Bush advisers say, a drawdown of U.S. forces isn't imminent. Bush plans to hold a two-day summit at Camp David this week in which Iraqi leaders will be beamed in by secure video lines for discussions about how to curb sectarian violence and kick-start reconstruction. Aides stressed this will not be a troop-withdrawal meeting--but the White House still faces pressure to show some kind of progress toward reducing U.S. involvement in Iraq. In Congress, both parties are scrambling to find ways to convince voters that they can bring troops home soon. Though Republicans on Capitol Hill danced giddily on al-Zarqawi's crater, they complain privately that what they consider Bush's stubbornness--his conviction that to withdraw would be to admit error--could cost them control of the House, if not the Senate. "If the war goes well, Republicans do better," says Connecticut G.O.P. Representative Chris Shays, who faces a tough re-election fight this year. "If the war goes badly, then Republicans will not fare as well. That's the reality." Democrats, though eager to congratulate the troops for knocking out such a heinous enemy, were just as eager to move on to the larger picture, arguing that al-Zarqawi's demise would have limited impact on the sectarian killings tearing Iraq apart. In the Senate, Democrats John Kerry of Massachusetts and Russ Feingold of Wisconsin are planning to offer amendments to a defense-spending bill that will call for U.S. combat forces to be withdrawn. "Our troops have done their job in Iraq, and they've done it valiantly," said Kerry, Bush's opponent in the 2004 presidential election. "It's time to work with the new Iraqi government to bring our combat troops home by the end of this year." Kerry told TIME, "Our troops did an incredible job killing this thug, and now he's out of the way."

Evaluating when the U.S. might be able to draw down its forces may hinge on the answer to another question: What will the absence of al-Zarqawi mean on the ground? U.S. military officials caution that the death of al-Zarqawi may not do much to erode the insurgency's strength in the short term, if measured by the number of attacks and casualties. Abu al-Bara, an al-Qaeda commander in Iraq, spoke to TIME and claimed the organization has a succession plan in place. "Let them be ready for our revenge in the name of our brothers and sisters who became martyrs on Iraqi soil," he says. Al-Zarqawi's foreign fighters always were merely a sliver of the bad guys in Iraq: intelligence estimates suggest al-Zarqawi commanded a few hundred men, of whom only a fraction were foreign jihadis. By most estimates that's less than 5% of the 25,000 to 50,000 insurgents believed to be operating inside the country. While al-Zarqawi's al-Qaeda in Iraq faction has been linked to some of the worst attacks in Iraq, homegrown Iraqi insurgents have shown themselves perfectly capable of building and deploying the improvised explosives that continue to bedevil and kill fellow citizens and U.S. troops. The sectarian violence al-Zarqawi helped spark with brutal attacks on Shi'ite "infidels" has taken root in the lawless country, with illegal militias and death squads murdering thousands of Iraqis in the past six months.

But al-Zarqawi did have an impact that measured far greater than the number of his fighters, which is why his demise was as much a psychological victory as an operational one. If the strike changes history in Iraq, it will be a matter more of momentum than mechanics. For the thousands of Americans fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of what the Pentagon calls a "Long War" against terrorism, the ability to pause, even for an hour, to revel in a clear military success was welcome. "A cult figure is dead because people he trusted betrayed him," a senior U.S. government official mused on his back porch in Washington on the night of the announcement, smoking a cigar and sipping wine. "They'll be studying this op years from now at the war colleges."

Iraqis weren't waiting. Most seem just to want their country back, from the insurgents and from the Americans. In the Shi'ite holy city of Najaf, locals drove around as if the entire town were taking part in a wedding procession, putting flowers on their cars and thrusting guns into the air. Mohammed Kareem, 36, spoke of a simple hope--"to live a peaceful life." Despite al-Zarqawi's death, that aspiration, as even President Bush would concede, may take years to achieve. The challenge for Bush is to convince Americans as well as Iraqis like Kareem that patience deserves to be a virtue again.

For the thousands of Americans fighting in Iraq, the ability to revel in a clear military success was welcome.

How They Killed Him

Time

By Bill Powell and Scott MacLeod

The dinner party had gathered last Wednesday evening in a farmhouse in the fertile, fruit-growing countryside just outside Baqubah, 30 miles north of Baghdad. One of the attendees was Abu Mousab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq. With him were at least three women and three men, including Sheik Abdul-Rahman, al-Zarqawi's so-called spiritual adviser and confidant. Also in the house was one of al-Zarqawi's most trusted couriers, an aide tasked with relaying messages from the commander to militants in the field. What al-Zarqawi could not have known was that U.S. and Jordanian intelligence officials had been tracking the movements of Abdul-Rahman and the courier--whom Jordanian intelligence refers to as Mr. X--for weeks. Fewer than half a dozen members of a U.S. reconnaissance and surveillance team from Delta Force hid in a grove of date and palm trees, watching the building. After years of hunting, they finally had the prey in their sights.

But almost as soon as they took up position, the commandos feared they were about to lose him. A special-operations source tells TIME that the surveillance team was worried that there wasn't enough time to assemble a ground assault force to raid the house and capture al-Zarqawi; the commandos at the site lacked sufficient manpower and weaponry to attack on their own. As dusk neared, the team fretted al-Zarqawi might slip away if they waited too long. A knowledgeable Pentagon official says the Delta team "saw one group come into the house and one group exit." Al-Zarqawi was not in the departing group, but the commandos were afraid he might be in the next one. The recon unit's leader radioed his superiors to request an air strike. Two Air Force F-16s on another mission miles away were given the assignment. At 6:12 p.m., the first of two precision-guided 500-lb. bombs fell on the farmhouse. For anyone still inside, there was nowhere left to hide.

The U.S. wasn't taking chances. During the three-year hunt for him, al-Zarqawi was a maddeningly elusive target--a master of disguise who could pass as a woman in a burqa one day, an Iraqi policeman the next. He traveled in groups of women and children to lower suspicion and frequently moved with ease through checkpoints in Iraq. Although military commanders believe they came close to capturing al-Zarqawi on at least half a dozen occasions in the past two years, few had reason to anticipate an imminent breakthrough. But military and intelligence officials in Washington, Baghdad and Amman tell TIME that the net around al-Zarqawi tightened significantly in the weeks leading up to the strike--boosted by the cooperation of al-Qaeda informants willing to betray their leader. The U.S. scored the war's biggest triumph since catching Saddam Hussein thanks to the determination of a small group of American hunters, to a Jordanian King's desire to avenge an attack on his country and, as always, to a good deal of luck. "This wasn't two hours', two nights' or two weeks' work," says a government source. "This was years of work to get this one guy."

For all his bravado, al-Zarqawi knew he could be caught at any time. In January 2004, U.S. intelligence officers intercepted a 17-page letter addressed to Osama bin Laden in which al-Zarqawi expressed concern for his longevity. "[Iraq] has no mountains in which we can take refuge and no forests in whose thickets we can hide," he wrote. "Our backs are exposed and our movements compromised. Eyes are everywhere."

By that time, hunting al-Zarqawi and his senior aides was the primary responsibility of a secretive special-operations task force whose number designation changed constantly (it was recently called Task Force 145). It was made up of military intelligence operatives, counterterrorism commandos of the Delta Force, and the Navy's SEAL Team 6, plus Army Rangers. Although the task force had helped capture Saddam in December 2003, the search for al-Zarqawi proved more frustrating. In late 2004, Iraq security forces caught him near the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah, but the al-Qaeda leader was able to talk his way out of custody. Several months later, according to special-ops sources, the task force's commandos closed in on his vehicle west of Baghdad near the Euphrates River, but he escaped. After every getaway, al-Zarqawi went further underground and beefed up his personal security. "I would like to say that every time we had a near miss, we got closer and closer," says a knowledgeable Pentagon official. "But that's not necessarily the case. After both close calls, there were periods where we had no information on him."

But early this year, the secret task force's luck began to change. Tips came in from Iraqi insurgents, former Baath Party members loyal to Saddam, some of whom objected to al-Zarqawi's viciousness and attacks against Shi'ites. U.S. officials say they also received valuable assistance from the government of Jordan, al-Zarqawi's home country. A Jordanian security official tells TIME that one month after the November 2005 suicide attacks on three hotels in Amman, which killed 60 people, Jordanian King Abdullah II ordered his intelligence officials to set up a new security branch, the Knights of God, to

launch an offensive against terrorists outside the country's borders and eliminate al-Zarqawi. In addition to providing support to anti-Zarqawi tribes in Iraq, the Jordanians sought sources inside al-Qaeda who could lead them to the al-Qaeda boss. The official says that one informant, described as neither Jordanian nor Iraqi, made contact with three of al-Zarqawi's couriers, all of whom the Jordanians referred to as Mr. X. According to the official, the informant reported spotting one Mr. X in an area outside Baqubah last week. "Mr. X went to Baqubah, so we knew Zarqawi went there," says the official.

Meanwhile, U.S. intelligence operatives gave the special-ops task force a tantalizing lead. For nearly a month, the commandos had monitored every move of Abdul-Rahman, the spiritual adviser, whose locations had been revealed by an al-Qaeda operative captured in May near the Iraq-Jordan border. When Abdul-Rahman surfaced near Baqubah last week--apparently in the same location as the Jordanians' Mr. X--the commandos moved in for the kill. "We had absolutely no doubt whatsoever that Zarqawi was in the house," Army Major General William Caldwell told reporters in Baghdad the day after the strike. The Jordanian security official told TIME that the bombing killed Abdul-Rahman and Mr. X, in addition to al-Zarqawi's 16-year-old wife.

Remarkably, al-Zarqawi apparently survived the attack, at least for a short while. Iraqi police, Iraqi security forces and military helicopters bearing U.S. soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division swarmed over the safe house immediately after the strike. Iraqi police, Caldwell said, were the first on the scene, and they put al-Zarqawi onto a stretcher. A special-ops exploitation team trained to glean intelligence from raids arrived with photos, fingerprint smudges and descriptions of the scars and tattoos on his body, much of which had been supplied by Jordanian intelligence. As the team began examining him, according to Caldwell, al-Zarqawi muttered something and tried to "turn away off the stretcher." He was quickly "resecured" and died of his wounds shortly thereafter. After investigators on the scene positively identified him, word reached Pentagon officials as they awoke Thursday in Washington. "It's been a long, long effort," says one. "But we finally got the bastard."

In the wake of the attack, says the Jordanian security official, members of al-Zarqawi's organization in Iraq launched a series of interrogations in search of those who sold out their leader, leading Jordanian officials to hope that the hit is already causing dissension in jihadist ranks. U.S. intelligence officials believe al-Qaeda in Iraq is likely to name a successor soon, and the Bush Administration was careful to point out that the insurgency will outlive al-Zarqawi. But no one who comes next will have his twisted star power, at least not for a while. "The violence is not only al-Qaeda," says the Jordanian security official. "But this weakens one important link. It's a warning to all these groups that they are not immune. If we can get Zarqawi, we can get you too." [The following descriptive text appears within A diagram] The Strike

Abu Mousab al-Zarqawi had eluded U.S. forces for years. A special team of intelligence operatives was tracking his spiritual adviser, hoping for a break.

Then they learned the two were going to meet Wednesday afternoon THE HOUSE

A small Delta Force team of perhaps half a dozen, together with a handful of Iraqi security personnel, watches the house and confirms that al-Zarqawi and Sheik Abdul-Rahman, his adviser, are inside

6:12 p.m. TWO EXPLOSIONS

With darkness approaching and lacking enough forces to storm the house, the surveillance team calls for an air strike. Two Air Force F-16 fighters respond. One drops two precision bombs

Evening POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION

After the bombing, Iraqi security and 4th Infantry Division troops swarm over the scene. Al-Zarqawi dies of his injuries soon after he is found. His identity is confirmed through scars, tattoos and fingerprints F-16 FIGHTING FALCON A compact, light and versatile fighter jet. It is highly maneuverable and able to perform in both air-to-air and air-to-surface combat THE TARGET The house, made of cinder blocks and reinforced concrete, was set back in a grove of date palms, about 1.25 miles (2 km) northeast of the village of Hibhib First bomb GBU-12 A 500-lb. (227 kg) smart bomb that follows a laser signal to its target. An electronics pod under the aircraft or a spotter on the ground illuminates the target with a laser. A guidance system in the nose of the bomb detects that spot and controls the movements of the airfoils in the rear to steer the bomb toward the target. The bomb has a

range of about eight miles (13 km) Second bomb GBU-38 Similar in weight to its counterpart, this one finds its target using GPS coordinates and satellite guidance.

How To Exploit The Opening

Newsweek

By Fareed Zakaria

6/19

You've read all the cautions. This is not a turning point. Zarqawi's death is not a seismic event. He was not that brilliant or strategic. He will be replaced. Al Qaeda is just one of the many militias running rampant in Iraq. All true. And so, the violence continues. But there are some political signs--no more than glimmers--that make me just a bit hopeful. First, Zarqawi's death might be a sign of the changing attitude of some radical Sunnis.

Zarqawi was likely betrayed by someone close to his organization, perhaps even someone within it. His extreme ideology and actions were turning off Sunnis, even those who had allied with him. His increasing

brutalities against Shiite civilians--blowing up mosques--were not popular. In a recent audiotape, he urged the killing of Grand Ayatollah Sistani, who is respected (even if not revered) by many Sunnis. Last week, in Fallujah, the heart of radical Sunni land, Zarqawi's men tried to destroy the tomb of a Sunni saint because, according to Al Qaeda's puritanical interpretation of Islam, such shrines are blasphemous. But Fallujah's Sunnis, even the radical and fundamentalist among them, have long respected such sites. The result was a pitched battle between Al Qaeda and other Sunni insurgent groups. The latter won.

Then there is the changing attitude of some radical Shiites. More important than Zarqawi's death last week was the completion of the cabinet in Baghdad, which included a Sunni defense minister. Earlier in the week Iraq's Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki, announced the release of about 600 prisoners, a number that will go up to 2,000. It also reported that Maliki will present a national reconciliation plan at a conference sponsored by the Arab League later this month. The proposal apparently will make some provision to end de-Baathification in its current form, and include an offer to reintegrate Sunnis who abandon the insurgency. Such an initiative would represent an attempt by Maliki to address key Sunni demands and draw some of the more moderate insurgent groups into the mainstream political process.

Maliki is also beginning to move on the militias. One of his first official acts as prime minister was to go down to the city of Basra, where Shia militias run rampant, and declare a state of emergency. He has also spoken up about disbanding all militias in Iraq. His actions have provoked angry reactions from his rivals within the Shia alliance, chiefly SCIRI, which has its militias throughout Basra. SCIRI's leader, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, and his son, Mohsen al-Hakim, have both given interviews in the past few days (to Knight Ridder and the Financial Times) that indirectly criticize Maliki's new direction. This internal Shia dissension has been the principal cause of the delays and dysfunction in Iraq's government. And it may get worse now as the tensions rise to the surface. Maliki will have to tackle not just Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, but Moqtada al-Sadr. However, Zarqawi's death has given Maliki greater popularity and thus a stronger hand with which to deal with all his challengers.

Maliki sees his job, first and foremost, as creating security, and he wants to do it by using more troops and focusing them in Baghdad. That's a good idea, but true security will now require a lot more than firepower. Maliki has to rebuild basic political order. Consider an analogy. Imagine if after the fall of apartheid in South Africa, the black majority had come to power and decided to dismantle the entire apparatus of the Afrikaner state. Let's say they disbanded the army, which had slaughtered them, and then fired all the whites in the civil service. The result would have been chaos, a dysfunctional state, and--in all probability--the rise of an Afrikaner insurgency. But they did none of that. On the contrary, the ANC was extraordinarily forgiving, reassuring white South Africans that they would have an important place in the new South Africa. As a result, South Africa has been more politically stable and economically successful than anyone would have predicted in 1994.

The contrast is obvious. The United States disbanded the Iraqi army and fired 40,000 bureaucrats after taking over Iraq, on the urging of some--though not all--Shia political leaders. We see the results. For

two years now we have been attempting to reverse course. But to build a stable political order, it will take more than just an Iraqi military. It will take an Iraqi Mandela.

The Apostle Of Hate

Time

By Aparisim Ghosh

6/19

Abu Mousab Al-Zarqawi didn't have to be in a room to silence it. Dozens of times in the past three years, I have sat with insurgent leaders, listening to their bombastic pronouncements and boastful tales of "victorious battles" against U.S. forces, complete with verbal sound effects of gunfire and explosions. On such occasions, there was only one sure way to quiet them down: ask about al-Zarqawi. Suddenly, they would begin talking in hushed tones, almost whispers--as if saying his name out loud might conjure him like a malevolent spirit.

Many of those men had worked with al-Zarqawi, plotted with him, fought alongside him. But they remained in awe of him, citing his capacity to take any situation and bend it to his will. "Three years ago, Abu Mousab was asking us for advice on how to start a jihad in Iraq," said an insurgent commander who had first met al-Zarqawi in Fallujah in the weeks after the fall of Saddam Hussein. "But in a few months, we were, one way or another, fighting the jihad by his rules."

By the time he died, al-Zarqawi had not only rewritten the history of the insurgency in Iraq but also bequeathed to the world a deadly new type of terrorist. While Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri issued impotent threats from their hideouts, al-Zarqawi got his hands bloody in Iraq, turning it into the holy war's primary battlefield. He became the jihad's eminent fighter-superstar, embracing and embellishing his infamy with brazen declarations and brutal atrocities--he personally decapitated American Nicholas Berg on videotape, sent scores of suicide bombers to their doom, killed fellow Muslims and attacked their houses of worship. He extended his reach beyond Iraq, dispatching suicide bombers to attack hotels in his native Jordan last November, killing 60.

It was not just his insistence on remaining on the front lines of the battle that set him apart from his al-Qaeda elders. As the insurgency unfolded, al-Zarqawi articulated and then acted upon an ideology more forbidding and toxic than even bin Laden may have imagined. In branding Shi'ites as betrayers of the faith and calling for their liquidation, al-Zarqawi stoked a war within Islam itself--one that is being played out in the streets of Iraq every day, with Iraqis engaging in the kind of sectarian frenzy that al-Zarqawi had advocated all along.

Few could have predicted he would play such a pivotal role. He spent his youth as a street thug in the dusty town of Zarqa before finding his life's purpose in the terrorist camps of Afghanistan. After returning to Jordan he was arrested for possessing explosives and spent five years in prison, where he memorized the Koran and drafted cellmates to join his quest to overthrow Jordan's secular rulers. "Either you were with them or you were an enemy," a former prison mate told TIME in 2004. "There was no gray area." Al-Zarqawi drifted back to Afghanistan and passed through Iran and northern Iraq before the U.S. invasion in March 2003. In the chaotic days after the fall of Saddam, al-Zarqawi began to build a terrorist network by luring foreign jihadis to Iraq. He pulled off his first two spectacular attacks with the August 2003 bombings of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad and the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf.

Although the Bush Administration at times overstated al-Zarqawi's indispensability to a predominantly homegrown insurgency, al-Zarqawi himself was a master of self-promotion. The high school dropout learned to use the Internet to burnish his image, recruit fighters and propagate his dream of perpetual jihad against infidels everywhere. It was his name that filled collection boxes in extremist mosques across the Islamic world. The National Counterterrorism Center believes that militants linked to al-Zarqawi may be operating in as many as 40 countries. In Iraq his dark charisma turned him into a figure of myth and legend. A top commander of al-Nasser Salaheddin, an insurgent group, told TIME last month, "When children in Fallujah and Ramadi play war games, some will be mujahedin, others will be Americans, but the role everybody wants to play is Abu Mousab. The biggest, toughest boy will get that role."

Al-Zarqawi merged his jihadi group under the umbrella of al-Qaeda and pledged fealty to bin Laden.

But there was reason to believe the relationship was strained. Al-Zarqawi's jihad was more rigidly uncompromising than bin Laden's: it wasn't enough to kill Westerners, it was just as important to slaughter fellow Arabs who followed a different form of Islam. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, bin Laden and al-Zawahiri had been suspicious of Shi'ites but learned to work with them. In al-Zarqawi's eyes, Iraq's Shi'ites were apostates because their practice of Islam differs from the extreme Wahhabist version he embraced. For that, they deserved even more gruesome punishment than nonbelievers. Fighters from his inner circle told TIME he lost his cool only when discussing Shi'ites. "He really hates [them], even more than the Americans," says a mid-ranking al-Qaeda operative. Although al-Zarqawi taunted and harangued the U.S. in videos and statements posted on the Internet, in recent months it was the sectarian war that consumed most of his energy. He launched scores of attacks against Shi'ites and their religious sites, culminating in the Feb. 22 bombing of the al-Askari shrine in Samarra.

The campaign has shattered the centuries-old sectarian balance in Iraq and set Shi'ites and Sunnis at one another's throats. The ensuing civil war may be al-Zarqawi's most poisonous legacy. In his last known communiqué, an audiotape released just days before he was killed, he exhorted Sunnis to "get rid of the infidel snakes ... and don't listen to those advocating an end to sectarianism and calling for national unity."

He was just as unforgiving of fellow Sunnis who refused to subscribe to his extreme vision, sending his suicide bombers to kill those who tried to join the peaceful political process. His unbending will caused splits in the Iraqi insurgency, as nationalist fighters and al-Zarqawi's jihadis fought armed skirmishes with one another. But, eventually, even those who disagreed with his methods conceded they were better off with him on their side than fighting against him: they needed the money, the materials, the men and the legitimacy that the fighter-superstar brought to the table.

In the final months of his life, al-Zarqawi sought a different kind of legitimacy. In exclusive interviews with TIME, fighters from his inner circle said that al-Zarqawi wanted to be seen, like bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, as a religious authority as well as a military commander. He may also have been trying to project a more moderate image, mindful of the revulsion induced by his barbarism toward fellow Muslims. One jihadist contact says al-Zarqawi had a growing sense that he couldn't trust those around him. He took to mimicking the habits of the Prophet Muhammad recorded in Muslim texts, including the way he brushed his teeth and wore his sandals. Lacking formal religious training, he prayed incessantly and consulted frequently with religious advisers--attempts, perhaps, to shed his murderous past and reinvent himself as a savior of Islam. But he never got the chance. U.S. forces bore in on al-Zarqawi by tracking his spiritual adviser Sheik Abdul-Rahman, a man the terrorist may have hoped would help guide him toward a new life. The U.S., and death, found him instead.

In his view, slaughtering fellow Arabs who followed different forms of Islam was as important as killing Westerners.

Seize the Day

Weekly Standard

By Frederick W. Kagan

6/26

THE DEATH OF ZARQAWI and the completion of the new Iraqi government have created a moment of opportunity for President Bush in Iraq. If the United States acts quickly to take control of lawless areas, improves security throughout the country, and wins a series of tangible victories, it might break the back of the insurgency. If we return to "business as usual" and the counterproductive Washington obsession with troop withdrawals, the moment will be lost. In fact, the quickest and only path to responsible troop withdrawals is visible progress toward victory over the insurgency and security in Iraq.

Insurgencies end when the population and the insurgents believe the government will triumph. People do not flock to losing causes. The U.S. failure to convince the Iraqi people--especially the Sunni Arabs--that the insurgency will lose has been destabilizing Iraq for the past three years. Many Sunni Arabs doubt the ultimate victory of the current government. Others see violence as a lever to use in a political process they feel is stacked against them. The political progress in Iraq so far is impressive and important. But it will not suffice to end the violence. And it will not continue for long if victory remains uncertain.

Establishing the inevitability of victory is important in ending any insurgency. It is more urgent in the current conflict because of the increasing impatience of the Shiites. Fear and resentment of the Sunni Arab insurgency is one of the main ingredients fueling the rise of Shiite militias and of Shiite reprisal attacks on Sunni Arabs. Both the militias and Shiite attacks and atrocities will continue to grow as long as it appears that the Sunni Arab insurgency is out of control. It is as important, therefore, to convince the Shiites that the Iraqi government's victory is assured as it is to show the Sunni Arabs that the insurgents' defeat is certain.

Saying all this is easier than doing it, of course, and the Bush administration and the Iraqi government have been trying in their own ways to accomplish this goal. The Bush administration has consistently argued that the growth of the Iraqi Security Forces and various rebuilding projects would convince Iraqis to side with their new government. The trouble is that although progress in these areas is a sign of victory for the Iraqi government, continued violence is seen as a victory for the insurgents. When both sides can claim successes in an insurgency, it is really the government that loses.

There is only one thing the administration and the Iraqi government can do that generates both a sense of their victory and an obvious defeat for the insurgency: clear, hold, and rebuild cities and towns wracked by violence and lawlessness, as the president declared we would do last fall. When Iraqi and American troops clear a town in which the insurgents have been operating freely, we know we've won, the Iraqi people know we've won, and the insurgents know we've won. This is the way to create a sense of victory that everyone understands.

The other virtue of clear-and-hold operations is that they bring security. Without security, further political and economic progress is extremely difficult. And the ultimate goal of reconciling Iraq's sects, ethnicities, and tribes will be much easier once the population is secured. Insurgents take advantage of the absence of coalition and effective Iraqi military and police units to assassinate key officials seen as collaborators, intimidate or punish anyone who might provide information about the rebels to the coalition, and recruit supporters from disaffected and terrorized young men. Those young men are frequently unemployed, moreover, because it is nearly impossible to have a functioning local economy in such lawless conditions. Even the nonmilitary elements of counterinsurgency strategy that the Bush administration has rightly been emphasizing require security to succeed. Yet clear-and-hold is not actually the primary objective of U.S. forces in Iraq today. American commanders instead claim to be focused on "handing over battlespace" to newly trained Iraqi troops. Like the body counts of the Vietnam war, the percentage of "battlespace handover" has become the statistical proxy for success in this war.

That must change. With the Iraqi government now complete and the Iraqi Security Forces growing more rapidly than anyone had a right to expect, there is no more urgent task for the coalition in Iraq today than establishing security throughout the country. This is not merely part of a defensive operation to control the spreading violence. Now is the time for a surge in military operations to clear and hold contested areas in Iraq that can offer the prospect of convincing large numbers of Iraqis that the government will win and the insurgents will lose. This is the best hope for breaking the insurgency rapidly, strengthening the new Iraqi state, and achieving victory.

A Wellspring of Anger

U.S. News & World Report

By Mitch Prothero

6/26

BEIRUT--The name Ain al-Hilweh means "Sweet Spring" in Arabic, but to 70,000 Palestinians it describes a crowded, impoverished refugee camp ringed by Lebanese Army checkpoints and tanks. The four checkpoints, the only ways in and out of the square-mile slum, are deemed necessary because more than 20 armed factions compete for influence in what has always been the largest and toughest Palestinian camp in Lebanon.

It's a conflict zone now on the verge of spilling out into the neighboring Lebanese city of Sidon, as radical jihadists return from wars in Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Iraq imbued with an Islamist extremism that is drawing more recruits and changing the complexion of the once secular Palestinian movement. The camp, say Palestinian and Lebanese officials, has supplied scores of fighters to the

Iraq insurgency, particularly the terrorist organization that was headed by Abu Musab Zarqawi. Islamist powerbase. Sitting in his office in Sidon, a senior Lebanese military intelligence official pores over an aerial map of the camp covered in small stickers that show the general location of militant groups. But the Lebanese Army can't enter the area, where well-armed Palestinian militias of mainstream Fatah, rival Hamas, and several Islamist groups rule the streets and frequently clash in gunfights. And the Army has had to concede an adjacent neighborhood to armed groups of radical Islamists considered aligned with al Qaeda: Jund al-Sham (Army of Greater Syria), a mostly Lebanese group originated by veterans of the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, and Asbat al-Ansar (League of Partisans), which is mostly Palestinian.

In any Palestinian camp or neighborhood, the walls are adorned with posters depicting "martyrs" of the fight against Israel. But in Asbat's neighborhood, the Iraq battlefield is evident: The main road has been renamed "Martyrs of Fallujah," and the signs glorify men killed fighting alongside Zarqawi or in suicide attacks against U.S. troops or Iraqi Shiite Muslims.

One Lebanese member of Jund al-Sham says that these groups are aligned with al Qaeda in the sense that they share a worldview of Salafism, or return to the most basic principles of Islam, and the need for jihad to free Muslim lands from infidel occupiers. The Iraq war, says Abed al-Jalil (who insisted his real name not be used), helped strengthen the jihadist group in Lebanon, which had been plagued by infighting and constrained by Lebanese and Syrian authorities.

"Before, there were Salafists, Takfiris, Wahabbis who all disagreed on minor points and did not unify," he says. "But now, they are one."

By his account, Jalil spent part of the summer in 2004 living, training, and fighting with Zarqawi's fighters in Fallujah. He says he planned to conduct a suicide attack but was sent back to Lebanon because his education made him valuable as a recruiter. "I hope to have the heart to be a martyr," says Jalil, whose story can't be independently verified. "Right now, I am struggling with whether the *dawa* [preaching] is stronger than the bullet."

Sheik Maher Hammoud, a Salafist cleric in Sidon who preaches in a mosque just outside the camp, explains the need for good Muslims to fight what he regards as the American occupation of Arab lands. While not a member of Asbat, Hammoud has contacts in the group. "The question is not why they would go and fight in Iraq," he says. "It's why they would not go."

According to Hazim Amin, a reporter for the al-Hayat newspaper and an expert on al Qaeda ideology, Lebanon is regarded as a jihadist recruiting ground through groups such as Asbat and Jund. Some Lebanese authorities, citing several recently uncovered plots with al Qaeda-type characteristics, have grown concerned about the ramifications of this for Lebanese security. One military official who dealt with these groups regularly says that Jund al-Sham and Asbat al-Ansar are "mostly the same group and are very, very dangerous men." "[There are] less than 100 Jundis, 300 to 400 Asbat al-Ansar. ... They are tied directly to al Qaeda," he explains. "There is no hierarchy to al Qaeda, though; it's like a McDonald's. ... Everyone wants their own franchise. But they are the same, the same very dangerous mentality."

It would be difficult for Lebanese authorities to crack down, even if so inclined, because of the dense population of the camp and the lack of heavy weaponry in the Lebanese Army. "The Lebanese Army cannot go inside the camp to fight them; it would be a massacre," he concludes.

Camp powerbroker. The person the Lebanese would rely on to help contain these groups is the closest thing to a powerbroker in the camp, Munir al-Maqdah. He leads a breakaway faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization that rejected the 1990s peace agreements with Israel but maintains good relations with most of the different groups in the camp. A gunman at age 11 for Yasser Arafat's Fatah wing of the PLO, Maqdah later commanded Arafat's personal security detail during the Lebanese civil war, was convicted and sentenced to death in absentia for plotting attacks on Israelis in Jordan, and is allegedly implicated in a 2001 assassination plot against then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Now 46, he controls the strongest militia in Ain al-Hilweh.

But he has little problem with the idea of people from the camp going to fight in Iraq. In fact, he sent about 300 of his own men to fight in Iraq at the start of the war. "An Arab land is occupied," he says of Iraq, sitting in the garden of his home in the camp. "As Palestinians we understand this [idea of occupation], that it is the duty of every Arab who can to resist this or any occupation."

Today, he does not think it necessary to send more men to Iraq because the Iraqi insurgency doesn't need the help--and he wants to keep his men focused on the traditional foe, Israel. But many obstacles block the way to Israel, just a few dozen miles south of here--the Lebanese Army and Hezbollah militia, a high-tech fence, and, finally, the Israeli Army. Iraq, in contrast, can be reached by transiting Syria, perhaps with the help of a small bribe to border guards. "When crossing Syria, nobody but God knows what will happen. Some days it is easy; other days, everyone is arrested. You can never predict," says Jalil, who claims to have done it himself without incident and to know a dozen or so others who have as well. Most of them made it, he says, but one ended up in a Syrian jail for eight months.

So, American forces in Iraq become, almost by default, a proxy target for some Palestinian and Lebanese fighters. Suhail Natour, a human-rights lawyer and a former Palestinian militant, likens the conditions in the camps of Lebanon to a volcano: "If there's no way for the lava to go out, it will go where it can... to Iraq."

Amnesty in Iraq

National Review

Symposium

6/27

Editor's note: In recent days, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has proposed an amnesty plan for some Iraqi insurgents. Is this as bad as it sounds? Is it unavoidable? What can/should the U.S. do about it? We asked a group of Iraq experts.

Ali Al-Zahid Since coming to power, Prime Minister Maliki has won many new friends in Iraq. At the same time, he has made a number of enemies in his own party, which is upset with some aspects of his newly proposed plan. Most of Prime Minister Maliki's plan has been around for a while, but the amnesty is a contentious issue. This could never have been proposed by Allawi, with his murky past and his ties to the Baath Party. But since it is from Maliki, it will be given more serious consideration.

The plan is worded in such a way as to exclude al Qaeda and followers of the Baath Party, which means it includes only a small portion of the insurgents. But it will serve to exacerbate the divisions among the insurgent groups and clarify their intentions.

Nevertheless, the best strategy would be for Maliki to break the unity of the terrorist groups, and then to destroy them one by one. The simple fact is that the democratic rebuilding of Iraq will never be carried out by people who formerly cut off the heads of those who disagreed with them.

As for the United States, any interference at this point could be interpreted negatively by the Iraqi people. Supporting the plan half-heartedly would lead to an Allawi-effect, while not supporting the plan would be disastrous. So the U.S. should adopt a "wait and see" attitude, expressing support for what the Iraqi government chooses to do, but not making a big deal about it.

--Ali Al-Zahid is a member of the new Iraquna think tank. Born in 1978, he was imprisoned in 1982 after his father made critical statements against the Baath regime.

Kerry Dupont The questions that Prime Minister Maliki's plan raises are important ones, as important in the long run for America as for Iraq. One of the main questions being, how do we accept that these groups, some of which have caused great harm to our military, now be given a 'free pass' so to speak? What then, have we been fighting for?

Therein, many Iraqis and Americans believe, is the answer. What we have been fighting for in Iraq, really, is the stability for Iraq to establish a free society. If, in fact, this allows for some security in the short term, then it will allow for more terrorists of all types to be rooted out in the long term. The reality in Baghdad is similar to New Orleans almost a year ago. Secure the area first. Then you can go about an orderly rebuilding. Until then, resources will continue to waste, and that includes our most valuable resource, the sons and daughters of our country that are there.

What to say to those who have lost loved ones to fighting these groups and now see them being

granted a place in the political process? If a group that considered themselves legitimate "resistors of the occupation" are willing to change their stance, it means exactly that losses were not in vain. After all, aren't we always trying to make people understand that the only reason we go to war is to win a peace? The mission has for some time now been: work for change first and engage militarily if forced. In a land where grudges are held for centuries and mistrust runs deep, if a Shia-dominated government can be forgiving enough to listen to what hardcore Sunni and former Baathist groups might be ready to say, so can we.

-- Kerry Dupont is a consultant for organizations conducting work in Iraq and the Middle East. She has spent time in various parts of Iraq, working with Iraqi counterparts on educational projects and civil-society activities, covering both the Arabic and Kurdish regions. She blogs at <http://literalthoughts.blogspot.com>.

James S. Robbins An amnesty plan may be an effective means of splitting off some of the less-committed insurgents, particularly those who are motivated by anti-Coalition sentiments rather than anti-government or pro-jihad sentiments. Also not extending the proposed amnesty to the foreign fighters makes sense, since it will drive a wedge between them and the rest of the insurgency. Amnesty and reconciliation programs have been effective in other conflicts, though they do not in and of themselves end violence. And since the Iraqi government is a sovereign entity, they are free to handle these matters in the way they feel would be most useful. However, since many if not most insurgents prefer to remain anonymous, they would not need to be granted amnesty to get on with their lives, they could just stop doing what they are doing and the government would be none the wiser. For those who do take the amnesty and publicly agree to stop committing violent actions, they would then have to deal with the popular Iraqi extra-judicial methods of dispute resolution, such as death squads. As well the foreign fighters might seek to make examples of those who betray the cause. So while the amnesty program is a useful act of good faith on the part of the government, for the average insurgent it neither addresses the issues that caused them to take up arms, nor promises safety once they agree to stop killing people. Quel dommage...

-- James S. Robbins is senior fellow in national-security affairs at the American Foreign Policy Council, a trustee for the Leaders for Liberty Foundation, and author of *Last in Their Class: Custer, Picket and the Goats of West Point*. Robbins is also an NRO contributor.

Bill Roggio The Iraqi government's proposed reconciliation program has elicited concern within some circles that insurgents who have killed American soldiers will evade punishment. The plan is clear that the amnesty applies to "detainees not involved in terrorist acts, war crimes or crimes against humanity..." Al Qaeda and the violent elements of the domestic Iraqi Islamist terrorist groups will not be offered amnesty under this plan, nor are they likely to accept the terms of reconciliation.

The fact is that a reconciliation plan will need to provide insurgents with a way to eschew the violence. The amnesty is aimed at giving the foot soldiers and mid-level functionaries (weapons smugglers, support cells, and facilitators) a way to lay down their arms and prevent the deaths of further Iraqi civilians and American, Coalition, and Iraqis soldiers.

National reconciliation is a political settlement to an insurgency, and has been successfully implemented to end insurgencies throughout the world. If implemented properly, it will produce a clear rift between domestic, nationalist elements of the insurgency and of the al Qaeda, Ansar al-Sunnah, and the Islamist terrorists groups in the Mujahideen Shura Council. This will level a strategic defeat for al Qaeda. Their image as the one true voice of the Arab and Muslim world will be shattered, as their own fellow Sunni travelers will have rejected their ideology in favor of a political settlement with the democratically elected government of Iraq. Seven insurgent groups have already agreed to the terms, and twelve more are seriously considering the offer.

There has also been talk the reconciliation plan will limit offensive military operations against the insurgency, but the text states "military operations [are to] take place in accordance with judicial orders and do not breach human rights." This is merely an assurance the insurgents who have agreed to reconciliation will not be rounded up after pledging cooperation with the government. The Coalition should not and will not cede the ability to strike at the Islamist terrorists when the opportunity arises.

-- Bill Roggio is co-editor of the Counterterrorism Blog and co-chairman of the Counterterrorism Foundation.

Michael Rubin

Iraq is a sovereign country, but that does not mean its government's decisions are always wise or above criticism. The amnesty is a bad idea. The conventional wisdom that amnesty quells insurgency is unsupported by evidence. Insurgencies end when they are defeated, not when their participants win immunity. Peruvian terror died away because Lima took an unforgiving attitude toward the Shining Path. In contrast, each Israeli amnesty of Palestinian terrorists sparked new waves of terrorism. When the current Turkish government granted a partial amnesty to PKK terrorists based in Iraq, the PKK responded by launching once again its murderous campaign. After all, amnesties prior to victory are signs of weakness, not compassion.

In Iraq, the amnesty plan will embolden insurgents and terrorists, not pacify them. The U.S. press talks about Sunni insurgents. Within Iraq today, Shiite militias are just as violent and corrosive to society. In recent weeks, for example, Muqtada al-Sadr's followers have targeted Kurdish civilians in Kirkuk. Under the amnesty plan, Shiite militiamen -- some of whom are guilty of murdering Western civilians like Steven Vincent and Fern Holland -- will walk free. The broader context in Iraq is also worrisome. While U.S. pundits and politicians discuss amnesty, the Iraqi government is also debating accrediting Hezbollah's al-Manar television. This comes against a context of most European states and even some Arab states pulling the plug on this mouthpiece for terror. That the new Iraqi government would decide to support the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Lebanese Hezbollah against the world is indeed unfortunate. If the State Department has not already endorsed amnesty under its mantra of compromise is always good, then Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad should lobby hard to convince Nuri al-Maliki and his backers that they risk a grave miscalculation.

-- Michael Rubin, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, returned last week from a research trip to Iraq.

Dan Senor

In evaluating any reconciliation proposal, five central questions must first be answered:

I. What will be the reaction of those Iraqi Sunnis who chose NOT to actively participate in the insurgency? They represent the majority in the Sunni communities. Will they resent that enemies of a democratic Iraq are being rewarded for their violence, or will they view this as a constructive process toward ending the violence?

II. What will be the reaction of Shiites and Kurds, whose communities have been the targets of insurgent violence? This violence has in turn stoked the sectarian strife we see today in Iraq. Will outreach to Sunni insurgents further inflame resentment and violence from Shiite militias or will it be an important step in reducing provocations?

III. What will be the reaction of the regional stakeholders, especially the small "d" democrats who are protesting autocratic governments throughout the region? Will they feel emboldened or abandoned by our olive branch? And what about the autocrats themselves, many of whom have passively -- and in some cases actively -- supported the Iraqi insurgency? Will they view our outreach as that borne of weakness or strength?

IV. What will be the reaction of those specific insurgency leaders with whom the Iraqi government engages? What can they actually deliver? As a point of comparison, when the Coalition received outreach from insurgency leaders following the capture of Saddam Hussein, back in December 2003, and discussions ensued, it was never clear who we were dealing with and who exactly they were speaking for, not to mention what they were capable of delivering. Do we have a clearer picture and a reasonable set of expectations in the current environment?

V. Finally, and most importantly, what will be the reaction of the families of those American soldiers that have been the victims of insurgent violence? Whether we are talking about reconciliation with passive supporters of the insurgency or with actual direct participants will be a fundamental distinction for Americans.

-- Dan Senor, former adviser to the Bush Administration, was based in Baghdad from April 2003 through June 2004.

What to Do in Iraq: A Roundtable

Foreign Affairs

By Larry Diamond, James Dobbins, Chaim Kaufmann, Leslie H. Gelb and Stephen Biddle

July 2006

Summary: Can anything -- international mediation, regional collaboration, decentralization, or constitutional negotiations -- save Iraq from a full-fledged civil war and the Bush administration from a foreign policy fiasco?

How to End It

Larry Diamond

In his trenchant analysis, Stephen Biddle ("Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon," March/April 2006) argues that the escalating violence in Iraq is not a nationalist insurgency, as was the Vietnam War, but rather a "communal civil war" and that it must therefore be addressed by pursuing a strategy different from "Vietnamization": if the United States were simply to turn over responsibility for counterinsurgency to the new Iraqi army and police forces, it would risk inflaming the communal conflict, either by empowering the Shiites and the Kurds to slaughter the Sunnis or by enabling a Trojan horse full of Sunni insurgents to penetrate the multiethnic security forces and undermine them.

Biddle is right in many respects. First, Iraq is already in the midst of a very violent civil conflict, which claims 500 to 1,000 lives or more every month. Second, this internal conflict has become primarily communal in nature; as Biddle writes, it is a fight "about group survival." It pits Sunnis against Shiites, in particular, but also Kurds against Sunnis and, more generally, group against group, with smaller minorities coming under attack on multiple fronts. Third, as Biddle warns, the current moderate-intensity communal war could descend into an all-out conflagration, with a high "risk of mass slaughter." Thus the United States cannot in good conscience withdraw from Iraq abruptly -- and doing so would not even be in the United States' national interest -- because that would remove the last significant barrier to a total conflagration.

Washington needs a new strategy, and, as Biddle writes, it cannot simply be "Iraqization" of the conflict. Biddle proposes two bold steps: slowing down the buildup of the Iraqi army and police and threatening to "manipulate the military balance of power among Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds to coerce them to negotiate." But these steps (particularly the latter) are dangerous and unlikely to work, because they follow from an incomplete analysis of the formidably complex, multidimensional nature of the Iraqi conflict.

Although the war in Iraq is mainly a communal conflict, it is not only that. It also contains an important element of nationalist insurgency. One misses an essential piece of the puzzle -- and a reason the conflict is so difficult to contain -- if one does not grasp that many Iraqis (mostly Sunnis) are fighting in some significant measure because they believe they are waging a war of resistance against American occupiers and the Iraqi "traitors" who cooperate with them. Among the score or more of Sunni insurgent groups, both the radical Islamist forces and the secular resistance (which includes Saddam loyalists and surviving Baath Party members) have as one of their principal aims the expulsion of U.S. forces from Iraq. That this goal coincides with the ambition of some to return the Baath Party to power or with the dream of others to establish a Sunni Islamic caliphate -- and with the conviction of all that the Shiite Islamist parties are controlled by Iran or at least stalking-horses for Tehran -- should not obscure the insurgents' dedicated, ideological resistance to the U.S. presence. The communal hatred that extreme Sunni Islamists have deliberately provoked (a cynical tactic in a war of destabilization, eviction, and conquest) has overshadowed the resistance's nationalist dimension but has not removed it.

The Sunni resistance believes the United States seeks to establish permanent military bases in Iraq in order to control the country and its oil indefinitely. Some of the most ideologically extreme insurgent forces, such as al Qaeda in Iraq, will fight to the death to expel the Americans and achieve their own goal of domination. But since the autumn of 2003, other insurgent groups (accounting for a significant portion of the Sunni insurgency) have sent signals through international intermediaries that they want to talk directly to the United States. Two of these groups' objectives have been to obtain an unambiguous statement from Washington that it will not seek permanent military bases in Iraq and to

set up a timetable for a complete U.S. military withdrawal, even if it stretches over two or three years. For more than two years now, Washington has had the opportunity to open negotiations, with the help of international mediators, with these elements of the insurgency and then draw Iraqi government leaders into those talks. The result could have been -- and might still be -- an agreement by key elements of the resistance to wind down the insurgency: Sunni political and religious leaders could send clear messages to their constituencies to suspend the war of resistance and pursue their political interests through the emerging game of peaceful politics and governance instead. In exchange, the United States would need to commit at least to a flexible timetable for the withdrawal of its troops, tied not only to dates but also to facts on the ground and confidence-building measures. Now that the conflict has become "communalized," much more will likely be required to curb the violence. But the need and the opportunity for dealing with the Sunni-based resistance remain.

CURSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

Biddle misses another crucial element of the conflict in Iraq. His proposed strategy of threatening to manipulate the military balance of power among the factions rests on two reciprocal assumptions, both highly questionable. On the one hand, Biddle assumes that the Sunni resistance would be compelled "to come to the negotiating table" if Washington threatened to throw in its lot with a Shiite-Kurdish force. He implies, and other strategists have explicitly argued, that the United States could solve the insurgency problem by backing a joint Shiite-Kurdish military campaign to crush the Sunni resistance. But this threat is not likely to move Sunni forces: many of them believe Sunnis actually represent a majority of the country's population, and all of them would expect and probably receive massive assistance from neighboring Sunni Arab states in any all-out conflict with the Shiites and the Kurds.

By the same token, Biddle is on shaky grounds when he assumes that a U.S. threat to back the Sunnis militarily would be credible or that a U.S. threat to withdraw altogether militarily would necessarily panic the Shiites. Many of the Shiite Islamist parties and Shiite militia factions that constitute the ruling United Iraqi Alliance -- most of all, Muqtada al-Sadr's political movement and his irregular Mahdi Army (which fought two campaigns against coalition forces in 2004) -- are eager to be rid of the Americans and might well call their bluff. At that point, Washington would have to either back down from its threat and surrender its remaining leverage with the Shiites or follow through and watch Iraq descend into just the kind of civil war it has been trying to avert.

Biddle is right to argue that the United States does not have the leverage to achieve needed compromises over the fundamental issues that divide Iraq: the constitutional structure, the distribution of oil revenues, and security. But Washington is not likely to summon that leverage through hollow strategic threats. A better strategy -- perhaps the only remaining alternative -- would be for the United States to accelerate its mediation efforts and do so with international assistance. Washington needs and, at this critical juncture, can obtain the active partnership of the United Nations and the European Union to help the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, and other senior U.S. officials broker political compromises.

A combined diplomatic effort by the United States, the un, and the eu, working in close coordination and speaking with one voice, might well engage all the relevant actors and gain the leverage to extract concessions from them on key issues. One crucial actor with whom un or other mediators could talk -- but who will not talk with the U.S. occupiers -- is Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, still the most widely revered Shiite religious leader in Iraq and still a vastly underestimated force for moderation and compromise. But there are many others who might respond better to coordinated international appeals and to the financial and political incentives that the United States and Europe could together provide. A critical element of this approach would be for the U.S.-un-eu team to bring into the negotiations, at the right moment, the Arab League, which has developed ties with a number of political actors in the Sunni resistance and thus could offer them credible assurances and induce them to compromise.

U.S. and international mediation must begin by facilitating the work of the Constitutional Review Commission. This commission, which was conceived just before last year's October 15 constitutional referendum but has yet to be formed, is to be appointed by the Iraqi Parliament and given four months to recommend amendments to the constitution; those amendments will then have to be adopted by a simple parliamentary majority and approved by another referendum. This process was established because the current constitution has not been able to garner a consensus and is thus not viable. The document leaves Iraq with an extremely weak central authority. And it implicitly splits control over future oil and gas fields between a new Shiite superregion containing 80 percent of the country's oil

and gas resources and a Kurdish region that, once it incorporates Kirkuk, will contain the other 20 percent.

If a constitutional compromise can be brokered, joint mediation might then address the other imperative concern, security, and with the various militias produce a plan, backed by extensive international financing, for the demobilization and disarmament of the various nonstate militias and the reintegration of their members into civilian economic life. Until the militias' control of territory and state structures (including the police) is substantially diminished, Iraq will lack a state with sufficient authority to hold the country together and restore some measure of order.

While intensified efforts at mediation proceed, the rebuilding of the Iraqi police and armed forces must go forward as well. It is true that the penetration of the police (and the Ministry of the Interior) by sectarian militias has been alarming and must be reversed; a new leadership and perhaps the embedding of U.S. forces in some police units could help. The rebuilding of the Iraqi army is one area in which the United States has achieved at least some incremental success. Such efforts must continue: Iraq simply cannot be held together much longer without a national army that can defend the new political order.

A truly international mediation process in Iraq would need to be carefully planned, designed, and coordinated. And there is relatively little time to do this. But there is no better option for achieving the political compromise necessary to stabilize Iraq and prevent it from descending into all-out civil war.

Larry Diamond, a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, is the author of *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*.

No Model War

James Dobbins

Stephen Biddle has provided a very useful reminder that history teaches a variety of relevant lessons - even if official Washington often has difficulty absorbing more than one at a time. In 2003, the Bush administration based its plans for the reconstruction of Iraq on the U.S. occupations of Germany and Japan. Its critics have increasingly compared the results to Vietnam. Biddle suggests that the better analogy may be post-Cold War Yugoslavia.

Biddle's choice is apt in many respects. The Bush administration invoked Germany and Japan as models for Iraq's transformation because the occupations of those countries were highly successful and because those successes had nothing to do with Bill Clinton, Lyndon Johnson, or, for that matter, Richard Nixon. But if the administration's choice was politically safe, it was not otherwise very instructive. In 1945, when the United States occupied Germany and Japan, those countries were both highly homogenous societies with first World economies. And they had both surrendered following devastating defeats after years of brutal warfare.

None of these conditions existed in Yugoslavia in the 1990s or in Iraq a decade later. Both these countries had been created in the early twentieth century from the remnants of other empires (the Austrian and the Ottoman) and were established within borders that included disparate ethnic and religious groups that would have preferred not to live in the same state. Neither Yugoslavia nor Iraq ever developed a first World economy, nor had either surrendered.

Had the Bush administration used Bosnia or Kosovo as the model for Iraq, it would have realized that the stabilization and reconstruction of that country was going to require a lot more time, money, and manpower than it had planned. It would have anticipated the security vacuum that was likely to emerge immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. It would have arrived with plans for the orderly disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration into society of sectarian militias and Republican Guard troops, and with blueprints for expanding the police and reforming the army. It would have moved quickly in the aftermath of the invasion -- at a time when U.S. prestige was high, when no significant resistance had emerged, and when the world still assumed that weapons of mass destruction would be found -- to expand international participation in the occupation and reconstruction of Iraq.

But it did none of these things. Instead, a faulty historical analogy led to faulty policy choices. When Baghdad fell, the Bush administration initially seemed to view Iraq as a prize won rather than as a burden acquired. It banned French, German, and Russian companies from reconstruction contracts. President George W. Bush rebuffed Prime Minister Tony Blair's efforts to give the United Nations a central role in the mission. The United States chose to designate itself an occupying power, basing its continued military presence on the laws of armed conflict rather than the UN Charter. All these positions were eventually reversed. But by then, an armed resistance movement had emerged, and with it disappeared any opportunity to draw the rest of the international community into Iraq more deeply.

As the possibility of Balkan-style peace enforcement in Iraq receded, that of Vietnam-style counterinsurgency advanced. Some critics of the administration have used the Vietnam analogy to argue for a withdrawal of U.S. troops. For others, it provides a model for how to redirect U.S. efforts. A number of experts (such as the Brookings Institution's Kenneth Pollack) have drawn on the Vietnam experience to make the case for a step-by-step pacification campaign, in which coalition forces would concentrate on securing a gradually expanding swath of territory and on protecting the local population therein, giving it better government and thereby winning its cooperation in marginalizing violent extremists.

DOING MORE WITH LESS

In his article, Biddle argues against a campaign based on such a "hearts and minds" approach, insisting that Iraqis are not fighting for good government, but for a state dominated by their own group (Sunni, Shiite, or Kurd). However, like some of those employing the Vietnam analogy, Biddle identifies the Kurdish and Shiite militias as the greatest long-term threat to Iraqi unity and urges the United States to shift the weight of its operations in Iraq from hunting down insurgents in the Sunni heartland to establishing secure areas, initially in Baghdad and the Shiite south.

There is much to be said for the Vietnamese and Balkan models. Today, U.S. troops in Iraq are having to relearn valuable techniques honed in Vietnam but since forgotten. Ethnic tensions in Iraq are reminiscent of those that led to the breakup of Yugoslavia, and they could produce a similar result. The Shiite and Kurdish militias do present a growing threat, if not to U.S. forces, then certainly to the unity of Iraq. Some repositioning of U.S. and Iraqi troops to ensure greater control over Baghdad -- the country's center of gravity and home to 20 percent of its population, where the Shiite, Kurdish, and Sunni communities are thoroughly intermixed -- may well be desirable.

It seems unlikely, however, that the United States at this late stage will deploy a force in Iraq large enough to successfully execute either Balkan-style peace enforcement or Vietnam-style pacification. The United States put 500,000 troops into South Vietnam, a country that in 1970 had a population that was little more than half the size of the population of Iraq today. Nato put over 100,000 troops into Bosnia and Kosovo, societies that in combination are around a fifth of the size of Iraq's. Coalition forces are currently not numerous enough even to suppress the Sunni insurgency; they are certainly insufficient to take on the much more powerful Shiite and Kurdish militias as well.

Biddle and those using the Vietnam analogy have made good abstract cases for a deeper, larger, and longer U.S. military role in Iraq. Unfortunately, the political basis for such a commitment is absent in both U.S. and Iraqi societies. U.S. economic assistance to Iraq has already largely dried up. And the U.S. military presence seems likely to diminish over the coming year. If the United States is to avert a wider civil war in Iraq, it must supplement the influence it derives from these two waning assets with a much more deft and active campaign of regional diplomacy.

Holding together ethnically divided societies is hardly a new or unfamiliar task. Similar efforts were required to end the war in Bosnia in the mid-1990s and to install a successor to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in late 2001. Iraq is not a more divided society than was Bosnia or Afghanistan. Both of those states were in the midst of open, long-running civil wars when the United States stepped in. What makes Iraq different and a particularly difficult case is that for the first time the United States has tried to put a society back together without securing the cooperation, however grudging, of the principal neighbors of the state in question.

In contrast to the administration's earlier approach in Afghanistan, its approach in Iraq -- especially the way Washington has characterized its objectives there -- has precluded any sort of regional

cooperation. The United States did not invade Afghanistan in order to remake that country as a model for Central Asia, nor did Washington announce an intention to subsequently promote the democratization of all of the states neighboring Afghanistan. Had the United States committed itself to such a program, it would never have secured the support of Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, or Uzbekistan for the war, nor would it have had their help in shaping the subsequent peace.

The United States, however, did invade Iraq with the intention of making that state a model for the Middle East, promising that success in Iraq would be followed by efforts to transform the political systems of Iraq's neighbors. This was not a vision any of those regimes was likely to embrace. Nor have they.

When states disintegrate, the competing claimants to power inevitably turn to external sponsors for support. Faced with the prospect of a neighboring state's failure, the governments of adjoining states inevitably develop local clientele in the failing state and back rival aspirants to power. Much as one may regret and deplore such activity, neighbors can be neither safely ignored nor effectively barred from exercising their considerable influence. It has always proved wise, therefore, to find ways to engage them constructively.

Washington's vocal commitment to regional democratization and its concomitant challenge to the legitimacy of neighboring regimes work at cross-purposes to its effort to form, consolidate, and support a government of national unity in Iraq. Iraqi political leaders will work together only if and when they receive convergent signals from their various external sponsors. The administration's drive for democratization in the region, therefore, should be subordinated (at least for the next several years) to its efforts to avert civil war in Iraq. Unless Washington can craft a vision of Iraq and of its neighborhood that all the governments of the region can buy into, it will have no chance of securing those governments' help in holding that country together. The central objective of U.S. diplomacy, therefore, should shift from the transformation of Iraq to its stabilization, with an emphasis on power sharing, sovereignty, and regional cooperation, all concepts that Iraq's neighbors can reasonably be asked to endorse.

Neither the American nor the Iraqi people are likely to support a larger, longer U.S. military role in Iraq. Neither the Balkan model of peace enforcement nor the Vietnamese model of pacification is open to the United States. Insofar as a future U.S. military role in Iraq is concerned, the more apt analogy would be the counterinsurgency campaigns of Central America in the 1980s, where U.S. military involvement was largely limited to advice and training. In Iraq, however, this reduced military engagement will have to be paired with a much more active U.S. campaign of regional diplomacy if the slide toward wider civil war is to be averted.

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Separating Iraqis, Saving Iraq

Chaim Kaufmann

Three different civil wars are now raging in Iraq: the first between U.S.-led coalition forces and antigovernment insurgents, the second between the Kurds and other communities in northern Iraq, and the third between Sunni Arabs and Shiite Arabs in the center of the country. The last is the most important because it represents the greatest potential for humanitarian disaster as well as for long-term instability in Iraq and in the region.

Stephen Biddle offers the right diagnosis of the situation but the wrong prescription for treating it. The conflict between Sunnis and Shiites is, as Biddle argues, a communal civil war, not a war based on class or ideology, and the U.S. military's efforts to learn, or relearn, best practices for fighting a counterinsurgency from the Vietnam War are thus beside the point. But his proposal for communal power sharing -- which has been the Bush administration's policy since January 2006 and has become conventional wisdom -- is impractical. Power sharing rarely works well, and in Iraq its prospects are especially bleak: the Shiites are too strong to want or need to share power, there is too little trust between communal elites, and no institution in Iraq is capable of guaranteeing anything to anyone. Worse, the level of violence has passed the threshold where the communities can safely live together.

At an earlier stage, this conflict might have been resolvable by compromise. But at this point, that no longer is possible.

Today, all members of both the Sunni and the Shiite communities face real security threats. The violence has escalated dramatically since the bombing of the Askariya shrine, in Samarra, on February 22, 2006, but it had been intensifying for several years. Sunni insurgents have been killing Shiite civilians since 2003, and since Shiite parties won control of the Iraqi government in early 2005, the Shiite-dominated police forces have often operated as death squads. As of late April 2006, the U.S. press alone had recorded 3,500 deaths over the previous two months, and the total number of actual deaths was probably higher. During that period, according to the Iraqi Red Crescent, more than 89,000 Iraqis became refugees. This estimate is likely low too, as it implies a ratio of deaths to refugees of about 1 to 20, and in ethnic-cleansing campaigns such ratios typically run closer to 1 to 100.

Today, no Iraqi Sunni is safe anywhere within the reach of Shiite militias or Shiite-controlled police forces, and no Shiite whom Sunni suicide bombers or assassination squads can get to is safe either. The danger is greatest and the violence worst where the two communities cohabit, as in Baghdad and in parts of the four surrounding provinces -- Anbar, Babil, Diyala, and Salahuddin.

And the situation will get worse, because communal atrocities have hardened sectarian affiliations. Before 2003, virtually all Iraqi Arabs identified themselves as Arabs, in opposition to Kurds and others. Since then, national and ethnic identities have not vanished, but they have been overshadowed by more specific, sectarian identities. Some 92 percent of the votes in the December 2005 elections were cast for sectarian parties, and both communities now use increasingly extreme language, each describing the other in sweeping generalities.

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

Biddle recommends that Washington suspend its efforts to strengthen the Iraqi state until it can broker a grand bargain among all the communities, coercing them to compromise by threatening to manipulate their relative military power. In practice, such a policy would mean trying to force the United Iraqi Alliance (uia), the main bloc of Shiite religious parties, to surrender the victory it won in last December's elections. The idea would be to threaten to remove U.S. support for the Iraqi police and army if the forces remained split along sectarian lines and refused to reorganize based on loyalty to Iraq. The United States' trump card would be the threat to leave Iraq altogether. (Except for the last point, this essentially is current U.S. policy.)

This strategy is likely to fail. Attempts to compel power sharing among sectarian groups in Iraq will not stop the fighting and could even accelerate it. Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari has stepped down, but the uia has not split. Despite serious internal rivalries, Shiite leaders have redoubled their commitment to make key decisions among themselves before negotiating with the U.S. government or anyone else. In April, the uia chose Nouri al-Maliki to replace Jaafari. The main Kurdish and Sunni parties promptly accepted the nomination even though Maliki, whom they see as inflexible and excessively sectarian, was their least favorite candidate (their endorsement may reflect the fact that they have little leverage). Shiite leaders will retain control of the all-important Interior Ministry. In early May, it was still unclear whether the Defense Ministry would remain under uia authority or if its control would go to a technocrat not affiliated with the alliance.

A governing coalition has yet to be formed. But it might come to resemble the Kurdish-Shiite accord that underpinned the last government: Baghdad turned a blind eye toward Kurdish activities in the north in return for Kurdish acquiescence on anything the central government did elsewhere. A few Sunni ministers might be appointed, but the Shiites do not want -- nor do they need -- to offer significant concessions. Even if an all-party unity government could be formed, it would not be able to function; the parties' demands cannot be reconciled, and their mutual distrust is far too great.

Trying to create a genuinely Iraqi security force will not work either, because there is no powerful, legitimate political movement loyal to "Iraq," in or out of government. Nor could most members of the security forces be persuaded to identify with such a force if it did exist. Some Iraqi army units, under tight U.S. control, have been deterred from using violence for purely sectarian goals, but others are openly loyal to Kurdish or Shiite leaders. Reforming the police is a lost cause; any U.S. remark about the force's performance is met with heated retorts from Shiite leaders. In March, uia spokespeople demanded that U.S. forces stand aside from further involvement in internal security. Most Shiite

leaders do not desire an immediate U.S. departure, but only because they hope to collect more U.S. aid before the civil war escalates further. An additional barrier to coercing Shiite leaders is the fact that Shiite militias are already receiving aid from Tehran on a moderate scale.

Any serious attempt to compel the Iraqis to share power would result in either a quick, ignominious reduction in U.S. troops or an actual U.S. withdrawal followed by a massive escalation of hostilities. Control over every mixed settlement and neighborhood in the country would be up for grabs, which would increase incentives for ethnic cleansing throughout the country. The Shiite-dominated Iraqi government might also find itself forced deeper into a clientelistic relationship with Iran.

In any case, it is beyond the power of any Iraqi government to stop the violence between the communities if they are not separated first. Although the main Shiite militias are controlled by factions within the uia, they do not answer to it or to one another. The most active death squads seem to be those of the Badr Brigades, the armed wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which controls the Interior Ministry. Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army has also killed many people.

As a result, Iraq is breaking up into communal cantons. As they become unsafe, mixed towns and urban neighborhoods are becoming segregated. No one knows how far this process has gone already; some reports suggest that many towns have already become monoethnic. Shiite and Sunni militias have been inundated by new volunteers, and new independent neighborhood militias are forming, too. Free movement between Sunni and Shiite areas will be increasingly curtailed by checkpoints manned by militias, if not by government forces, as is already happening within and around Baghdad.

Iraq will eventually develop internal communal borders with a few heavily guarded crossing points. Since the ethnic makeup of Baghdad is far too complex for the city to be divided into just two parts, some of its neighborhoods will become isolated enclaves surrounded by barbed wire. This ugly solution has worked before: in Jerusalem, Mount Scopus was a Jewish island from 1948 to 1967. Any such partition of Iraq would likely be de facto, because many Shiite leaders still hope that a unified country can emerge, and no regime in the Middle East would tolerate formal independence for the Kurds.

MISSION: POSSIBLE

In the meantime, the United States will remain the strongest military force in Iraq. As such, it will have one remaining duty: the moral obligation to minimize the damage, human and otherwise, caused by ethnic cleansing. This is also a U.S. national security interest: the U.S. government is -- and will continue to be -- blamed by most of the world for all of the harm that befalls the people of Iraq. The shorter that bill of indictment, the better.

Satisfying this obligation would mean using U.S. military strength to protect Iraqi refugees who wish to relocate. U.S. forces must defend the most vulnerable mixed towns and urban neighborhoods from both Sunni and Shiite attackers for long enough to organize transport for those who want to move to safer locations. Otherwise, who controls Baghdad and dozens, perhaps even hundreds, of towns in central Iraq will be determined by full-scale sectarian battles that could go on for months or even years.

Which settlements need to be defended and which communities need to be evacuated are questions that would largely determine the location of the de facto line that would separate Sunni and Shiite communities. Protection and relocation would have to be coordinated with the strongest forces in Iraq, the main Shiite factions. These groups would not be enthusiastic: two of the main uia factions -- the Dawa Party and the Sadrists -- still want a unitary Iraq. But sober Shiite leaders would also realize that such a policy would save many Shiite lives and bring the Shiite-dominated government greater control over more settlements than it could manage otherwise.

Little active cooperation would be required; all that would be needed is enough forbearance on the part of the Shiite militias to let temporary defensive garrisons and evacuation convoys complete their tasks without having to fight. Washington would have to explain its intentions clearly and establish firm limits to its mission both in aim and in time. The tolerance of the Sunni militias would also be needed in areas under their control. But if U.S. forces were scheduled to depart shortly -- leaving the affected settlements in Sunni hands -- the Sunni militias would have little reason to oppose the evacuation of those Shiites who wished to go. So far, few groups have displayed such bloody-mindedness as to

suggest that they would take the risk of attacking U.S. forces solely to murder refugees in flight. (Afterward, the number of minorities living on the wrong side of the separation line would be small, which would limit incentives for "rescue" offensives.)

In the longer run, it will be important to ensure that the Shiites remain the stronger side militarily, as any change in the balance of power could encourage Sunni factions to challenge them again. The outcome of a civil war tends to be more stable when the party that is most satisfied is also the stronger one.

Some might say that this policy will legitimate ethnic cleansing. But they would have to face squarely the costs of not protecting refugees; to the extent that the policy did succeed, Iraqis would experience less suffering than if it failed or was never attempted. Others will object that the current U.S. administration is unlikely to adopt these measures. Perhaps, but saving at least some lives would require getting only a few brigade commanders in a few places to think seriously about refugee protection.

Such protection would not mollify the Iraqi Sunnis, who would still be out of power, or angry Sunni Arab governments. But no policy can prevent such discontent. It is also inevitable that whatever rump Sunni statelet remains will continue to be poor, disorderly, and unable to prevent terrorists from operating on its soil. Three years of counterinsurgency in Iraq has stimulated more terrorism than it has suppressed. But if Iraq's sectarian wars were ended, ordinary Iraqi Sunnis might come to realize that the greatest threat to their well-being is not Iraqi Shiites or U.S. troops, but foreign jihadists in their midst. Then, perhaps, they would begin to work at restoring order in their country.

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Last Train From Baghdad

Leslie H. Gelb

The United States' way forward and out of Iraq now comes down to a fatal choice between President George W. Bush's policy of simply staying the course even as security in Iraq slowly deteriorates and his critics' policy of quickly withdrawing U.S. forces even with civil war looming. The Bush approach looks like an attempt on Bush's part simply to avoid defeat and pass the tar baby on to his successor, Democrat or Republican. The alternative looks like a way to have the United States escape from a quagmire, whatever the consequences. Either way, Americans and Iraqis lose.

There is a third way: for the United States to stop its futile resistance to the inevitable sectarian tides now rolling over Iraq and help the Iraqis channel these forces into a viable political settlement -- uniting Iraq by decentralizing it. This deal would be driven into place by bringing the Sunnis in with an offer presenting them with prospects far better than any of their present ones and by promising U.S. troop withdrawals and redeployments before 2009, all backed up with regional diplomacy.

There are three parts to the Bush strategy in Iraq. First, the United States is putting its top priority on creating a government of national unity, with the expectation that doing so will help solve other political problems. But Iraq has had national unity governments for the past three years, the latest one inclusive enough to count seven Sunni ministers holding positions as important as the deputy prime ministership and the ministry of defense, and they have accomplished little on critical issues such as maintaining security and reducing corruption. It would be foolhardy to predict that the next such government will do much better. Second, Washington is planning to withdraw U.S. troops as Iraqis are trained to take over -- to "stand down as they stand up." But this policy gives Iraqis little incentive to fight their own battles. Third, and most devastating, although Bush persistently proclaims that he is still pursuing victory, his actions suggest that he is, instead, merely trying to avoid defeat.

According to a New York Times article in April, despite small signs of progress, a team of U.S. diplomats and military officers in Iraq described the situation early this year as serious or critical in more than a third of Iraq's provinces. Their report also found that sectarian militias still dominated Iraq's security forces and that rampant ethnic cleansing was taking place throughout the country -- all of which adds up to the start of de facto partition. Yet the Bush administration has decided to end further U.S. economic reconstruction aid after this year, even though the insurgents, as everyone

knows, cannot be defeated without rebuilding Iraq. It also has slashed funds to develop democracy in Iraq. Finally, it has largely pulled U.S. troops off the streets of big cities, leaving the insurgents with greater control.

The result of this deteriorating situation and of Bush's pulling back on key programs will be a draining stalemate. Although the insurgency will grow, the insurgents will never prevail as long as U.S. troops remain in sufficient force, with, say, 30,000 troops. Any insurgent effort to hold large chunks of territory would fail against the United States' dominant firepower. Thus Bush will be able to avoid defeat in Iraq until he hands the problem over to the next president, in 2009. In the meantime, Iraq and the United States will stagger tragically through the next three years -- unless a totally frustrated Congress, supported by an increasingly disillusioned American public, decides that it has had enough of the quagmire and mandates an immediate withdrawal. But a quick U.S. exit from Iraq, however explainable by frustration, would only weaken U.S. national security and the war against terrorism.

AN HONORABLE OPTION

It may be that the situation has reached the point where no strategy, no matter how clever on paper, can work. But to believe there is no choice save to follow Bush deeper into the quagmire would bespeak moral and strategic bankruptcy. There is, in fact, a way to keep Iraq whole and make it politically stable: rather than continue to tear the country apart with futile efforts at centralization, decentralize it. This strategy flows legally from Iraq's existing constitution and is consistent with both U.S. military thinking about orderly troop withdrawal and the desire of U.S. diplomats for a more active regional diplomacy. The United States, along with its friends and allies, can and should lead the Iraqis in this direction. Vital U.S. interests are involved as well as Iraqi ones. But the final decision must be the Iraqis', and Washington should not impose it on them. Helping decentralize Iraq is also more honorable and realistic than either hanging in there or getting out.

This policy has five elements. The first is to establish, consistent with the current constitution, three strong regions with a limited but effective central government in a federally united Iraq. Doing so would build the post-Saddam Hussein Iraq around Kurdish, Sunni Arab, and Shiite Arab regions, each largely responsible for its own legislation and administration. Each region's government could pass laws superseding those passed by the central government, as stated in the present constitution, except in areas of the central government's exclusive jurisdiction. The central government would have the deciding responsibility for foreign affairs, border defense, oil and gas production and revenues, and other countrywide matters, as agreed to by the regions. Its writ would be limited and restricted to areas of clear common interests, which would allow Baghdad to meet its responsibilities effectively. The oil provision, in particular, would strengthen the central government beyond its present powers. The underlying principle behind this policy would be to hold Iraq together by allowing each group to satisfy its real ethnic and religious aspirations.

Keeping Iraq united in this manner would be in the interest of all parties. Key oil pipelines run through the country, north to south, and Baghdad remains the only possible business hub for the country. Most Iraqis also share a powerful interest in seeing that their regions and their country do not get picked apart by greedy neighbors. Divided, Iraq would be an irresistible target for outside meddling; united, the country would stand a chance of survival. More and more leaders -- among the Kurds, the Shiites, and, increasingly, the Sunnis as well -- are favoring negotiated regionalism and moving toward a federal system over civil war. (The existing constitution provides for federalism by allowing provinces to unite with each other and form a regional government.) Nonetheless, Washington would have to play a pivotal role in helping the Iraqis secure this agreement.

Big cities with highly mixed sectarian populations, such as Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Mosul, pose a huge problem now and would continue to do so under a federal solution -- or any other solution. To fix this, the Iraqis will have to make special security arrangements, such as ensuring that the police forces in these cities are composed of members from all the sectarian groups and backed by international police. The factor that will most determine the fate of these cities, however, will be whether the sectarian groups find the overall political settlement fair and viable. And as painful as it may be, the United States will have to assist those Iraqis who wish to relocate to safer terrain, temporarily or permanently. It is essential to realize that this proposal will not cause ethnic cleansing or the country's breakup. These terrible things are already happening. Regionalism may be the only option left to stop them.

The second element of this policy is to bring the Sunnis on board with regionalism with an offer they cannot reasonably refuse. The carrot will have to be very sweet, namely, control of their own region in the center of the country and a constitutionally guaranteed share of oil revenues. Until recently, most Sunni leaders flatly opposed controlling their own region because they fully expected to be running the whole country again. They still saw themselves as masters of their universe and wanted Iraq to remain intact and ready for them to reassume the power they held for hundreds of years. And they pressed for the strongest possible central government.

Now, however, growing numbers of Sunnis are recalculating. Many see that a centralized structure would leave the Sunnis as a permanent minority in a government run by Shiites and Kurds. And whereas the Sunnis used to be convinced that they were invincible in battle, they now understand that they would be the principal victims of a civil war. Today it is obvious, except to Sunni fanatics, that the Kurds have the best militia in the country and that the Shiites are willing and able to fight. And so the prospect of running their own affairs in a Sunni region now looks more appealing to Sunni leaders.

The Sunnis' remaining nightmare is about money, but this could be taken care of with a second carrot: oil revenues. The present constitution calls for distributing "oil and gas revenues in a fair manner in proportion to population." But it does not define "fair" or provide population percentages. It refers to "extracted" oil, suggesting that the rule applies only to current revenues, not to future revenues, which are expected to be much greater, thanks to increased production. The current constitution also disadvantages the Sunnis by giving the final say on oil revenues to the governments in the regions that have the oil, leaving the Sunnis out in the cold, since almost all of Iraq's oil and gas resources sit either in the Kurdish north (about 20 percent) or in the Shiite south (about 80 percent).

The cure is to satisfy all but the greediest Sunnis by amending the constitution to make oil and gas production and revenues the sole province of the central government and to determine that both present and future revenues will be distributed according to population percentages. Such an arrangement would be far better for the Sunnis than the current deal and infinitely preferable to what they would receive -- namely, nothing -- if the country split into three separate states. It should be sufficient to co-opt most Sunni leaders into subscribing to the federal approach and provide them with considerable incentives to try to curb the insurgency in the Sunni region. The Sunnis would gain far less from being granted a larger role in the central government, the plan the Bush administration is currently advocating.

The third element of this third way would be protecting the rights of minorities and women by linking U.S. aid to regional governments to their respect for the politically and culturally vulnerable people in their regions. For women, especially in Shiite territory, and for Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites living in a region other than their ethnic group's own, there will be problems. Washington will not be able to solve these problems, but it must be tough and clear about trying to ameliorate them.

Fourth, the U.S. military should prepare a plan for the orderly and safe withdrawal and redeployment of U.S. forces, to be carried out before the end of 2008. It should also provide for a residual force that would deter and fight any large-scale military disruptions by insurgents or others and continue training Iraqis for the Iraqi military and police forces. Such a measure would recognize the fact that U.S. troops are both part of the solution and part of the problem. They must stay in Iraq -- although in declining numbers -- to take care of the security problem, and they must leave steadily in order to effectively motivate Iraqis to take over security matters.

Finally, Iraq's territorial integrity should be reinforced through a regional nonaggression pact, which must be achieved through active international diplomacy. As a first step, a regional security conference should be convened, where Iraq's neighbors, including Iran, should be encouraged to pledge respect for Iraq's borders and its federal system and to establish procedures to implement a nonaggression plan. Iraq's neighbors have strong incentives to try to make such a deal work. For Turkey, it would be the best way to avoid Kurdistan's becoming a separate state and a rallying point for separatist Kurds in Turkey. States with majority Sunni populations, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, would find consolation in the fact that Iraqi Shiites and Iran would not be controlling all of Iraq. For Iran, stability in Iraq would help it avoid new and unsettling confrontations with other countries. All parties would also share a strong interest in preventing Iraq's meltdown into a civil war, which could draw them into a wider conflict.

The United Nations, particularly the five permanent members of the Security Council plus the European Union, should precede the conference with appropriate diplomacy and help promote some kind of regional mechanism to ensure that the proposed nonaggression deal, once in place, is respected.

Of course, all parties would bring cynicism to such a diplomatic enterprise. But a similar mechanism has worked for Bosnia and is worth trying in regard to Iraq. It is a long shot, but a necessary venture nonetheless.

A BETTER DESTINY

All wars are messy, and all plans for ending them are flawed. But the messy war in Iraq could metastasize into an out-of-control civil war and a regional conflict. The Bush strategy does almost nothing to reduce these terrible risks and only threatens to drag the United States deeper into the Iraq quagmire. As the flaws in this strategy become ever more evident, it is increasingly possible that the American people will sweep aside Bush's strategy in favor of ill-considered demands for an immediate and total pullout. Even optimists about Iraq would be remiss not to confront these looming dangers. Americans and Iraqis must look at other choices.

Uniting Iraq by decentralizing it is not likely to make most Iraqis happy, but it is a plan that gives each group most of what it considers essential: re-blessed autonomy for the Kurds, some degree of autonomy and money for the Sunnis, and for the Shiites, the historic freedom to rule themselves and enjoy their future riches. For all of these parties, it is perhaps the last chance to escape civil war.

This plan provides reasonable time for Iraqis to tend to their own security, and its incentives are tangible. It is carefully paced to salvage the honor of those Americans who served and sacrificed themselves in Iraq. And it allows the U.S. government both to depart honorably and to leave Iraq to the Iraqis for their own disposition -- as it should be.

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Biddle Replies

It is a privilege to respond to such an august panel, especially when we agree on so much. Larry Diamond, James Dobbins, Chaim Kaufmann, Leslie Gelb, and I all agree that current U.S. strategy in Iraq is unlikely to succeed. Diamond, Dobbins, Kaufmann, and I further agree that Iraq is already embroiled in a civil war, albeit one waged at low intensity for now, and Kaufmann and I agree that "Iraqization" is likely to make things worse.

Perhaps most important, we all agree that if the United States is ever to succeed in Iraq, Washington must help Iraq's communities reach a compromise on a viable constitution that distributes power among them. Kaufmann thinks this goal is impossible to achieve, meaning failure is inevitable. The rest of us believe the United States' current leverage for obtaining such a compromise is limited but propose ways to increase it.

I have argued that the United States' most powerful source of unexploited leverage is military: a U.S. threat to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq, realign U.S. support for the parties to the conflict, or reinforce any one of them may be necessary to motivate compromise. Diamond, Dobbins, and Gelb propose a variety of other ways for the United States to increase its leverage. Diamond suggests turning to international mediators, Dobbins seeks regional collaboration among Iraq's neighbors, and Gelb advocates U.S. support for a decentralized Iraqi government and both security and financial guarantees for Iraq's Sunnis. These options are not mutually exclusive, and each merits careful consideration.

But each one also has important drawbacks. International mediation, for example, could be hard to obtain. Intervention by the European Union would certainly be very unpopular with the European public, which overwhelmingly opposes the war. Many Iraqis resent the United Nations for having imposed harsh sanctions on Iraq for a decade. Nor is it clear that either the eu or the un could offer anything to the parties that would outweigh the grave dangers that Iraqis associate with intercommunal compromise.

As Dobbins notes, for regional diplomacy to be effective, the United States must retreat from its initial aim of turning Iraq into a democracy in the near term, because pursuing this goal threatens the political stability of Iraq's neighbors and makes them unwilling to assist. As I argued in my original essay, deferring this project may be necessary anyway. But it would be a bitter pill to swallow for a president who repeatedly cites democratization as the United States' chief interest in Iraq. And it would sacrifice important U.S. interests, at least temporarily. Moreover, regional concord could be difficult to achieve. Iraq's neighbors are as divided over sect and ethnicity as is Iraq itself, and so satisfying their conflicting desiderata could prove far from easy.

Decentralization, which Gelb advocates, would amount to a form of partition. Various partition proposals have been floated since 2003, ranging from a hard division of the country into three separate ministates (one for Shiites in the south, another for Kurds in the north, and a third for Sunnis in the center-west) to variations on federal systems, with a weak central government and more or less autonomous regions. The problem with hard partition is that the Sunnis will not accept it: as an independent state, the Sunni heartland would not be economically viable. The Sunnis would rather fight than accept such impoverishment; hard partition would therefore not end the war. But a softer form of federalism might well offer a basis for constitutional compromise. The problem is not a shortage of ideas on how to divide oil revenues or protect the rights of different regions; it is getting the Iraqis to agree on one of them. Anything they accept would surely satisfy U.S. interests. But to date they have been unwilling to make the needed compromises. Breaking the parties' intransigence will require not so much a new proposal for softer or harder partition, but a new source of leverage over the parties.

Of course, military leverage, too, has many shortcomings. As I noted in my article, to use its military leverage effectively, the United States might need to keep its forces in Iraq for longer than the troops could endure or than U.S. voters would tolerate; a realignment of U.S. positions would be hard to sell domestically; and both Sunni political development and clear-eyed rationality on all sides would be needed before a successful compromise could be reached (and yet these are two elements that may be unavailable given the emotions the war has triggered and Iraq's cultural complexity). Because there are no easy options for Iraq -- all proposals have important disadvantages, and none can guarantee success -- a combination of imperfect initiatives may be needed. And Washington must consider using in such a combination every major source of unexploited leverage at its disposal, including the threat that the United States will realign itself militarily.

Is this threat likely to be credible or effective? Neither Diamond nor Kaufmann thinks so. Kaufmann thinks it is too similar to current U.S. policy to succeed; Diamond thinks it is too different to be credible. In fact, it is neither. A threat of military realignment would add a missing military dimension to the current U.S. policy of brokering a compromise by pressuring each side to negotiate. Realignment already is U.S. policy, but today that policy excludes military threats from the realignment tool kit. If anything, current U.S. military policy actively undermines Washington's bargaining leverage: it aims to build an indigenous Iraqi military as quickly as possible, regardless of the parties' behavior in negotiations, and then to withdraw U.S. forces whether the war is over or not. This policy promises to get U.S. troops home as soon as possible, but in the meantime it is undermining the prospects for settlement by discouraging the parties from compromising. The Shiites and the Kurds will be protected until they can fight their own war, whether they bargain or not, and the Sunnis will face a U.S.-armed opponent whether they bargain or not. So why should any of them compromise? Rather than pursue a military policy that undoes its diplomacy, the U.S. government should coordinate its military and political strategies by deliberately using contingent military threats to create bargaining leverage.

Skillfully conveyed, such threats could be powerful levers. So far, the United States has actively restrained Iraq's security forces, which are dominated by Shiites and Kurds, granting them only light weapons of limited firepower. If it were to remove such constraints and provide the security forces with liberal quantities of modern tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery, body armor, night-vision equipment, armed helicopters, and fixed-wing ground-attack aircraft, the capacity of the Kurds and the Shiites to commit mass violence against the Sunnis would increase dramatically -- and very visibly. Threatening such a change could provide an important incentive for the Sunnis to compromise.

Conversely, a U.S. threat to cease backing the Shiites, coupled with a program to arm the Sunnis overtly or in a semi-clandestine way, would substantially reduce the Shiites' military prospects. Iran might provide more aid to the Shiites to compensate them for some of their loss, but the United

States' military potential so far outstrips that of Iran that rational Shiites could hardly welcome the prospect of being abandoned by Washington and having to confront U.S.-armed Sunnis.

This threat could be made credible to the combatants. The Shiites are very attentive to signs that the United States might abandon them or realign itself against them. Many of them already charge that even Washington's limited tilt toward the Sunnis in the ongoing political negotiations amounts to a "second betrayal" (the first one being the United States' failure to support the Shiite uprising against Saddam Hussein in 1991). An official U.S. threat of military realignment would be hard for the Shiites to ignore. On the other side, some Sunnis already view the United States as a potential protector against Shiite violence, as the fighting in Tal Afar last spring suggests.

Effective leverage need not take the form of clumsy ultimatums, which risk forcing the United States into corners, or the kind of blunt expositions that analysts like me put forward in the interest of clarity. Diplomats enjoy a rich palette of subtler signals with which they can indicate incremental movement in one direction without irrevocably committing to a maximum use of force.

Ideally, Washington would combine any threat with an inducement: the promise to keep U.S. troops in Iraq as long as would be necessary to protect the parties who cooperate. Does the U.S. government have enough political capital at home to accomplish this? Perhaps not. Recent polls of U.S. public opinion are not encouraging. On the other hand, public opinion is not independent of government policy, and voters might have a higher tolerance for casualties if they thought both that the stakes of U.S. involvement in Iraq were high and that Washington's policies there were feasible. The stakes certainly are high. But the American public currently lacks a reason to think that the Bush administration's policies can succeed.

Some analysts, however, believe that the war is already lost, whether or not the Bush administration can get the American people to rally behind it. Kaufmann, for example, argues that communal tensions in Iraq have already passed the point of no return. Calming the situation is now impossible regardless of U.S. policy, and so U.S. forces should withdraw, tarrying only long enough to escort Iraqi refugees to new homes.

He may be right. But he overstates his case by ignoring any contradictory evidence. Although Kaufmann sees no hope of intercommunal accommodation, both the Shiites and the Sunnis, when under sufficient pressure from the United States, have made important concessions to ethnic rivals over the past year. Last fall, the Shiites agreed to the Sunnis' demands for more permissive procedures for amending the constitution; in deference to the Sunnis and the Kurds, the Shiites withdrew Ibrahim al-Jaafari as a nominee for the prime ministership of the permanent government last April; and the Sunnis accepted Nouri al-Maliki, a staunch Shiite, for the prime minister's post even though they clearly preferred other candidates. These concessions were made grudgingly and slowly, and they required heavy U.S. pressure. Much heavier pressure would probably be needed to reach a lasting agreement about issues as important as the constitution. But is there really no chance for a compromise solution, as Kaufmann claims, even if the United States uses all the leverage it has?

Perhaps most important, the pattern of sectarian violence that followed the Samarra mosque bombing in February is inconsistent with Kaufmann's argument that communal tensions cannot be contained. Contrary to many dire predictions, the civilian death toll in Iraq did not spiral out of control in the aftermath of the bombing; on the contrary, it fell sharply. According to Iraq Body Count, a British antiwar group, during the week of the bombing, the violence did spike, causing some 270 Iraqi civilian deaths. But the number of casualties then dropped by 40 percent over the next seven weeks. In fact, the death toll declined every week between March 22 and April 18 (the last day for which data was available when this article was being prepared). If communal violence is spiraling out of control, then why is the number of fatalities decreasing? Is it not possible that the two sides have pulled back from the brink? The data provide no conclusive case either way, and the United States might indeed fail to calm the sectarian violence. But the evidence does not exclude the possibility that the United States might succeed if it somehow increased its leverage over the parties.

What, then, is to be done? Given all the uncertainties, how long should the United States keep trying in Iraq? The longer it persists, the more Americans will die. Yet withdrawal could produce near-genocidal sectarian violence, a regional war, the disruption of international oil supplies, and both a recruiting windfall and new basing possibilities for al Qaeda. If these outcomes are inevitable, then the United

States should leave Iraq now. But if they are not, then sacrificing U.S. lives now could save many more later, and staying is an imperative.

How does one know if there remains a reasonable chance of success? There is no formula for determining so. But I would offer three guideposts. First, is the gap between the positions of the Iraqi factions on key constitutional issues narrowing or widening under U.S. pressure? Good-faith negotiating generally causes parties' divergences to narrow; backtracking or reneging on past offers is a dangerous omen. Second, are the Shiites unified? Conducting three-way negotiations among the Shiites, the Sunnis, and the Kurds is complex enough, but if the Shiite alliance splinters, then the bargaining will become impossibly challenging. Third, and perhaps most important, has the United States used all its leverage? If Washington has exhausted all resources for compelling a compromise, then it should go. If not, it should try harder.

By these standards, it is not yet time for the United States to leave Iraq. As of late April, when the Shiites withdrew Jaafari's nomination, the parties were still moving -- albeit slowly -- toward compromise. Worrisome signs of a split among the Shiites receded when Muqtada al-Sadr accepted Jaafari's withdrawal without bolting. And, as I have argued, and as Diamond, Dobbins, and Gelb have suggested in their own ways, the United States has not exhausted all options for increasing its leverage with the parties.

It is time for the United States to start maximizing its leverage. Flexing military muscle is not the only way of doing so, but it is probably a necessary one. At a minimum, the United States must change its policies regarding the Iraqi security forces, which are only making matters worse. The United States might need to try many different levers. But it must seriously consider invoking its military role as a tool for compelling the parties to reach a settlement rather than as a preface to its disengagement.

U.S. POLITICS & POLICY

Winning Is Not an Option

National Review
By Jonah Goldberg
6/16

Let me get this straight. For a couple of years now Democrats have increasingly demanded that America get out of Iraq now, soon or by a date certain. The Murtha bug-out chorus says "it's not our fight," "let the Iraqis handle it," "let's stay out of a civil war," and, "we can't win."

I think I have that right.

So on Thursday the Washington Post ran a front-page story on how the democratically elected Iraqi government is considering offering amnesty for some insurgents as part of a larger "national reconciliation plan."

In response, the Democratic leadership in Congress went ass over tea kettle.

"The mere idea that this proposal may go forward is an insult to the brave men and women who have died in the name of Iraqi freedom," shrieked Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid. New Jersey Senator Bob Menendez a co-sponsor of the resolution demanding that the amnesty plan be immediately quashed, thundered: "We ask you Prime Minister Maliki, are you willing to have 'reconciliation' on the pool of American blood that has been spilled to give your people and your country a chance for freedom?" He continued: "We reject that notion and are outraged that the sacrifice of American troops and the American people could be so devalued."

Florida Senator Bill Nelson says "Terrorists and insurgents shouldn't be rewarded for killing American soldiers." And, Chuck Schumer in a pitch perfect pose of deep regret and sadness lamented that insurgents were getting a "get out of jail free card."

This is repugnant. Shame on them.

What on earth do these people think cutting and running from Iraq means? When they say, "it's not our fight" and "it's a civil war," how do they envision this non-American conflict to be resolved after we depart?

If America left Iraq tomorrow and then the Iraqi government granted amnesty the day after that, would these sanctimonious champions of military honor protest? I doubt it.

Do they really think that a negotiated peace to this civil war will involve every single Sunni insurgent being put on trial? Of course not. Indeed, if America bugged out and the factions came to just such an understanding on their own, John Murtha would jump up and down shouting "I told you so!" Nancy Pelosi would smirkingly gloat "See? America was a hindrance to peace!"

Look: Bugging out of Iraq is the greatest amnesty possible because it's the only way the men who've shed American blood can not only get off scot-free but actually win the war. But that is precisely what Democrats want to do. These guys talk about how the sacrifices of American troops would be "devalued" by amnesty, but they see no devaluation of such sacrifice in surrender. They say they don't want to "reward" those who spilled American blood through amnesty. But amnesty is the consolation prize. It is the set of steak knives and coupon to Chuck E. Cheese's of rewards. Chasing the infidel American crusaders out of Iraq is the jackpot. And that is precisely what the Democrats are for.

This sanctimony is so dishonest it stews the bowels. Most of these Democrats have denounced America's decision to disband the Iraqi military after the toppling of Saddam. Those Iraqis fired on Americans and now they comprise the bulk of the insurgents. These Democrats wanted to keep many, if not most, of the same fighters in uniform and give them the color of authority in Iraq -- not send them off to be ditch diggers and taxi drivers under some amnesty plan. They wanted them to command troops!

Now, it turns out that the story was wrong and the Iraqi government isn't actually moving ahead with an amnesty plan. I think that's for the good. But I don't think America would be wise to tell the Iraqi government they can't ever find a solution to this conflict that lets insurgents off the hook at all. Wars against insurgencies always involve cooptation. Telling the insurgents - as opposed to the foreign fighters who should be hung from the nearest lamppost -- that it's death or victory is not a path to peace.

The details are obviously complicated. The normal rules of war don't fully apply, since the insurgents use terror tactics, don't wear uniforms, etc. But, we didn't ask that every German be put on trial who had American blood on his hands after World War II and we didn't ask that every North Vietnamese soldier face a tribunal.

Oh wait, that's because we bugged out, just like the Democrats want to now.

The Democrats say we can't win. They also say we can't find a political solution. In other words, it seems their message to American troops is "surrender or fight to the death." Winning is not an option.

Bubba Dubya?

Weekly Standard
By Michael Rubin
6/19

ON SEPTEMBER 20, 2001, President George W. Bush put the world on notice. "We will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." Unanimously, senators and congressmen gave Bush a standing ovation.

Now, faced with falling poll numbers, and wanting the affirmation of the foreign policy elite here and abroad--from the Quai d'Orsay to Auswärtiges Amt and Turtle Bay--the president seems to have reversed course. He still speaks about democracy and the war against terror, but increasingly his administration charts the path of least resistance and paper compromise so dominant during the Clinton years. This may please diplomats, but it does not ensure national security. It's djæ vu all over again in the White House.

Reviving the North Korea Model

On May 31, 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reversed U.S. policy toward Iran. "We are agreed with our European partners on the essential elements of a package containing both the benefits if Iran makes the right choice, and costs if it does not."

Her announcement delighted European diplomats and validated former Clinton administration officials. An April 26 statement signed by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and five European former foreign ministers had advised, "We believe that the Bush administration should pursue a policy it has shunned for many years: attempt to negotiate directly with Iranian leaders about their nuclear program." Sandy Berger, Clinton's second-term national security adviser, applauded the move: "[Rice] has done a very effective job in the last year and a half of consolidating foreign policy back in the State Department." To Albright and Berger, 1990s-style diplomacy, with its emphasis on multilateralism and consensus over substance, is an end in itself.

In the wake of Rice's announcement, senior U.S. diplomats and European officials speaking on background outlined the proposed carrots and sticks: If Tehran promises to suspend uranium enrichment, sits down, and talks, it will receive light water nuclear reactors. If Tehran refuses to talk, Europe, Russia, and perhaps even China will discuss sanctions at the U.N. Security Council. There is no consensus about what these sanctions would constitute, nor is there a timeline. Just two days after Rice's concession, her Russian counterpart hinted at just how flaccid the proposed sticks were. Speaking in Vienna, Sergei Lavrov commented, "I can say unambiguously that all the agreements from yesterday's meetings rule out in any circumstances the use of military force."

Precedent gives little ground for optimism. What Bush offered Tehran mirrors what Clinton gave Pyongyang. On October 21, 1994, Ambassador Robert L. Gallucci signed the U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework. In exchange for a freeze of the Stalinist dictatorship's nuclear program, Washington offered to supply Pyongyang with two light water nuclear reactors and a basket of additional incentives. Clinton explained, "North Korea will freeze and dismantle its nuclear program. South Korea and our allies will be better protected. The entire world will be safer as we slow the spread of nuclear weapons."

But North Korea did not freeze its nuclear program, and the world did not become safer. In 1998, Pyongyang signaled its renewed belligerence when it launched a nuclear-capable Taepodong-1 missile over Japan. It continued to enrich uranium and later withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The Central Intelligence Agency now estimates North Korea has a couple of bombs; the Stalinist state claims to have more. The idea that Clinton's deal was a success is revisionist nonsense. It is a model only for the triumph of appearance over substance. Kim Jong Il played Clinton; Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is playing Bush.

Terror Training Camps

It is not just the actions of the Bush administration that recall the Clinton years, but also the inaction. The Clinton administration knew that Afghanistan played host to terror training camps. The 9/11 Commission detailed the Clinton administration's decision to trust diplomacy. A declassified December 8, 1997, State Department cable detailed high-level talks between Assistant Secretary Karl F. Inderfurth and a Taliban delegation. The Taliban promised to "keep their commitment and not allow Bin Laden and others to use Afghanistan as a base for terrorism." The State Department lauded its own success. "We believe our message . . . came through loud and clear." It didn't.

On August 7, 1998, al Qaeda attacked the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Thirteen days later, Clinton ordered a retaliatory missile attack on a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan and on Zhawar Kili, a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan. International reaction was tepid at best. While Prime Minister Tony Blair stood by Clinton, most European allies were lukewarm. U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan expressed "concern" and the Kremlin denounced U.S. actions.

Clinton valued international affirmation. The symbolic Tomahawk strike complete, he sought to assuage allies with renewed commitment to international multilateral diplomacy. Both Clinton and the Taliban reverted to business as usual. Sensing weakness, al Qaeda accelerated its training program. In March 2000, I spent three weeks in the Taliban's Afghanistan. In Kabul, shopkeepers described meeting Arabs and Filipinos training for jihad. While the Taliban denied hosting terror training camps,

residents near Rishkhor, a camp just a few kilometers from Kabul, spoke of continued activity. Eighteen months later, graduates from Afghan camps like these brought down the World Trade Center.

Today, the location is different, but the White House's desire to turn a blind eye is the same. In the 1990s, Afghanistan was a forgotten backwater; this decade, it is Somalia. Terrorists love a vacuum. On June 5, the Islamic Courts Union, an Islamist group affiliated with al Qaeda, seized Mogadishu, Somalia's capital. Both journalists and policymakers were underwhelmed. Perhaps, some mused, this radical Islamist gang could restore order. Reporting was similarly blasé when the Taliban seized Kabul just under a decade ago.

The Islamic Courts Union and the terrorist threat they pose did not materialize out of thin air; rather, they are a product of Bush administration neglect. Somalis living in Mogadishu speak of terrorist training camps established in the Lower Juba region, along the Kenyan border. According to Somali officials, the camps are not indigenous, but are run by Palestinians and Syrians. Senior U.S. military officials acknowledge the growing al Qaeda presence, but say they are forbidden to intervene. Not only has the Bush administration long nixed U.S. military action against terror training camps but now also forbids the U.S. military from filling the vacuum in still stable regions of the country, such as Somaliland and Puntland.

As the Bush administration wishes the problem away, rich Saudi and Persian Gulf financiers work to consolidate the region as a jihadist base. While Clinton did little to stop the capital flow from Gulf Arab sheikhs into the Taliban's Afghanistan, today the Bush team ignores the almost daily flights from Dubai to the Somali airfield at Baledogle, about 70 miles northwest of Mogadishu. Here, chartered jets bring men and materiel for al Qaeda affiliate al-Ittihad al-Islami and the Taliban-like Islamic Courts Union, which is slowly consolidating its control over Mogadishu.

Clinton Redux

In 1993, Bill Clinton came to the White House without foreign policy experience. He followed the advice of professional diplomats and, for eight years, did what was short-term popular, but long-term unwise.

He trusted U.S. security to the goodwill of international organizations. The intellectual elite applauded, even as Saddam Hussein, for example, exploited the United Nations for financial gain, the European Union funded Palestinian terrorists, and Iran developed secret nuclear facilities under the nose of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

He let public opinion polls determine national security. After a disastrous October 3, 1993, raid in Mogadishu, he ordered U.S. troops to evacuate the country, mission incomplete, a key factor, Osama bin Laden later said, in bolstering al Qaeda's confidence.

Bush's recent about-face also seems driven more by public relations than strategy. Bush administration figures once said they would not replicate Clinton's mistakes. On March 18, 2004, Rice told CNN interviewer John King that a proper U.S. response to 9/11 was "an American strategy that is bold and decisive and takes the fight to [the terrorists]" and not Clinton's laid-back, law-enforcement approach that "led to September 11." Four days later, Vice President Dick Cheney reiterated the message and then, on March 23, 2004, so did Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

Today, the Bush administration is in full retreat from that high ground. The Iranian president can threaten war, but if nuclear reactors are what it takes to get the United Nations to promise to consider whether to discuss talking about the possibility of taking action, then Bush is willing to agree. Meanwhile, authorities in Turkey complain that Central Intelligence Agency officers meet with representatives from Kurdish terrorist groups, former CIA officers meet with Hezbollah, and the State Department plays a shell game with Hamas, withholding money on one hand, but dispensing the same funds through the United Nations Refugee Works Administration with the other. Rice now even hints at scaling back U.S. opposition to the International Criminal Court. Like Clinton before him, Bush is being tempted by the siren song of international peer affirmation.

During his September 20, 2001, speech before the joint session of Congress, Bush declared, "We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail." Increasingly, though, the administration seems to be tiring and faltering. And if it retreats to the policies that led to 9/11, it will fail.

--Michael Rubin, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is editor of the Middle East Quarterly.

At Last, a Rosy Day

Newsweek

By Richard Wolffe and Holly Bailey

6/19

President Bush could tell something big had happened in Iraq, but he didn't know if it was good or bad. Last Wednesday afternoon, the president hosted a meeting at the White House with members of Congress who had recently returned from Baghdad. The congressmen told stories and gave Bush advice. Rep. Ray LaHood of Illinois pointedly told Bush that he should be trying to kill Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi. The comment caused quiet snickering: try to kill Zarqawi--like no one had thought of that before. At one point, Bush's national-security adviser, Stephen Hadley, was called out of the room. When he returned a few minutes later, Bush gave him a searching stare, trying to suss out what Hadley had learned. Bush had been waiting for word that Iraq's government had finally succeeded in filling its last cabinet positions, an incremental step that the White House was eager to hold up as a sign of progress. But Hadley, gray-haired and sober, sat poker-faced, betraying nothing. Bush grimaced and waited out the end of the meeting.

Afterward, the president and his top aides gathered in the Oval Office. "Hadley, you got news for me?" Bush barked. "Yes, sir," Hadley said. "I'd like to talk to you alone." There was a kind of inaudible groan in the room. The staffers filed out, bracing for yet another setback in Iraq. Instead, Hadley told Bush that Zarqawi was almost certainly dead. Gen. Stanley McChrystal had laid eyes on the terrorist's corpse. It would take a few hours to make sure it was him. "That would be a good thing," Bush said cautiously. The president knew that the military had recently intensified its efforts to hunt down Zarqawi, but he had not been told about the planned airstrikes on the terrorist's safe house.

When the staff returned to the Oval Office, Bush's mood was upbeat, according to a White House aide who was present (and who, like all White House personnel quoted in this story, follows a policy of not being quoted by name). "I think we got Zarqawi," he announced. Counselor Dan Bartlett joked, "Damn, Ray LaHood is good!" Aides began to laugh but then caught themselves. It was immediately clear to everyone, says the Bush aide, that even with Zarqawi dead they were still a long way from high-fives in Iraq.

For the White House, Zarqawi's unexpected demise is the first good news about the insurgency in months, and the president and his advisers know they risk squandering it if they were to gloat. Bush's tendency toward "bring it on" swagger cost him credibility as the war dragged on--the insurgents did come on, to deadly effect--and the president now avoids raising expectations even when he has something good to report. Announcing Zarqawi's death at the White House, Bush was solemn. "The difficult and necessary mission in Iraq continues," he said. "We can expect the terrorists and insurgents to carry on without him. We can expect the sectarian violence to continue." (Among themselves, long-suffering staffers couldn't help but indulge in a little end-zone dance. "People around here are palpably happy," says one senior White House official. "Good news is good news. I'll take any I can get. It's hard to come by.")

The new cautious, low-key approach is part of a larger White House strategy to win back voters' trust in Bush's Iraq plan--and in Bush himself, whose public- approval ratings are languishing in the basement. The idea is to show that Iraq is improving by touting progress in the government and the Iraqi security forces while projecting a measured optimism about defeating the insurgency. That will require strict message control--a White House specialty--and constant vigilance to avoid creeping hubris.

A possible hitch: Congress. With the elections coming up, Republicans on Capitol Hill, fearful of being dragged down by the war, aren't spending much time worrying about Bush's rehabilitation. And they aren't buying into the new, nuanced stand on the war. GOP leaders were quick to violate every principle of the White House plan, hailing Zarqawi's death as a major victory in the war on terror--and lording it over the Democrats.

The new White House strategy emerged late last year, after Bush had plunged into what looked like a

death spiral in the polls. Bush's senior aides believed that the public had a surprisingly high tolerance for casualties in Iraq as long as they thought the war had a purpose, and that Bush had a plan that would ultimately be successful. That view was more than just a gut feeling. It was based in large part on the research of Peter Feaver, a Duke University political scientist who had recently joined Bush's National Security Council. Feaver helped shape Bush's new approach, especially his "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq." For the first time, Bush seemed to be speaking more truthfully about the war's problems and challenges. Without conceding any personal mistakes, the president admitted that the training of Iraq's security forces "hasn't always gone smoothly."

The new tone seemed to work. Bush's poll numbers rose out of the post-Katrina hole for several weeks before the rising death toll--and the political stagnation in Iraq--pushed them back down. Still, Bush's aides had proved their point: they could massage public opinion by recalibrating expectations, and that a realistic tone, which conveyed purpose without hype, would produce the best long-term results in the polls.

Zarqawi's death grabbed attention in a way that political advances in Iraq's reconstruction never could have done. For weeks, White House aides have been planning a Camp David strategy session for the president and his cabinet as a way to underscore the importance of the new government in Baghdad. The session would take place the first week after the new government was fully formed. By chance, the new Iraqi cabinet was finally named on the day Zarqawi was killed, and the Camp David session takes place early this week.

One private reason for the meeting was to take a cold look at the military strategy in Iraq. In recent weeks, briefers have given Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte a grim view of the war effort. Before Zarqawi's death, "there was a sense that the insurgency was getting stronger, and we were on the road to nowhere," says an administration official who declined to be named talking about intelligence. But the public highlight of the Camp David session will be much sunnier: a picture-perfect videoconference between the Bush cabinet and the new Iraqi cabinet--symbolically projecting an image of two independent, democratically elected governments working together.

That's just the sort of feel-good image that helps burnish a president's legacy--but it's not much good to a congressman looking for votes. Members of Congress saw a domestic political opening in Zarqawi's death, and unlike Bush they didn't waste much time trying to find just the right words to express their feelings. "With regard to the insurgency in Iraq, the military has chopped off the head of the snake," said House Majority Leader John Boehner. Senate GOP leader Bill Frist went so far as to say Zarqawi was a bigger threat than Osama bin Laden. "[Bin Laden] is a little bit like Saddam Hussein at this point. He's not giving orders," Frist said. "The mastermind ... the top terrorist in the world today, has been taken down." Democrats were sure to lace their comments about Zarqawi with praise for the soldiers who killed him--and reluctant credit for Bush. But Republicans don't intend to let the triumphant moment pass without using it to their advantage. "When there's nothing but bad news from Iraq, we have to worry that the war will hurt us," says a campaign aide to a GOP senator who wouldn't speak on the record while talking strategy. But "good news gives you an opportunity to start reminding people that [Democrats] don't have a plan for Iraq."

To help make that point, the GOP House leadership has set aside time this Thursday for what it called a "freewheeling" floor debate on the Iraq war. There will be plenty of praise for the troops, no doubt, and huzzahs over Zarqawi's death. The hope is that voters who may have gone cold on the GOP will rally once again around the war. "When you kill some bastard terrorist with a long Arab name--they get that right away," says the Senate campaign aide. "So, yeah, this is the kind of thing ... voters respond to."

Not all Republicans think it's such a great idea. Democrats will have a chance at the microphone, too, and they will use it to remind voters that the violence continues despite Zarqawi's death, and point out that Iraq is still a mess with no end in sight. "Why are we going to have a debate about the thing that has been dragging the president and our party down?" LaHood wonders. "It doesn't take a genius to see what a silly idea that is in a year like this."

WAR ON TERROR

Death Comes To Guantanamo

Time

By Adam Zagorin and Richard Corliss

6/19

If the Bush Administration had a wish list for its war on terrorism, the eradication of Abu Mousab al-Zarqawi would surely have been toward the top. But somewhere on that list would also be no deaths in Gitmo. In its 4 1/2 years as a detention center for some 750 men the U.S. has held as terrorist suspects, Camp Delta on Cuba's Guantanamo Bay has been the scene of at least 41 suicide attempts, according to U.S. officials. None were successful until Saturday, when the U.S. Southern Command reported that three men had hanged themselves. After a few sweet days during which the White House could savor the accomplishment of the al-Zarqawi killing, the word from Gitmo introduced a bitter taste.

The three men, two Saudis and a Yemeni, whose names were not immediately released, hanged themselves "with fabricated nooses made out of clothes and bedsheets," Navy Rear Admiral Harry Harris told reporters in a conference call from the U.S. base. The first death was discovered shortly after midnight on Friday, the other two soon after. All three men left suicide notes written in Arabic. Harris said he believed the acts were coordinated, in part because of the similar method of the deaths and because in the past the three had gone on hunger strikes--acts of defiance that at times involved up to 130 of the detainees.

President George W. Bush expressed "serious concern" about the deaths and directed that the remains be "treated humanely and with cultural sensitivity" in accordance with Muslim traditions, Press Secretary Tony Snow said. "He wants to make sure that this thing is done right from all points of view."

Governments hostile to the U.S. and friendly ones too have condemned the Administration's detention of the prisoners, few of whom have even been charged with specific crimes. The incarcerations have reverberated violently throughout the Muslim world. A year ago, unsubstantiated news accounts that Korans had been flushed down toilets sparked riots and several deaths. More outrage followed the news last month that a Gitmo melee between detainees and guards was ignited when the guards attempted to search prisoners' copies of the Koran for concealed medicine. Two prisoners tried to commit suicide on May 18 by swallowing ant anxiety medication they had managed to hoard.

If there's one thing the Administration and the detainees agree on, it's that the battle over Gitmo takes place on two levels: in the camp, where prisoners stage hunger strikes and attempt suicide, and in the outside world, where reports of alleged mistreatment foment negative international and domestic reaction, which in turn puts pressure on the White House to close down Gitmo.

The Administration has a keen interest in keeping detainees alive, even against their will. Force feeding has long been standard policy for hunger strikes at Gitmo, which first began in 2002. The facility's top physicians have told TIME that prisoners who resist are subjected to what critics call especially forceful methods. According to medical records obtained by TIME, a 20-year-old named Yusuf al-Shehri, jailed since he was 16, was regularly strapped into a specially designed feeding chair that immobilizes the body at the legs, arms, shoulders and head. Then a plastic tube, sometimes as much as 50% bigger than the type commonly used for feeding incapacitated patients, was inserted through his nose and down his throat--a procedure that can trigger nausea, bleeding and diarrhea.

Allegations of prisoner abuse prompted more than 250 medical professionals, none of whom work at Gitmo, to sign an open letter to the British medical journal the Lancet demanding an end to force feeding. They cited the code of ethics of the American Medical Association and the World Medical Association, both of which condemn the force feeding of prisoners as a violation of human dignity. In response, the U.S. could say that keeping prisoners alive is its responsibility, even if drastic measures are required to do so.

It was equally in the prisoners' interests for one of their number to die. In a global jihad in which suicide bombers are cheered as heroes, suicide at Guantanamo could be seen as an act of passive resistance, like the self-immolations of Buddhist monks in the early days of the Vietnam War. The

Gitmo deaths may have had religious significance for the men who committed them. Colonel Mike Bumgarner, who oversees the detention camps, said in May that several inmates told him of a "vision, or a dream--implicitly a message from God--that if three detainees die, it will attract enough attention so that they will all get out of Guantanamo."

A former Bush Administration official who has been involved in Guantanamo issues believes the suicides could put a crimp in the international praise Bush has received for his tentative detente with Iran: "It reinforces the perception that he can't play nicely with the world and will stir up the monitoring organizations, which hurts the President abroad." The detainees' deaths are unlikely to become a domestic political liability, the source says, because the American voter assumes "that if they're in Gitmo, they're pretty bad." But the former official adds, "People don't react very well to surprises like this, because it reinforces the notion that a chaotic world has been made more chaotic by the Bush presidency, not less. People say, 'Typical Bush. He creates problems he can't solve.'"

The President says he wants to "empty" the Gitmo facility but can't do so until another country agrees to take the inmates without torturing or freeing them. Yet authorities are currently constructing a new, \$30 million prison at Gitmo, where they plan to consolidate many of the camp's maximum- and medium-security inmates. Harris argues the camp will be needed for the foreseeable future.

A more urgent concern is a case on the detainees' legal rights that the Supreme Court is expected to decide by July. That case, *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, could determine whether prisoners have the right to be charged in U.S. civilian courts. Any decision in favor of the detainees would mean a defeat for the elaborate legal framework the Administration has developed to hold Gitmo detainees and other prisoners without charges--and often without trial--by classifying them as "enemy combatants."

That legal battle may yet be overshadowed by a bloodier confrontation at Gitmo. Word of the suicides will spread quickly through the prison. Leaders among the inmates could decide to ratchet up the pressure by launching more strikes, more fights or perhaps more suicides. Guantanamo is far from Iraq and Afghanistan, but it could become another front in the war on the war on terrorism.

Inmates talked of a "vision--if three detainees die, it will attract enough attention so that they will all get out of Guantanamo."

Fighting Zarqawi's Legacy

Newsweek

By Rod Nordland and Michael Hirsh

6/19

From the president on down, U.S. officials are trying hard to suppress their excitement. But Zalmay Khalilzad, the American ambassador in Iraq, can't help it: he sees a "big opportunity" in the death of Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi. Why? Because Khalilzad knows that jihadists around the world may not encounter Zarqawi's like again soon, no matter who replaces him. So monstrous a man was Zarqawi--so singularly savage in his methods--that he inspired almost as much fear among his Sunni confederates as he did in his victims. A terrorist among terrorists, he was always the scariest guy in the room, frightening his Sunni hosts into silence or cooperation with his unique combination of cruelty and competence: cross Zarqawi and you would die, along with your family, perhaps horribly. As recently as the last couple of months, Zarqawi's group orchestrated the assassination of 11 Sunni tribal chiefs around Ramadi, all killed for merely talking to the new Iraqi government, according to Israeli historian Amatzia Baram.

So the U.S. ambassador's implicit message to Iraq's Sunni insurgents and sympathizers is this: it's safe to come out now, and maybe even act civilly toward your fellow Iraqis among the Shiites. "Ding dong, the witch is dead," as one administration official, speaking anonymously because he is not authorized to talk to the media, jokingly described the mood. In an interview with NEWSWEEK, Khalilzad went further than he has before in suggesting that the U.S. administration and new Iraqi government are willing to negotiate directly with some insurgent leaders.

"The elements of reconciliation are there," Khalilzad said. One of those elements is the appointment of new ministers--after six months of haggling--to Iraq's key security posts. New Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani and Defense Minister Abdul Qader Mohammed Jassim--the first is a Shia, the latter a Sunni--

"don't have ties to militias, [and] from all indications they're not sectarian," said Khalilzad. If you're trying to reach out to Sunnis in the resistance, the two have the added benefit of having served as officers in Saddam's Army. "Both ministers have ties to all communities," said the ambassador. "But we'll see. They need to now deliver and engage."

Can the post-Zarqawi politics of reconciliation work? There are some positive signs: only a few days after Zarqawi's death, some Sunnis who had supported the insurgency began to renounce him and signal a willingness to return to the negotiating table. Still, U.S. officials admit they are chastened by so many false starts and disappointed hopes over the past three years--the capture of Saddam, the parliamentary election, the handover of sovereignty. The answer depends on how enduring, and far-reaching, Zarqawi's legacy turns out to be. From his beginnings as an obscure journeyman jihadist, Zarqawi engendered his own global movement of young Islamists who aspire to his brutal brand of terror. Many now long to take up his fight in Iraq. As if to demonstrate that Zarqawi's cause will endure, an insurgent group called Ansar al-Sunnah posted an Internet video Saturday showing three alleged Shia death-squad members being beheaded.

Even to Osama bin Laden and his No. 2, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Zarqawi's savage tactics--including videotaped beheadings and the mass slaughter of Shia women and children--were sometimes over the top. Though Zarqawi ultimately swore loyalty to Al Qaeda, his movement has always been distinct from bin Laden's, and he made independent forays into global jihad with terror acts in Jordan and Morocco. Terror experts say that Zarqawi also had a hand in recruiting "white-skinned" militants in Europe with the aim of using them--with their valid passports and ability to blend in--to launch suicide attacks on Western targets, as well as to fund-raise and fight in Iraq.

Zarqawi surpassed his elders as well in the art of virtual jihad on the Internet. Now that Al Qaeda is being denied sanctuary in Afghanistan, the Internet is the terrorists' new "base." It is the place where new cells and plots spontaneously form--and where Zarqawi's MO is studied widely. One of the biggest Islamist hits on the Web is still the horrific video of Zarqawi personally beheading American contractor Nicholas Berg. Among the more zealous disseminators of Zarqawi's cyberspace messages was a London-based hacker who was known as Irhabi 007--irhabi is Arabic for terrorist--until his arrest last fall. Zarqawi's hatemongering on Web sites has extended his influence even to what Canadian authorities fear is an incipient cell they broke up two weeks ago. One of those linked to the alleged Toronto plot to take hostages in the Canadian Parliament was Irhabi 007, identified as Younis Tsouli, who was found possessing suspicious computer pictures of sites in Washington, D.C.

Within the cyberworld, Zarqawi's legend sometimes seems as potent as bin Laden's. "He set a new standard of ruthlessness, and he created a new model for propaganda," says Boston University's Husain Haqqani, an expert on Muslim extremism. "No one else re-corded operations in as much detail." Today even the resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan, which once banned all human images (saying Islam forbade them), has started up a video division of its own, Haqqani notes. "These are guys who used to beat up people for hanging a picture of Grandpa in the living room." Among the Taliban, the hagiography of Zarqawi is already in full swing. "He is a superstar of the Muslim world," says a senior Taliban operative who goes by the nom de guerre Zabihullah and knew Zarqawi when he fought with the Taliban. "His death is a worldwide tragedy for Al Qaeda and all mujahedin. It will be difficult to find a replacement."

That's why the biggest question about Zarqawi's legacy is whether his grand design for Iraq--for an apocalyptic sectarian conflict--has taken on a life of its own and no longer needs him. Thanks to Zarqawi's relentless targeting of Shiites, hatred and mistrust between Sunnis and Shiites is now endemic. Far more than power failures, or untreated sewage and spreading disease, this is the worst of Iraq's daily realities, one that could easily send it into full-blown civil war if the U.S. military withdraws. Zarqawi's attacks on Shia mosques and police stations, U.S. intelligence officials believe, were the main reason for the creation of the fearsome Shiite death squads. These in turn have created renewed support among Sunnis for the insurgency. "Sectarianism is Zarqawi's legacy," says Mokhtar Lamani, the Arab League's permanent envoy to Iraq. "The main thing that all Iraqis share now is being afraid of one another. And everybody's afraid of what is in the future."

It is a cutting irony that the Bush administration once thrust Zarqawi forward as a prewar link between Iraq and Al Qaeda. It was never clear that he ever had any ties to Saddam--and yet after the war, the terror leader became what he was once trumped up to be: Al Qaeda's man in Iraq. He made Iraq far more deadly for U.S. soldiers, and played a greater role than anyone else in turning the country into what George W. Bush called the "central front" in the war on terror. "Former regime groups paid lip

service to Islam in the beginning, but Zarqawi truly Islamized and thus internationalized the insurgency," says a U.S. military-intelligence official who did not want to be named because it might harm his career.

In his interview with NEWSWEEK, Khalilzad agreed that Zarqawi did much to turn the anti-American insurgency into a larger cause. The envoy also said that Zarqawi, more recently, had helped to re-energize the movement by transforming its image into that of a "Sunni militia" countering the Shiite death squads he himself inspired. "The nature of the conflict has changed," Khalilzad said. "If you look back over the past eight to 10 months, what you see is that the sectarian conflict has become a dominant, if not the dominant, conflict here. Some insurgents see themselves as protecting Sunnis against Shia militias."

Even now, many Sunnis in Iraq and around the world cannot bring themselves to condemn Zarqawi and his murderous three-year rampage. Last week one brave moderate Sunni politician, Mithal al-Alusi of the Iraqi Nation Party, criticized Sunnis in the government who failed to renounce Zarqawi after his death. There were some Sunni politicians who said nothing to the media, al-Alusi told NEWSWEEK, but out of the camera's eye they called him a shaheed --or martyr. The politicians viewed Zarqawi as an Arab ally, the only force powerful enough to defend--and avenge--Sunnis against brutal death squads linked to Shia militias. His death, to them, was a loss--it represented a boost in power for the Shiite Mahdi Army and Badr Brigades, al-Alusi said. "They were sorry," he said between puffs on a cigarette at his guard-ed house in the International Zone. "You could see it in their eyes."

Still, one by one, some Sunnis in Iraq may be losing their fear of cooperation. For the first time last week, Esam al-Rawi of the Association of Muslim Scholars publicly disavowed Zarqawi. In the past, al-Rawi's influential group has either avoided the question or insisted that Zarqawi was an invention of the Americans. The association is known to be close to the Iraqi resistance, and had been publicly threatened by Zarqawi when it began flirting with the idea of negotiations with the government. Now al-Rawi tells NEWSWEEK, "We would like to confirm that we did not have any kind of relations with him or Al Qaeda. Zarqawi and his acts have, in fact, deformed the real image of the Iraqi resistance; this was our point of view toward Zarqawi since long ago, and we would like to confirm that." Sheik Halaf al-Ilaiyan, a Sunni national assemblyman, also bravely came out to say that "Zarqawi was against such dialogues [with the government], but dialogue is not against Islam; the Prophet made negotiations with heathens."

The bigger issue is how much Zarqawi's group managed to extend its reach worldwide, at a time when bin Laden is focused mainly on staying safe. U.S. and British officials tell NEWSWEEK that a series of arrests beginning in Britain and Bosnia last fall--and culminating in the breakup of the Toronto cell--seem more linked now to Zarqawi's influence than to what remains of bin Laden's central command.

Some U.S. officials now hope that the images of the dead Zarqawi being broadcast and linked around the world will cause young Muslims to reconsider the glories of jihad. But many fear that what might now be called Zarqawism will live on. Zarqawi, an ill-educated former petty criminal, may have left his "real legacy in the realm of ideas," says John Arquilla of the Naval Postgraduate School. "One idea was to fuse insurgency and civil war in Iraq. The other idea was to take jihad most effectively onto the Web." And so the war--one with real and virtual fronts--goes on.

Sects and Death in the Middle East

Weekly Standard

By Lee Smith

6/26

It's unclear how damaging the death of Abu Musab al Zarqawi will be to the Sunni insurgency in Iraq. But the admiration of sympathizers like Hamas, which called him a "brother-fighter," reminds us that he was not just a blood-drenched killer and lowlife. He was also the product of his region. The impact of his career on his extremist peers and the Middle East's Sunni mainstream will therefore bear close watching.

Even happier than the White House at his demise are Middle Eastern minorities, especially the Shiites, for they, rather than the Americans, were at the core of his exterminationist program. For Sunnis, the Shiites have always been barely tolerable heretics, but Zarqawi took this traditional loathing to new

heights. Shortly before his death, he called Lebanon's fanatical Islamist militia Hezbollah a cover for Israel--because, after all, they were Shiites who stood between the Zionists and the wrath of the Sunni resistance.

Hezbollah general secretary Hassan Nasrallah and supporters were most certainly appalled and quite possibly terrified. After all, one reason for waging the "resistance" against Israel is to prove that the minority Shiites are Arabs in good standing just as much as the majority Sunnis. Indeed, since the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah has been bragging that it was the first Arab group to make the Zionists taste defeat, and thus that the Shiites had managed to out-Sunni the Sunnis.

In effect, Zarqawi said he saw through the charade, and that Hezbollah should disarm--a demand that reminds us why it is probably going to be impossible to convince Nasrallah to give up his weapons peacefully. Hezbollah may well believe its own rhetoric--that only its militia can protect Lebanon from Israel. But the Shiites also have to worry that, if they put down their guns, they are vulnerable to Sunni violence, a threat that Zarqawi's spectacular Iraq campaign made very real to Shiites across the region. Thus, in response to the insult that he was doing the work of the Zionists, Nasrallah described Zarqawi in similar terms: "The killers in Iraq, no matter what sect they belong to, are Americans and Zionists and CIA and Mossad agents."

This Arab habit of blaming everything on the United States, or Israel, or the West in general, strikes many observers as evidence of faulty logical processes, or an abdication of basic political responsibility. But it is also part of an unspoken ceasefire pact--a reminder among Arabs that they have agreed not to attack each other and will focus their energies on external enemies in order to keep the peace at home.

For over half a century, Arab leaders from Nasser to Nasrallah have all sounded the same note--we Arabs are in a battle to the death against Israel, the United States, the West, colonialism, etc. Zarqawi broke that pact. We Sunnis are Arabs, said Zarqawi, but you lot are Shia and we will kill you.

And so Ayman al-Zawahiri's letter last year urging Zarqawi to leave the Shiites alone and focus on the Americans indicates that, at least compared with the late leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, the al Qaeda home office is staffed by rather mainstream Arab demagogues. Many Arabs believe that Israel would be lost without U.S. support. The same holds true in the bin Laden-Zawahiri worldview, where Washington is the only thing protecting weak Arab regimes from jihadist takeovers. Zarqawi believed, for whatever combination of religious, political, criminal, and sociopathic rationales, that to truly set the region in flames and bring down the established order, you get the people to fight each other.

Zarqawi tapped into the id of the region, the violent subterranean intra-Arab hatreds that no one wants to look at very closely, neither locals nor foreigners, because the picture it paints is so dauntingly gruesome that it suggests the Middle East will be a basket case for decades to come.

A RECENT ZOGBY POLL on Arab TV-watching habits explained that Al Jazeera remains the most watched station in the region for foreign news. Curiously, the poll ignored Iraq, where 80 percent of the population, Shiites and Kurds, are not apt to patronize a media outlet that regards them as little more than fodder for the heroic Sunni struggle against the Americans and Zionists.

That other 20 percent of Iraq was Zarqawi's target constituency, his Sunni base, and it is a much, much larger number outside of Iraq. It includes not just takfiris like himself--extremists who believe in murdering infidels and heretics. It comprises a mournful Hamas government, elected by a majority of Palestinians, and "moderate" Islamists like the four parliamentarians from Jordan's Islamic Action Front now facing prosecution for openly lamenting the death of a man who had repeatedly targeted the Royal Hashemite Kingdom. Certainly not all Sunni Arabs approved of Zarqawi's tactics, but many agreed that someone had to put the Shiites back in their place lest they misunderstand what is in store for them once the Americans leave.

Last year, Jordan's King Abdullah famously warned of a Shiite crescent--a sphere of influence running from Iran to Lebanon--and Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak has accused Shiites of being more loyal to Iran than the countries they live in. And these are the heads of the two major Arab states that are almost devoid of Shiites. Feelings run even higher elsewhere in the region.

In Saudi Arabia, the mere existence of Shiites in the Eastern Province threatens not only the kingdom's primary source of income, oil, but also the very legitimacy of Wahhabi rule. After all, as true Wahhabis,

shouldn't they be converting or killing Shiites, as the founder of the country, Ibn Saud, once insisted? Further west in Syria, the Sunni majority has been grating for more than 40 years under the rule of a Shia sect, the Alawites, who have now cost the Sunni merchant class in both money and prestige. The Assad regime has so isolated Syria from the rest of the international community that its only ally is the Islamist Republic of Iran. And then there is Lebanon, where Hezbollah has effectively usurped the mantle of Arab militancy from the Sunnis.

To your average Joe Sunni, then, it's good that Osama bin Laden kills Americans. And it's wonderful that the Palestinian groups kill Israelis. But Zarqawi was the man in the trenches who went after the heretics that Sunni Arabs all actually have to live with every day, and have successfully kept in their place for a millennium now, and don't ever want overturning the scales.

THE SECTARIANISM OF IRAQ has been topic A in Washington ever since the war began. And yet it is not merely a temporary eruption at a time of crisis, but rather a permanent and defining feature of every Arab society, and you don't have to scratch beneath the surface of things to find it. Sometimes, it's just gossip and banter, as in Lebanon, where I've heard Sunni women talk about the disgusting way that Shiites hang their laundry. A Christian friend married to a Shiite confided his concern that their daughter's fashion sense was becoming gaudily Shiite. The Sunnis say, eat with a Druze but sleep with a Christian--meaning the Christians are filthy but the Druze are untrustworthy and will slaughter you in your bed. Some exchange Jew for Druze.

Other times, the gossip turns to folk wisdom. Some Sunnis really believe that Shiites have little tails. And there are scores of volumes of age-old Shiite propaganda about the bizarre sexual practices of Sunnis. Much of the sectarian enmity, in fact, partakes of sexual loathing and envy. Sunni women, for instance, are famously believed by their detractors to relish anal sex. Recently, Hezbollah supporters surrounded a Sunni neighborhood in Beirut, where they insulted deputy Saad al-Hariri, chanting "the c--of his sister, the c--of his mother."

Many Arabs believe that Syria's Alawites engage in pagan orgies where men sleep with each other's wives, or with their daughters, or with each other. Osama bin Laden's mother, as it happens, is an Alawite, which is strange only in that the 14th-century jurist and father of modern jihad Ibn Taymiyya, one of bin Laden's role models, thought the Alawites were "more infidel than Jews or Christians, even more infidel than many pagans." He wrote, "War and punishment in accordance with Islamic law against them are among the greatest of pious deeds and the most important obligation."

Of course, most people don't speak about sectarian hatreds publicly. In Syria, the Alawite government has made it very dangerous to talk about sects. In Lebanon, people are too polite to ask you directly what you are, and so to find out, they will ask you your last name, your neighborhood, your school, your father's name, his hometown. The well-educated Arab classes are especially careful about speaking in sectarian terms in front of Westerners, because, as elites talking to elites, they believe that Westerners think religious faith is bizarre to begin with and sectarianism evidence of a primitive society. To hear many Iraqi officials and journalists describe their country, there is so much intermarriage between the sects and tribes that their Iraq, the non-Zarqawi Iraq, actually looks something like a page out of the New York Times wedding announcements. And to be fair, a case can be made that 20th-century Iraq was at times among the most cosmopolitan of Arab societies.

But to downplay sectarian issues is to risk misunderstanding the real problems in Iraq. There are already scores of books and articles detailing how the Bush team screwed up the war or the postwar occupation, some written by former administration employees, others the mea culpas of self-described onetime true believers. But the biggest problem in Iraq isn't really the stupidity or arrogance or incompetence of the Bush administration. The real stumbling block isn't getting Iraq's electricity or water on full blast. Police and army recruits aren't bound and tortured before they are decapitated or shot in the head because of premature or insufficient de-Baathification, or because the State Department and the Pentagon were fighting over the role of Ahmad Chalabi. Americans should have provided better security, and more overwhelming force. But the political and religious cover so amply offered to the assassins of ordinary Iraqis did not issue from the office of the Coalition Provisional Authority or the U.S. embassy in Baghdad. No American exhorted Sunni or Shiite gangs to butcher their neighbors. The American arguments over Iraq sometimes achieve truly astonishing levels of parochialism and self-obsession. The problem in Iraq is Iraq. More broadly speaking, it is the problem of Arab society. Intolerance of the other, fear of the other, is always there.

OSAMA BIN LADEN, some Middle Eastern wags like to joke, is the father of Arab democracy, for

without September 11, the United States would have gone on ignoring the region. But Zarqawi is the real radical, for he exploited and illuminated the region's oldest and deepest hatreds. And he stayed on message until it was very difficult to argue that the root causes of violence in the Middle East are colonialism, imperialism, and Zionism.

Zarqawi made it clear, if it wasn't already, that a more "even-handed approach" toward the Israeli-Palestinian crisis will not really defuse tensions in the Middle East. That particular problem, at least in its political dimensions, goes back at most only to 1860; the Sunni-Shiite split begins with the death of the prophet Muhammad. Zarqawi also made it clear, if it wasn't already, that getting U.S. troops out of Saudi Arabia will not really calm jihadi fervor, because the American military is just one among the many valuable targets the jihadists see in the greater Middle East.

The world looks like a different place thanks to Abu Musab al Zarqawi, for without him the obtuse, the partisan, and the dishonest would still have room to talk about root causes and such stuff and reason away mass murder and sectarian fear and loathing. Zarqawi clarified things. If his death turns out to be a turning point in the war or the political development of Iraq, we will not know for many years, maybe decades. But it will only be a turning point if, having held up a mirror to the people who quietly cheered him on, they recoil from what he showed them.

--Lee Smith, a Hudson Institute visiting fellow based in Beirut, is writing a book on Arab culture.

POLITICS OF ISLAM

Islam in Office

Newsweek

By Stephen Glain

7/3

Judeo-Christian Scripture offers little economic instruction. The Book of Deuteronomy, for example, is loaded with edicts on how the faithful should pray, eat, bequeath, keep the holy festivals and treat slaves and spouses, but it is silent on trade and commerce. In Matthew, when Christ admonishes his followers to "give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's," he is effectively conceding fiscal and monetary authority to pagan Rome.

Islam is different. The prophet Muhammad--himself a trader--preached merchant honor, the only regulation that the borderless Levantine market knew. In Muslim liturgy, the deals cut in the souk become a metaphor for the contract between God and the faithful. And the business model Muhammad prescribed, according to Muslim scholars and economists, is very much in the laissez-faire tradition later embraced by the West. Prices were to be set by God alone--anticipating by more than a millennium Adam Smith's reference to the "invisible hand" of market-based pricing. Merchants were not to cut deals outside the souk, an early attempt to thwart insider trading.

Today, with a spiritual revival sweeping much of the Muslim world and with the Bush administration still keen on democratizing the region, it is worth asking how an Islamist movement would manage the economy. Since 2001, Islamist parties have made strong showings or won elections in 10 Arab countries (Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait and Pakistan) and the Palestinian Authority. And none are clashing with the West on free-market economics. In Iraq, the supply-side economic-reform plan submitted in 2003 by former U.S. administrator Paul Bremer has survived with only minor revisions under Baghdad's new Shia-dominated government.

An interesting test came in the January election in Egypt, when the Muslim Brotherhood--the fountainhead of modern Islamism--took a fifth of the seats in Parliament. Now the largest opposition party, much of the brotherhood's appeal rests on its network of hospitals, schools and charities, which are often superior to state services (and help explain why the secular regime cracks down harder on the secular opposition than on the religious one). Fortunately for the reform-minded prime minister, Ahmed Nazif, the brotherhood's economic agenda is largely consistent with his own, albeit with a more populist twist.

The brotherhood embraces free-trade deals in general, but criticizes the government for failing to negotiate better terms for Egyptians. Though Islam tends to frown on tax collection, the brotherhood

supports tax reform (not abolition) and opposes a proposed flat tax as regressive. It even endorsed the recent decision to lift budget-busting food and fuel subsidies, but wants to use Egypt's ample natural-gas reserves to finance a less painful transition to market prices. "It must be done gently," says Mohammad Habib, the brotherhood's first deputy chairman, "with the objective of reducing the gap between rich and poor."

In the 1950s, as the brotherhood gained political momentum, it opposed President Gamal Abdel Nasser as much for his decision to nationalize the Egyptian economy as for his fierce secularism. Muhammad, says Yasser Abdo, a Muslim Brotherhood member and a former economist at the International Islamic Bank for Investment and Development in Cairo, "believed in the private sector as the basis of productive activity," with a "limited" state role.

Today, brotherhood parliamentarians remain anti-statist and staunchly antitrust, citing a verse in the Qur'an: "He who brings commodities to the market is good, but he who practices monopolies is evil." Not that any member goes as far as questioning the OPEC cartel. As Cairo University economist Abdel Hamid Abuzaid puts it, Islam promotes "competition of a cooperative" nature, not the "cutthroat" Western kind.

Politically, at least, the objective of fundamentalist Islam is to restore the Islamic caliphate, the unified Muslim kingdom of the 7th to the early 20th centuries that stretched from the Hindu Kush to the Strait of Gibraltar. This rhetoric turns more practical on the subject of trade. "If the ancient caliphate can revive itself," says Habib, who has a U.S. doctorate in geology, "it will happen through regional commerce." A brotherhood in power, says Habib, would respect Cairo's free-trade agreements--though the group appears to be divided over whether it would honor one with Israel.

In the days of the caliphate, Islam developed the most sophisticated monetary system the world had yet known. Today, some economists cite Islamic banking as further evidence of an intrinsic Islamic pragmatism. Though still guided by a Qur'anic ban on *riba*, or interest, Islamic banking has adapted to the needs of a booming oil region for liquidity.

In recent years, some 500 Islamic banks and investment firms holding \$2 trillion in assets have emerged in the Gulf States, with more in Islamic communities of the West. British Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown wants to make London a global center for Islamic finance--and elicits no howl of protest from fundamentalists. How Islamists might run a central bank is more problematic: scholars say they would manipulate currency reserves, not interest rates.

The Muslim Brotherhood hails 14th century philosopher Ibn Khaldun as its economic guide. Anticipating supply-side economics, Khaldun argued that cutting taxes raises production and tax revenues, and that state control should be limited to providing water, fire and free grazing land, the utilities of the ancient world. The World Bank has called Ibn Khaldun the first advocate of privatization. His founding influence is a sign of moderation. If Islamists in power ever do clash with the West, it won't be over commerce.

ENERGY

Surprise Drop in Oil?

National Review
By Larry Kudlow
6/27

Prince Turki al-Faisal, the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the U.S., recently told the United States Energy Association that any U.S. conflict with Iran would threaten the Strait of Hormuz and triple the barrel price of oil. Of course, such language could be an attempt to get President Bush to rule out the military option as Iran pushes to weaponize its uranium-enrichment program. But the administration will not rule anything out as it grapples with this belligerent power.

That said, I'd like to challenge the prince's assessment of the potential direction of oil prices, and the idea that the Middle East necessarily holds all the cards.

The Energy Department just announced that crude oil supplies rose 1.4 million barrels to 347.1 million for the week ended June 16. Analysts had been expecting a drawdown, so this news caught them by

surprise. More, crude oil supplies in the U.S. are now at their highest levels since May 1998, when oil was trading around \$15 a barrel. Add in the fact that Canadian oil inventories are fully stocked, and the more imminent reality is of a sizable oil-price decrease -- not a huge increase.

Recently I interviewed four oil-tanker executives who control a combined 85 percent of the oil coming into the United States. They confirmed market rumors that the amount of oil being stored on large carriers on the high seas is abnormally high. One of the CEOs even predicted the possibility of \$40 to \$50 oil in the next 6 to 12 months. In another interview, Chevron CEO David O'Reilly suggested that gasoline and energy demands have flattened in the U.S., and may be showing signs of decline.

Prince Turki can threaten \$200 oil all he wants, but we may instead be looking at a downward correction that will have oil prices dropping more than anyone imagines possible. Supplies are at their highest levels in eight years, while demand appears to be falling, or at least leveling off. Should a significant price correction be in the offing, stock markets and the economy will cheer.

The economic principles at work here are very simple: Markets work. Supply and demand works. Higher prices are gradually slowing consumption. At the same time, those high prices continue to stimulate outsized profits and investment returns. So capital is pouring into all the energy sectors, providing a strong foundation for new energy production. Chevron, for example, is reinvesting virtually all its profits in new oil-and-gas exploration and drilling. The drilling industry, meanwhile, has recovered from last year's Hurricane Katrina shock and is once again producing near peak capacity.

There's even good news from Washington on the energy front. The House Resources Committee, chaired by California Republican Richard Pombo, has just delivered the Deep Ocean Energy Resources Act, which will give coastal states the authority to drill 100 miles or more offshore. This will allow for exploration and production in the deep seas and on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), where kajillions in oil-and-gas reserves are waiting to be siphoned. It also will provide the coastal states with significant oil and gas royalties. Democratic House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi opposes this, but the bill has strong bipartisan support.

Finally, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued its first license for a major commercial nuclear facility in thirty years. Construction of the \$1.5 billion National Enrichment Facility in New Mexico could begin in August, and according to Louisiana Energy Services CEO Jim Ferland, it could be ready to sell enriched uranium (for electricity) by early 2009. Senate Energy chair Pete Domenici calls this a "renaissance of nuclear energy in this country."

A combination of market forces and government deregulation could be setting us up for a big crack in energy prices, including gas at the pump. And it may happen sooner rather than later. Many years ago, during the 1970s oil crisis, Milton Friedman argued that free markets are more powerful than OPEC, and Ronald Reagan proved the point when prices plunged after he deregulated energy in the early 1980s. Twenty years later, energy-market forces may be poised to assert themselves once more.

Iran and its allies will continue to rattle their sabers in an attempt to boost the value of their only cash crop. And of course, a gunboat battle in the Strait of Hormuz will temporarily boost prices again. But pessimists keep making a one-way bet on sky-high oil prices that will doom the American economy, even though record low tax rates on capital have so far prevented anything like this from happening.

Conventional forecasters understate the economic power of free markets, low marginal tax rates, and energy deregulation. As a supply-side contrarian, I'll take the other side of that trade. Indeed, as future events unfold, we may be headed for a much different energy and economic scenario.

-- Larry Kudlow, NRO's Economics Editor, is host of CNBC's Kudlow & Company and author of the daily web blog, Kudlow's Money Politic\$.
