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NONVIOLENT CHANGE JOURNAL (NCJ) ON THE WEB

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

EDITORS COMMENTS

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

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

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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE IS DECEMBER 8
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UPCOMING EVENTS

The International Society for Organizational Development (ISOD) (formerly the Organization Development Institute upcoming conferences, for more details go to: http://www.theisod.org/index.php/2011-05-22-00-53-59:

ISOD Fall Conference is October 13-16, 2011 at Benedictine University in Lisle, IL, with Special Guest Lecturer: Geoff Bellman.

ISOD Spring O.D. Information Exchange is May 21-25, 2012 at the George Williams Conference Center in Williams Bay, WI.
The UN DPU-NGO (Department of Public Information – Non-Governmental Organizations), United Nations, DPI/NGO Resource Centre, Room L-1B-31, (212)963-7233, 7234, 7078, Fax: (212)963-2819, dpingo@un.org, www.un.org/dpi/ngosection, publishes a provisional briefings and events calendars for fall 2011.

International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) 2011: “Toward Human Security: A Gender Perspective on Alternatives to the War System”, organized in partnership with the National Peace Academy (home of the IIPE secretariat) and the Global Campaign for Peace Education Japan (GCPEJ) cooperating with a consortium of other national organizations invested in furthering peace education in Japan, is at the National Women’s Education Center (NWEC) near Tokyo, Japan, August 12-19, 2011. Hosted at the National Women’s Education Center (NWEC) Applications will be available in early 2011. Click above for more information visit: http://www.i-i-p-e.org/2011.html.

World Peace Festival is in Berlin, Germany, August 26-28, 2011. For more information go to: http://www.worldpeacefestival.org/.

The 64th Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference: Sustainable Societies; Responsive Citizens is September 3-5, 2011 at Bonn, Germany. For details go to: www.un.org/dpi/ngosection.

Interdisciplinary Conference: “War and displacement” is September 6-7, 2011 at the University of Plymouth, Plymouth, UK. For details visit: www.plymouth.ac.uk/view.asp?page=34336.


8th Culture of Peace Festival – Peace Network of San Carlos and Fundación CEPPA is at San Carlos and San José, Costa Rica, September 18 – October 1, 2011. For information visit: http://ceppacr.org/html/evento.html.

International Day of Peace is September 21st.


The Network for Peace through Dialogue, in its focus on trafficking, is sponsoring a Living Room Dialogue on the movie The Whistleblower, September 26, 2011, in New York City. For details call (212)426-5818. Network for Peace through Dialogue is at 240 East 93rd St. #3H, (212) 426-5818, info@networkforpeace.com.


The Network for Peace through Dialogue is putting on a series, Understanding Islam, a Dialogue: Not Argument! September 29, 2011 (Thursday): Faith and Culture; October 12 (Wednesday) : Fasts and Feasts; November 29 (Tuesday): Social Doctrine for Peoples of the Book, all at Marymount Manhattan College, 221 E. 71 St., NYC (Between 2nd and 3rd Avenues), 5:30 – 7:30 PM in the Chapel. Please Pre-register at least 5 days before the session, by calling 212-426-5818, or info@networkforpeace.com.
The Occupv Wall Street movement is joining with MoveOn, and labor and community groups in New York for a massive march down to the Occupy Wall Street encampment, October 5, 2011, and for those who can't make it to New York, we're also holding a huge online "Virtual March on Wall Street" in solidarity with the brave protesters in New York, and local marches all over the U.S. For details go to: http://www.moveon.org/r/?r=264653&id=31653-1653571-02zugAx&t=1, and on the virtual and local marches: http://www.occupytogether.org/, while during the week of October 5, in Washington, D.C., is the first national gathering of Occupy Wall Street: the Take Back The American Dream conference.


The National Teach-In, "Students Rising for Jobs and Economic Justice" is at the University of California Washington Center, October 12, 2011, 7:00 – 8:30 (EDT) with webcast live across the U.S. For details go to: http://www.afcio.org/issues/jobseconomy/jobs/teachin.cfm.


World Youth Festival 2011: Discover Azerbaijan ("The Role of Youth in Conflict resolution and Peace building") is in Ganja, Azerbaijan, October 15-20, 2011. For details visit: http://worldyouthfestival.az/.

English 'Riots': Civic Responses and Sociological Perspectives is at Birmingham Midland Institute, UK, October 15, 2011. The recent civil disturbances across a number of English cities have provoked much commentary and debate. This symposium endeavors to bring public understandings and sociological perspectives to bear upon the events of last month. To this end we have invited a diverse range of speakers to open up the discussion. More information can be found at: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/rsr/research_centres/theory/conf/rs


Not For Sale is convening the Global Forum on Human Trafficking October 21-22 in Silicon Valley, CA. The Global Forum will bring together people from all walks of life – from business leaders, people of faith, students, athletes, law enforcement and others to learn and explore different models being deployed to mobilize individuals to combat trafficking. Keynote speakers include Twitter founder, Jack Dorsey." For details go to: http://salsa démocracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=0SZzC9HM5FpPwozClpU22vh7eqO0d1m2.

The End Genocide Action Summit is October 22nd in Washington D.C. For information go to: http://action.savedarfur.org/site/R/?i=aZhV_Vd-ZUZHh0MHK-Y_aA.

5th National Symposium on Dispute Resolution in Special Education of the National Center on Dispute Resolution in Special Education, is in Eugene, OR, October 26-28, 2011. For information go to: http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/.

Cultivating the Greater Self: the 8th Annual Ikeda Forum for Intercultural Dialogue is October 22, 2011. The "greater self" of Mahayana Buddhism, writes Daisaku Ikeda, "always seeks ways of alleviating the pain, and augmenting the happiness, of others, here, amid the realities of everyday life." Building on this Buddhist foundation, this year's Ikeda Forum will consider the greater self from a range of philosophical perspectives, with emphasis on ways that education and dialogue can encourage this enlightened state. For details contact Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue, 396 Harvard Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, phone (617)491-1090, www.ikedacenter.org.

Common Bond Institute International Conference on Practical Models For Peace: Making a Difference Now is October 27-30, 2011 at Wahat Al Salaam/Neve Shalom, Israel. "In the midst of frustration, impasse, and animosity, there is another story of practical hope and healing.... A new annual multi-disciplinary conference series promoting support for successful peace programs in Israel and Palestine, Sponsored by: Common Bond Institute, Wahat Al Salaam/Neve Shalom,
International Humanistic Psychology Association. Endorsed by an international list of over 100 organizations and universities. Official Partner of: Charter For Compassion and Parliament of World’s Religions, For details go to: www.cbiworld.org/Pages/Conferences_PMP.htm.

First global Conference, Probing the Boundaries: Communication and Conflict” is November 3-5, 2011 at Prague, Czech Republic. For information visit: www.inter-disciplinary.net/probing-the-boundaries/hostility-and-violence/communication-and-conflict.

Secrets of Spiritual Activism: a toolkit for educators and activists is November 4-6, 2011 in Petaluma, CA, Conducted by: Metta Center for Nonviolence in partnership with the National Peace Academy. Course Instructors: Michael Nagler, Metta Center President and Professor emeritus and founder of Peace and Conflict Studies Program, UC Berkeley; Stephanie Van Hook, Metta Center Co-Director and adjunct faculty at Portland State University. For information go to: http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?llr=m647c9cab&et=1107546139198&s=2121&e=00187xaAmQVwLFI_vnEfa7VVrRdoADZRABhHCJTb7JZa6pU_DtSjct2NmaDFbclQgprrU4Utmtm6QfWoUTZ8vPO-TaMMCwmA2vIv0xZxBudCgm1lcjXovl9NkBhUo2b06bCVEX-who06y_0jIV-9owqmRgUc13WIV-qdKWXvte4JoiCf81sI6v65gffqth1, or contact the National Peace Academy, (202)556-1075, certificate@nationalpeaceacademy.us, www.nationalpeaceacademy.us.

Mid-Atlantic Human Rights Conference is November 11-14 at Maryland’s National Harbor. For details visit: http://www.kintera.org/TR.asp?a=jeLILKNH8LFJYJ&s=8nJIISNoH7JBIGOmEnE&m=egKOL1PHKjIS1J.


Common Bond Institute, 6th Annual International Conference on Engaging The Other: The Power of Compassion is December 1-4, 2011, at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California. For details visit: www.cbiworld.org/Pages/Conferences_ETO.htm.


SIT Institute Symposium: “Conflict, Memory, and Reconciliation” is January 10-13 at Kigali, Rwanda. Information is available at: www.asit.edu.symposium.


J Street's 2012 conference: Make History, “help bend the arc of history toward peace for a democratic, secure and Jewish Israel.” is March 24-27, 2012 in Washington, D.C. For details go to: http://salsa.wiredforchange.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=OujL19z7aVplvtVZKAoRcL8ZDOx%2Fn5J.

2nd Conference on Creative Education is in Shanghai, China, April 13-15, 2012. For more information go to: http://www.creativedu.org/2012/.


The Common Bond Institute is planning for 2012, International Conference on Transgenerational Trauma is in Jordan, in June. Dates and details will soon be available at: www.cbiworld.org.

Common Bond Institute 2nd Annual International Conference on Practical Models For Peace will be Immediately after TC Conference in June, 2012, WASNS, Israel. Details will b available at: http://www.cbiworld.org/Pages/Conferences_PMP.htm.
International Conference on diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations is at University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, June 11-13, 2012. For details visit: http://ondiversity.com/conference-2012/.


Common Bond Institute 1st Annual International Conference on Transgenerational Trauma: Communal Wounds and Victim Identities will be Early fall 2012, in Jordan. Details will become available at: http://www.cbiworld.org/Pages/Conferences_MainPage.htm

Common Bond Institute 7th Annual International Conference on Engaging The Other: The Power of Compassion will be in San Francisco, late fall 2012. Details will become available at: http://www.cbiworld.org/Pages/Conferences_ETO.htm


ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Bill McKibben and 350.org joined with other environmental groups in August to protest at the White House, with some being arrested, calling on the President not to approve the tar sands oil pipeline from Canada to refineries in Texas. Then “from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe and just about everywhere in between,” on Moving Planet Day There were rallies and marches and teach-ins and protests of all kinds, calling on action on climate change on September 24. For more information go to: http://act.350.org/go/423?akid=1314.51426.YAEy6a&t=1.

Global Exchange went to Chevron's annual shareholder meeting in San Ramon, California on May 25, 2011.” Nearly two years ago, Global Exchange formed the Energy Program (previously the Chevron Program), to expand and better coordinate a network of communities directly impacted by Chevron’s operations across California, the U.S. and the world,” “establishing the True Cost of Chevron Network at an inspiring international strategy session following Chevron’s annual meeting last year in Houston.” “On May 23, we will host a public teach-in at the Brower Center in Berkeley. (http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=7NuTRf89giUk%2BiXtEgBkSOjhfYV%2F). On May 24, we will release the third annual True Cost of Chevron: An Alternative Annual Report. Filled with an amazing array of first-hand accounts of Chevron’s abuses written by impacted community members from around the world, this year’s report includes new locations, such as China, the North Sea and the Beaufort Sea. There is also a special focus on Chevron and offshore drilling in the wake of the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon. On May 25, we will attend Chevron’s annual shareholder meeting while a support protest rally takes place outside Chevron’s gates (http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=H9yWq9NJtmRCGEKpQ看不出964BinP3CA).” "Allies joining us in the Bay Area include Humberto Piaguaje, Amazon Defense Coalition, Ecuador; Emem Okon, Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre, Nigeria; Mardan Pius Ginting, WALHI - Friends of the Earth Indonesia, Indonesia; Gitz C Radboy, First Nation Dene/Pikini (Blackfoot), Alberta, Canada; Elia Isaac, Open Society Initiative, Angola; Bryan Parras and Liana Lopez, Texas Environmental Advocacy Services and the Gulf Coast Fund, Houston, Texas; Tom Evans, of the Native village of Nanwalek, Cook Inlet Keepers, Alaska, and more.”

The Brave New Foundation, in May, was joining other environmental and other groups in opposing the Keystone XL pipeline that would carry the dirtiest oil on Earth, from Canadian tar sands through six states, one of America's most important aquifers and almost 2,000 miles of American homes and farmland. The production of oil from tar sands is extremely destructive to the environment. Thousands of acres of forest are being cleared to mine the tar sands with very wide direct destruction of the environment just from the mining. The process of extracting the oil from the mined material requires at least three barrels of water for each barrel of oil produced, and leaves behind huge quantities of exceedingly toxic waste water. Some of this poisonous water is stored in a pond right next to the Athabaskan River, and there is strong evidence that leaks into the river (and or runoff from the mining) are the cause of an outbreak, since the tar sands oil mining began, of a very high rate of normally exceedingly rare cancers in a First Nation community downstream from the tar sands mining and processing. For more information go to: http://kochbrothersexposed.com/tellclintonno/.
Raúl Zibechi, “Conference for Water and Pachamama,” AmericasProgram, July 28, 2011, http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/5187, reports, “This Conference arises from the need to articulate the isolated struggles from different parts of the continent, that we are suffering the same consequences’, said Carlos Pérez Guartambel, Quechua lawyer, water systems leader, and coordinator of the Continental Conference of the People of Abya Yala for Water and Pachamama [Encuentro Continental de los Pueblos del Abya Yala por el Agua y la Pachamama], celebrated June 21st to 23rd, 2011. “The same language used by multinationals about a responsible and sustainable mining industry is repeated by Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Juan Manuel Santos in Colombia, [and] Alan Garcia in Peru. Not even Chávez is immune. Up against that, we see the weakness of isolated struggles”, adds Pérez. The Conference was called by the country’s principal social movements: the Azuay Union of Community Water Systems, Ecuarunari, Conaie, the Ecumenical Commission on Human Rights (CEDHU), and Acción Ecológica, among others. Some two thousand people from 15 countries in the Americas participated in the conference, debating around three topics: Living Well or Sumak Kawsay; extractivism; and the commoditization of nature, the mass media and culture. Activities were held at a youth camp and combined workshops and debates with videos and music. Water was at the center of the assembly; the communities have an intimate relationship with it, “especially indigenous women, who are the key to this resistance”, declares Pérez. In southern Ecuador, transnational mining interests have bought politicians, journalists and local governments, but they have not yet been able to drive a wedge into the community of campesinos, who do not live on the land but “with the land”, as the Quechua say.”

100,000 Poets For change Organized more than 600 events around the world in 450 Cities and 95 Countries, on and around September 24th, in a demonstration/celebration of poetry to promote serious social, environmental, and political change. For details go to: http://www.bigbridge.org/100thousandpoetsforchange/.

Occupy Wall Street, beginning its protest of big capital’s attack on the middle class and working Americans by demonstrating on Wall Street beginning in mid September, joining with MoveOn, and labor and community groups in New York undertook a massive march down to the Occupy Wall Street encampment, October 5, 2011, with solidarity local protests around the United States and an online “Virtual March on Wall Street,” “in solidarity with the brave protesters in New York,” while the week of October 5, in Washington, D.C., Occupy Wall Street held its first national gathering: the Take Back The American Dream conference. “Our movement was born after Madison, Wisconsin, to stand up for middle and working class families. We’ve engaged 130,000 people to crowd-source our own jobs agenda—the Contract for the American Dream. In August, tens of thousands of us demonstrated for jobs in rallies across the nation.” Occupy Wall Street has provided nonviolent training for its participants and asked its participants to stop anyone at the protest from committing violent acts. Demonstrations, including ongoing occupations have since been taking place around the United States. For information go to: http://www.moveon.org/r?r=264653&id=31653 and http://www.occupytogether.org/.


Human rights first is involved in a campaign to “Urge Congress to stop the arms sale to Bahrain until democracy and human rights are established!” For more information go to: http://actions.humanrightsfirst.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=4797.

CODEPINK continues to organize for ending the war and bringing U.S. troops home from Afghanistan and Iraq, and more recently has been campaigning to support Palestinian statehood and membership in the UN. Recent and upcoming actions include: “September 11 - October 6: Create Not Hate! Join us at cultural events throughout the country to reflect on 10 years of war,” “ September in NYC: Schedule of actions around 9/11, Wall Street, & the Palestinian Statehood vote at the UN,” and “October 6-onward: Stop the Machine convergence in Freedom Plaza, DC: “Millions of people around the world are rising up for freedom and justice, from the Arab Spring to the Chilean protests for education. This October, let’s bring the protests to the US, where our rights have been severely curtailed and our national priorities emphasize war instead of housing, jobs, healthcare, and education.” Code Pink has also opposed the Israeli blockade of Gaza and in its “Ahava / Stolen Beauty,” campaign, Protested Ahava at the Natural Products Expo West 2011 in Anaheim, California because the company includes products produced in illegal Israeli settlements in
the West Bank. Code Pink also is working on a domestic agenda including pushing for the development of green jobs and increasing government support of people in need. For more information go to: http://codepinkalert.org.

The Council for a Livable World joined with others, in late May, in asking Congress to help President Obama to keep his promise about winding down the Afghan war. “When the President sent 30,000 additional American troops to Afghanistan, he promised that the U.S. would begin withdrawal of those forces by July 2011 with all combat troops out by 2014. Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley has circulated a letter to his colleagues demanding a 'sizeable and sustained' reduction in troop levels in Afghanistan beginning in July 2011.” The council was campaigning to support the Merkley letter. For more information go to: http://advocacy.clw.org/clw/issues/alert/?alertid=47696501.

While the weekly Israeli and Palestinian peace activists, with support of internationals, protests against the building of the wall and the illegal expansion of settlements have continued (for example go to: Occupation Magazine, May 14, 2011, http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=39859), additional protests have taken place.

Sharon Roffe-Ofir, “Hundreds protest arrest of alleged Arab spies,” Ynet News, May 10, 2011, http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3887729,00.html, reported that about 300 people, including several Arab Knesset members, rallied in Haifa, in early May, protesting of the arrest of well-known Arabs Omar Said and Ameer Makhoul on suspicion of contacting a Hezbollah agent. Balad Chairman Jamal Zahalka stated, “We won’t let (Israel) turn our political activities into security offenses.” MK Talab El-Sana (United Arab List-Ta’al) stated, “This is bigger than Omar and Ameer – this is an attempt to delimit us in a political ghetto, but we will breach it. There are mass demonstrations planned.”

Some 20 Palestinian and Israeli political parties and social movements issued a declaration in support of the social protests currently rocking Israel and their necessary linkage to the struggle against Israel’s occupation and colonial policies, in early September, as a follow up to the May 2011 Hebron conference, jointly organized by the left parties in Hebron, the AIC and Tarabut-Hithabrut. The signing political parties, social organizations and young women and men Palestinian and Israeli activists were: Association of Palestinian Democratic Youth (Palestine), Association of Progressive Students (Palestine), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Palestine), Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Israel), Democratic Teachers’ Union (Palestine), Democratic Union of Professionals in Palestine (Palestine), Democratic Women’s Movement in Israel (Israel), Israeli Communist Party (Israel), National Campaign for Return of the Bodies of Arab and Palestinian Martyrs Captured by the Israeli Government (Palestine), Palestinian People’s Party (Palestine), Popular Campaign for the Boycott of Israeli Products (Palestine), Progressive Workers’ Union (Palestine), Tarabut-Hithabrut – Arab-Jewish Movement for Social and Political Change (Israel), The Alternative Information Center (Palestine/Israel), Union of Palestinian Farmers’ Unions (Palestine), Union of One World for Justice (Palestine), Union of Palestinian Working Women (Palestine), and Workers’ Unity Bloc (Palestine) (“Historic Declaration by Palestinians, Israelis in Support of Israeli Social Protest, Anti-Colonial Struggle, The Alternative Information Center, September 5, 2011, http://www.alternativnews.org/english/index.php/topics/news/3795-historic-declaration-by-palestinians-israelis-in-support-of-israeli-social-protest-anti-colonial-struggle-). Between ten and twenty thousand marchers from a wide coalition demonstrated in Tel Aviv for a Palestinian State (two state solution) on the evening of June 4, on the eve of the 44 the anniversary of the occupation of Palestinian lands (http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en/events/1307302934/). On July 8, “the Marhaba to Palestine campaign” protested the ongoing travel restrictions imposed by The State of Israel on those entering end exiting the occupied Palestinian territories, and the ongoing denial of Palestinian human rights. Usually, an international activist who wishes to visit Palestine has to conceal her/his political intentions when landing at Ben Gurion Airport, and disguise herself/himself as a tourist with a detailed tour plan. On July 8th planeloads of international activists, 550 men and women, landed at Ben Gurion airport declaring openly, “We are here to visit Palestine.” Peace activists greeted the arrival of all activists with "welcome" signs in several languages, supporting them and expressing their solidarity (http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en/channels/press_releases/1310077157/).

In reaction to the governments response to the social movement, Gush Shalom issued a press release, August 11, 2011, “Uri Avnery on East Jerusalem construction plans: ‘Government heats up the political scene instead of dealing with social protest’ Following the approval of construction program at the Ramat Shlomo Neighborhood in East Jerusalem, former Knesset Member Uri Avnery, Gush Shalom activist, says: ‘The government heats up the political scene instead of dealing with the wave of social protest and the tent encampments springing up throughout the country. Economic hardships brought the youngster out into the streets and exposed the true face of the Netanyahu Government, which does not serve the voters but only the tycoons. Construction in East Jerusalem will benefit only to the favored ultra-Orthodox community, in stark contrast to demand of universal social justice, affordable housing for all. Not only will this act make even harder to renew any kind of diplomatic process, but it may well provoke a reaction by the Palestinians. In the present Israeli
political climate, this might well be precisely what the government desperately hopes for - distracting citizens from their real concerns, and steering them back to preoccupation with primordial fears. Netanyahu continues avoid finding real peace solutions – either domestically or with the Palestinians – his real concern being to keep his seat, at the expense of all of us."


Gush Shalom and other organizations held a demonstration at the Israeli Supreme Court, September 12, 2011, where Gush Shalom has brought a case, protesting that Israelis new Boycott Law is unconstitutional and anti-democratic. The petition states, among other points, "The parliamentary majority seeks, through the Boycott Law as by other pieces of legislation, to silence any criticism of government policy in general and of government policy in the Occupied Territories in particular, and to prevent an open and productive political dialogue, which constitutes the basis for a functioning democratic regime" (http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en/events/1310485548/).

For more information on the Israeli peace movement contact Gush Shalom, P.O. Box 3322, Tel-Aviv 61033, 972-3-5221732, info@gush-shalom.org, www.gush-shalom.org, Adam Keller of Gush Shalom launched a blog, at: http://adamblogger.blogspot.com/ in Hebrew and http://adam-keller2.blogspot.com/ in English.

Jewish Voice for Peace, in the U.S., in June, http://salsa.democracyaction.org/o/301/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=6780, complaining that Israeli authorities had again arrested peaceful Palestinian protesters, asked the U.S. State Department to pressure Israel to release them, saying, "Bassem and Naji Tamimi have organized unarmed protests in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh. The protests have featured women prominently, and have focused on an end to occupation: of land, of minds, of hearts— for Palestinians and Israelis alike. The Israeli army has responded with raids, arrests, and injuries to men, women, and children. Now they have arrested Bassem and Naji in order to break the spirit of the village. Based on testimony illegally coerced of a 14 year-old, Bassem and Naji are imprisoned without trial. Their freedom will depend on all of us speaking out."

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators repeatedly interrupted a performance by Israel’s Philharmonic Orchestra at London’s famed Proms festival at Royal Albert Hall, the first time there has been a disruption in the long standing festival, in a protest against its links with the Israeli army (“Palestine protesters disrupt Israeli concert in UK,” Ma’am News Agency, September 3, 2011, http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=417197).

Palestinian and Israeli Women, in July, risked prison to swim together in the Israeli Mediterranean – where it was illegal for the Palestinians to be – in protest of the Law of Entry Into Israel which allows every Israeli to move freely throughout Israel and the occupied territories, but restricts Palestinians to their own areas (Ethan Bronner, “Where Politics Are Complex, Simple Joys at the Beach,” The New York Times, July 7, 2011).

Laura Carlsen, “March Against Drug War Rejects ‘National Security Law’, Calls for ‘Citizen Security.,” Americas Program, August 17, 2011, http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/5253, reports, “Hundreds of people streamed onto Avenida Reforma from Mexico City’s Museum of Anthropology, further proof that Mexico’s peace and justice movement has the capacity to draw citizens out to protest the drug war. Protesters demanded that the Mexican Congress throw out proposed reforms to the National Security Law that is designed to provide legal underpinnings for continuing the war on drugs strategy launched by President Felipe Calderon in December of 2006."

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) “Update: June 2011,” and Fall 2011 Common Ground Newsletter, http://salsa.wiredforchange.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=%2Bb4Jxr%2BEEy5ezvB9%2BTdhBE4q5zeXrcSf%2B, report on Search for Common Ground’s implementing projects from 39 offices in 26 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and North America, with SFCG headquarters offices located in Brussels and Washington, DC, providing logistical and administrative support to the field, and regional offices located in Washington DC, Brussels, Jakarta, and Sierra Leone, stated that SFCG believes that “conflict is completely normal and that the critical challenge of our time is to find peaceful ways to resolve it. Violent conflict has a profoundly negative impact on the planet, even when it occurs in remote places. Unfortunately, hundreds of millions of people are caught up in violence, and, as a direct result, countless lives and livelihoods are shattered; economic development is blocked; human rights are abused; and the environment is almost always devastated. We are convinced that preventing violence is a necessary precursor for the world to move forward in positive ways. At Search for Common Ground, our core work is to transform adversarial, violent conflict to non-adversarial, collaborative solutions.” SFCG’s Emerging Leaders Program, Bridging the Israeli-Palestinian Divide through Shared Experiences, a partnership between SFCG and the Outward Bound Center for Peacebuilding (http://salsa.wiredforchange.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=onUPVoDbpsqtxnKLkWyubPFjWwrOFngb), last spring conducted a wilderness expedition with a group of business leaders from both sides of the conflict. The program initially included 36
individuals from civil society/social entrepreneurs, politicians, and business sectors. As the program grows the groups will "connect to the hub," allowing each group to network with the whole. The goal is to develop a strong network of young Israeli and Palestinian leaders who have a deep understanding of one another, bridging the divide through shared experiences through a wilderness expedition, retreats, one-on-one coaching, and transformational skills training. This program is part of SFCG's leadership work around the world with a vision of authentic leadership that synthesizes the inner and outer arts of leadership, merging mindfulness and leadership of the self with interpersonal leadership and conflict resolution skills; Leadership for the whole – not just for "my" party, faction, tribe, or group – that is rooted in a profound sense of our common humanity and interconnectedness; And compassionate leadership that facilitates problem solving and heals societal divisions. The bonds formed on these trips have proven strong. In July alumni from the civil society and political groups went on another expedition, which they planned and designed themselves, even paying out of pocket to participate. The latest expedition brought young business leaders on a trek through the mountains of Croatia. While Outward bound provides the equipment and some technical support, participants are responsible for cooking, navigating and deciding the pace of their trek, themselves. On this trip there were several people who had never spoken to, let alone met, someone from the other side. For one such Israeli woman this was the first time she’d had the opportunity to hear about the conflict from Palestinians. "If I were Palestinian, I would not have come here," she said, upon learning more about the daily challenges they face. Realizing that there are good people on the other side is new for many of the participants. Many come from a black or white perspective. What the project aims to do is to shake their preconceptions. "Seeing you might be wrong, or that sometimes things are grey, is the beginning of a lifelong process, and it’s when dialogue can begin," says Fadi. Will programs like the Emerging Leaders bring about peace? No, not alone, Fadi says, but we are preparing the conditions for a peace agreement by showing people each other’s humanity little by little. "There are no shortcuts to any places worth going to." In the Palestinian territories SFCG has worked in partnership with the Ma’an Network, since 2002, to produce independent media. In recent years, Ma’an has experienced rapid growth, to become the most visited Arabic-language website in the Palestinian Territories (an English version can be viewed at: www.maannews.net/eng), and the Ma’an TV Network is the leading Palestinian independent satellite broadcaster. Ma'an's latest achievement is to launch an hour-long, nightly news program. For the first time, Palestinians are able to watch unembellished news about themselves on satellite TV, without having to tune in to foreign broadcasts.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is Search For Common Ground’s largest program, with seven offices across the country. “We are actively engaged in retraining the Congolese army to prevent sexual violence against women and to carry out a broad array of other peacebuilding activities. This spring, we scored a great success in Equateur Province where two tribal groups had been fighting over fishing rights. There had been scores of deaths, and more than 130,000 Congolese had become refugees. With support from the UNHCR – the UN Refugee Agency – the UN Stabilization Mission, and the National Endowment for Democracy, we used mediation, facilitation, participatory theater, film screenings, and music to help defuse the violence. We went so far as to organize a traditional ritual to "cleanse" the region of bad spirits. All this culminated in the signing of a non-aggression pact,
which includes creation of an inter-tribal management committee for the disputed fishing ponds. (To learn more about the process, please go to: http://salsa.wiredforchange.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=e38kl2iQLNLsDw5WyPDQgsG%2BQ20U3w%2BvT). In the DRC, as elsewhere, we believe that popular culture can play a major part in promoting behavioral shifts. Thus, in order to change mass attitudes toward rape, we are utilizing a broad range of pop tools, including TV, radio, mobile cinema, theater, and even comic books to communicate persuasive messages to millions of Congolese. Our most recent effort involves a well-known rapper, named Celeo Scram. With funding from the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Celeo appears in eight short video and audio spots showing that “real men” do not commit violence against women. For example, one spot portrays a woman applicant for a job who is afraid that the man interviewing her has ulterior motives when he asks to meet her at a hotel. Unfortunately, forcing women to have sex in return for employment is a common practice in the DRC. However, there is a surprise ending to our spot: It turns out that the man has invited the woman to the hotel to introduce her to the office recruitment panel. According to Dirk Koch, our DRC Country Director, ‘There have been many campaigns that denounce men’s behavior and that say what they should not do, but there has never been a campaign that motivates men to become positive and to respect women and girls. (To watch the televised spots, visit: http://salsa.wiredforchange.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=6J4QLV4gJZ8QCACUJMM2eNYq5zeXrcSf%2BBe). Meanwhile, SFCG has expanded broadcast of its cooperation encouraging multi-episode, soccer-based, TV and radio soap opera series, The Team, to 17 countries. In addition to airing in Côte d’Ivoire, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, and the Palestinian Territories, the Team series is now broadcast in Liberia, Nepal, and Sierra Leone.

In the view of Search for Common Ground, “both the public and private sectors need to increase greatly the amount of resources available to prevent destructive conflict. In July, in order to boost giving from the private sector, we convened in New York 300 mostly wealthy, young people for a Summit on Innovative Philanthropy and Social Entrepreneurship. The event was skillfully organized by Jonah Wittkamper, Director of Search-USA, and a team of volunteers. They worked in collaboration with the UN Program on Youth. The goal was to inspire young wealth-holders, including offspring of the Bronfman, Kluge, Millstein, Pew, and Rockefeller families, to ‘give back’ – and to give more. Co-chairs were Saudi Prince Fahad bin Faisal Al-Saud and Swazi Prince Cedza Dlamini (Nelson Mandela’s grandson). UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon told the group, ‘This is the way of the future – governments, international organizations, foundations, and businesses working together in common cause’.” For more information, please visit: www.sfcg.org.

SFCG Update: September 2011, “The U.S. Hikers Held in Iran for Two Years Released Today; SFCG Arranged Final Negotiations,” noting that Search for Common Ground has been working since 1996 to improve relations between Iran and the U.S., said that it was “celebrating the release of the American hikers held in an Iranian prison for more than two years. SFCG worked for the release of the American hikers since they were arrested in July 2009, through a continuous series of high level meetings and dialogues with individuals in the U.S. and Iranian governments, with third countries, as well as with the families of the hikers. This culminated in last week’s trip to Iran by Bishop John Bryson Crane of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington. Ambassador (Ret.) William Miller, SFCG Senior Advisor, arranged for the two clerics to travel to Iran to meet with officials at the highest levels, including an hour-long meeting with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. ‘President Ahmadinejad told us that it was because of our presence that they were able to move the process forward in releasing the hikers, said Bishop Crane. Amb. Miller stated, ‘the return of the hikers to their families is an important step, a confidence-building measure, in the process of re-engagement and the restoration of friendly, normal relations between Iran and the United States.’”

Miguel Ángel Vásquez, “Capulalpam, the Babel of Land Disputes,” Americas Program, June 15, 2011, http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/4822, reports that for two days, Capulalpam de la Sierra Juárez in Oaxaca, Mexico was the site of the Third National Forum Building Resistance to Protect our Land, May 20 and 21, 2011 with indigenous participants speaking a variety of different languages, and having different philosophies, but agreeing that they were all being threatened by mining which was taking and profaning their land and profaning sacred sites. “The organizers said the goal of the event was, ‘a critical analysis of the current model of development, and the compilation of a list of demands so as to allow the communities to form a united front in the defense of their lands.’ Villages, communities and organizations from all parts of Oaxaca and all over the country came together with the common goal of protecting their land against politicians and projects that threaten their natural resources.”

Christine Kovic, “Human Rights Caravan Protests Migrant Kidnappings,” Americas Program,” August 25, 2011, http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/5267, informs that, “From July 25 to August 2, 2011, hundreds of Central Americans retraced the steps of family members through southern Mexico. They were searching for relatives who have disappeared and demanding respect for immigrant rights. The Caravan “Step by Step Toward Peace” (“Paso a Paso Hacia la Paz”) was organized by nongovernmental organizations and migrant shelters in Central America and Mexico to protest the kidnappings of thousands of migrants that take place each year.”
Global Exchange Reality Tours has organized hundreds of trips to countries in the world to connect thousands with peoples and cultures impacted by US policy, and to return home with a deeper understanding, a sense of empowerment, and the tools to affect change. In partnership with the Not for Sale Campaign (http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=UvgvN7rrymFg97g2UIXzv%2Ffh7eqO0d1m2), Global Exchange is organizing trips to Cambodia, Thailand, Peru and Uganda centered on issues of human trafficking and modern slavery to educate and mobilize an international abolitionist movement. To learn more about these trips, please visit http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=LzZb%2FXTuJMIltZcoGurb9bPh7eqO0d1m2. In a just and equitable world the existence of a booming international trade in human life can no longer be tolerated or ignored. Not For Sale is excited to be convening the Global Forum on Human Trafficking October 21-22 in Silicon Valley, CA. The Global Forum will bring together people from all walks of life – from business leaders, people of faith, students, athletes, law enforcement and others to learn and explore different models being deployed to mobilize individuals to combat trafficking. Keynote speakers include Twitter founder, Jack Dorsey." For details go to: http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=OSZzC9HM5FpPwozC1pU2vh7eqO0d1m2. For information on actions one can take today to help end human trafficking visit: http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=CNutlDBtISHSSyUhc9p4bfh7eqO0d1m2.

Interfaith Peace-builders Interfaith Peace-building delegation Olive Harvest Delegation is going to Palestine/Israel, October 29 - November 11, 2011 to help with the Palestinian olive harvest and meet with people in the Israeli an Palestinian peace movement and other international peace workers. For information contact office@ifpb.org, www.ifpb.org.

WORLD DEVELOPMENTS
Stephen M. Sachs

Environmental Developments

The Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Nuuk, Greenland, that began May 6, heard reports from the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), a working group of the Arctic Council, which studies the impact of climate change on snow, water, ice and permafrost in the Arctic (SWIPA), bringing brought together more than 400 scientists and researchers from all around the world. The numerous reports resulting from a “multi-year study that included contributions from scientists and indigenous groups from all of the Arctic States and additional expertise from non-Arctic communities as well,” were in agreement that global warming induced climate change was having a faster effect than previously projected, and that previous reports had underestimated the rates of change in sea ice, finding that the Arctic Ocean could be all but ice-free every summer in only 30 to 40 years, and that resulting changes in Arctic ecosystems could cause the loss of entire habitats, which “has consequences for people who depend on Arctic ecosystems to supplement their livelihoods,” the U.S. State Department stated. Moreover, the State Department statement noted, with the melting of highly reflective ice and snow, the darker-colored, exposed ground will be absorbing more energy from the sun, increasing the rate of global warming to the point “It could also turn the Arctic into a net source of carbon dioxide and methane and change large-scale ocean currents,” though, “the combined outcome of these effects is not yet known.” It should be noted that the changes are not linear, and that in the Arctic, right now, those changes are dramatic, and as the ice melts, it is raising sea levels world wide, and bringing global shifts in weather and ocean currents (“Ice Melt,” Indian Country Today, May 15, 2011, http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/05/ice-melt/). A similar report on Arctic melting being faster than previously projected was reported in, Alex S. Gardner Geir Moholdt Bert Wouters Gabriel J. Wolken David O. Burgess Martin J. Sharp J. Graham Cogley Carsten Braun and Claude Labin “Sharply increased mass loss from glaciers and ice caps in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago,” Nature aop, (2011), doi:10.1038/nature10089, Nature.com, April 22, 2011, http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/nature10089.html, that also found the glaciers on the Canadian archipelago have already melted enough water to fill three-quarters of Lake Erie and raise the level of all of the world’s oceans by a millimeter. Between 2004 and 2006, the first three years of the study, the region lost an average of seven cubic miles of water per year. From 2006 through 2009 that jumped to 22 cubic miles of water per year.

The eight nations of the Arctic Council - Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States – pledged, in Mid May, to create international protocols to prevent and cleanup shore oil spills in the arctic region, which is increasingly accessible for drilling as climate change unfolds (Steven Lee Myers, “Cooperation Is Pledged By Nations of the Arctic,” The New York Times, May 13, 2011).

Climate Change, bringing colder temperatures to upper levels of the Arctic atmosphere for the

A recent report has confirmed earlier scientific findings that global warming is increasing earthquake and volcanic activity as a result of the huge change in pressures in the Earth take place as glaciers melt and oceans rise. Scientists are warning that that the increased volcanic activity will further intensify climate change (Terry J. Allen, “The Global Volcanic Feedback Loop,” In These Times, June, 2010).

A long developed report, A Forest of Blue: Canada’s Boreal Forest, the World’s Waterkeeper from the Pew Charitable Trust sent to Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, Canadian national chief of the Assembly of First Nations; Clément Chartier, Métis National Council president, Mary Simon, president of Inuit Tapiririt Kanatami, and Canadian as Prime Minister Stephen Harper, March 16, warns that Canada may hold the key to the world’s survival, as it is steward of the world’s largest intact forest, which contains more unfrozen water than any other ecosystem. The open letter to and the governments of Canada’s provinces and territories, the International Boreal Conservation Science Panel called upon Canada to quickly take stricter conservation measures. The report, based on decades of research, found that the boreal forest stretching across much of northeastern Canada contains 25 percent of the planet’s wetlands, millions of pristine lakes and thousands of free-flowing rivers for a total of 197 million acres of surface freshwater. As a buffer against climate change, it provides $700 billion in value annually; is one of the last refuges half the North American Atlantic salmon population, as well as other sea-migrating fish; and maintains freshwater flows that help create Arctic sea ice, cooling the atmosphere and supporting marine life from sea algae to polar bears. The forest also stores more than 400 trillion pounds of carbon in lakes and river delta sediment, peat lands and wetlands. The study pointed out that this could change with the encroachment of industrialization, mining, lumbering and other development into these areas. Steve Kallick, director of the Pew Environment Group’s International Boreal Conservation Campaign, commented, “At a time when clean water supplies are disappearing, the vast reserves in Canada’s boreal are increasingly important to protect. Canadian provinces and First Nations have already made major strides defending the integrity of the vast lakes, rivers and wetlands in the forest, but they need to do more to guarantee that Canada’s water stays pure and abundant, watershed by watershed.” The letter said, “Protection of Canada’s boreal forest, along with limiting greenhouse gas emissions, should be among the top global conservation priorities, and the work to protect it can only be led by Canada’s federal, provincial and Aboriginal governments. Canada has the unrivaled opportunity to protect the world’s largest intact freshwater ecosystem and the responsibility to enact sound conservation and sustainable development policy to safeguard the boreal forest. The longer we wait to act, the fewer the conservation options that will continue to be available. Without prompt action, Canada may miss the opportunity to protect this global treasure.”


The Task Force on Climate Remediation Research, convened by the Bipartisan Policy Center, a research organization based in Washington founded by four senators — Democrats and Republicans — to offer policy advice to the government, reported, October 4, that because there is a political deadlock on the critical issue of climate change, it is time for the United States to begin researching techniques of climate remediation and the risks involved. The Task Force press release states in part, “The BPC Task Force report argues that managing risk is a central principle of effective climate policy, and emphasizes that climate remediation is no substitute for controlling risk through climate mitigation (i.e., reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases) and climate adaptation (i.e., enhancing the resilience of man-made and natural systems to climate changes). Furthermore, the report emphasizes that it is far too premature to contemplate deployment of any climate remediation technology. However, the Task Force report finds that it is time for the U.S. to undertake a climate remediation research program to understand the risks, costs, and feasibility of these approaches. “Most climate remediation concepts proposed to date involve some combination of risks, financial costs, and/or physical limitations that make them inappropriate to pursue except as complementary or emergency measures—for example, if the climate system reaches a “tipping point” and swift remedial action is required,” the report notes. “The United States needs to be able to judge whether particular climate remediation techniques could offer a meaningful response to the risks of climate change. But even if it decides not to deploy any climate remediation technology, the U.S. needs to evaluate steps others might take and be able to effectively participate in—and lead—the important international conversations that are likely to emerge around these issues and activities in the years ahead. “With that in mind, the Task Force believes the federal
government should embark on a focused and systematic program of research into climate remediation. The federal government is the only entity that has the incentive, responsibility, and capacity to run a broad, systematic, and effective program; it can also play an important role in effectively establishing international research norms. “This Task Force has not recommended deployment of climate remediation technologies, because far more research is needed to understand the potential impacts, risks, and costs associated with specific technologies. The purpose of this report, rather, is to describe how the Task Force believes the U.S. government should go about improving understanding of climate remediation options and how it should work with other countries to foster procedures for research based on that understanding.” Two distinct rationales for a climate remediation research program form the basis of the report: The physical risks of climate change are real and growing. The geopolitical and national security risks of deployment of climate remediation technologies by some other countries or actors are real. As a result, the Task Force believes that the United States must have the knowledge required to: Judge whether particular climate remediation techniques could offer a meaningful response to the risks of climate change; and Evaluate steps other nations may be in a position to take, and lead the important international conversations that are likely to emerge around these issues in the years ahead. The report notes that climate remediation proposals generally fall into two broad categories: Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR): CDR strategies aim to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, thereby addressing the root causes of climate change. Solar Radiation Management (SRM): SRM strategies aim to counteract or mask the effect of rising greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere by increasing the amount of solar energy that is reflected back into space. “…research into climate remediation is needed on multiple fronts, but is particularly focused on solar radiation management (SRM) options because of the potential, the risks, and the management difficulties this set of options presents,” the report states. “The Task Force notes that the risk profiles of carbon dioxide removal (CDR technologies) vary by technique, and that studies of some CDR approaches have been supported by the government for many years.” The Task Force recommends that the federal government embark on a focused and systematic program of research on climate remediation. The report argues that the federal government is the only entity that has the incentive, responsibility and capacity to run a broad, systematic and effective program, and that it can play an important role in effectively establishing international research norms. The report emphasizes the need for coordination, especially the need for the government to develop an overarching agenda and funding strategy as part of a coordinated research effort, rather than simply yoking together disparate programs and projects that emerge on an ad hoc basis. Specifically, the Task Force recommends that a climate remediation research program be coordinated by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). The group finds that basing coordination in the White House can ensure that the larger goals of the program are maintained over the more narrow interests of particular agencies, and that the political support of the President is clearly established over the course of the initiative. Additionally, the report argues that coordination in the White House will help ensure that research is linked to other relevant government activities, such as international relations and environmental regulation. The Task Force states that any controversies over experimentation by the United States or by other countries could certainly require White House engagement, which would benefit from having been involved from the outset. The Task Force suggests that some research into climate remediation, not to mention climate remediation efforts themselves, could pose risks and raise new ethical, legal and social issues of broad public concern. For these reasons, the Task Force notes that some kinds of research will require more robust forms of oversight than usual, involving more diverse kinds of experts and more public involvement. Given these unique characteristics, the group recommends that OSTP should be guided by a diverse advisory commission. The Commission should report to the Director of OSTP, and be responsible for: (1) advising the government on how to set up an effective and adequately funded scientific program commensurate with the scale of the problem, and identify dimensions of the problem that are being overlooked; (2) identifying and recommending policies and practices that ensure effective scientific research is conducted in a manner consistent with the principles articulated in this report; (3) recommending criteria for federal agencies to use in deciding whether to approve field research based on the level of risk posed by the proposed activity. Such criteria could also become the basis for international norms; and (4) conducting public communication and engagement activities. The Task Force finds that aspects of climate remediation research will require international cooperation and consideration. Unilateral actions by one or more individual countries could have far-reaching consequences. A number of nations are moving forward with research programs. Early efforts by the U.S. to engage other major nations and launch an international dialogue on relevant policy issues are essential. The Task Force recommends that the U.S. promptly commence working with nations that have the requisite scientific, technological, and financial qualifications to establish common norms and expectations for climate remediation research. Such a process would facilitate future formal or informal agreements among participating nations on norms for considering the deployment of climate remediation technologies. The Task Force recommends, however, that, for the foreseeable future, as a practical matter, a less formal process would be considerably more productive than a formal multilateral discussion or negotiation of climate remediation.” Just as the report is cautious about the prospects of major technological attempts to fix climate change quickly, most environmental experts believe they are too risky, as they are likely to interrupt natural cycles and processes, causing more damage than good. However, many environmentalists hope the report will bring about a deeper public discussion on global warming induced climate change that will stimulate critically

New Research published in the journal Science shows that two hundred million years ago, at the end of the Triassic period, volcanic activity greatly increased carbon dioxide in the air, causing global warming, and as the oceans warmed they released at least 12,000 gigatons of methane from the seafloor into the atmosphere resulting in a mass extinction of life in the oceans, wiping out half of all marine life on Earth. Current global warming initiated by human burning of carbons, already leading to the release of additional greenhouse gasses, increasing warming, is threatening again to warm oceans sufficiently that they will release the vast amounts of methane that they contain (Sindyan N. Bhano, “Blame for Extinction Spreads to Methane Gas,” The New York Times, July 25, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/26/science/26obearth.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).

Chris Huhne, the British secretary of state for energy and climate change, was expected to release a statement, in mid-May, that the British government will set in law a goal to cut its greenhouse gas emissions about 50% of their 1990 levels by 2025. The reduction would exceed the European Union’s goal of cutting emissions 20% percent by 2020, and it would mean that Britain would make faster emissions cuts than other similar size countries, including Germany. The target might require households to spend on new energy-saving devices for the home, and could revive stalled government support for large projects, like those that capture power from tides and that bury carbon dioxide emissions (James Kanter, “Britain Set to Announce Ambitious Environmental Steps,” The New York Times, May 16, 2011).

A panel at conference convened by the International Programme on the State of the Ocean (IPSO), at Oxford University, in June, issued a preliminary finding to a report to be released in 2012, stating that “the world’s ocean is at high risk of entering a phase of extinction of marine species unprecedented in human history.” Alex Rogers, IPSO’s scientific director and professor of conservation biology at Oxford University, stated, “and we’ve ended up with a picture showing that almost right across the board we’re seeing changes that are happening faster than we’d thought, or in ways that we didn’t expect to see for hundreds of years.” Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, a coral specialist from the University of Queensland in Australia, said that “the rate of change is vastly exceeding what we were expecting even a couple of years ago.” The conclusions are in agreement with those drawn by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme presented in mid-May. The preliminary report identified six causes for the perilous marine decline: • Climate Change Rising sea temperatures affect the distribution of marine species, and wreak havoc on coral reefs, which are safe havens for countless marine species. Absorption of carbon dioxide is also causing ocean acidification, which may already be reducing the size and growth rates of some marine animals. • Over-fishing Due to unsustainable fishing practices, fisheries can only deliver a fraction of what they could in the past, which in turn affects everything from seabirds to coral. • Habitat destruction In addition to the destruction of coral reefs through such practices as bottom trawling, we are also ruining habitats of sensitive sea animals by changing the water quality. • Extraction While headline-grabbing spills are an obvious way in which oil and gas extraction can harm the oceans, even disaster-free drilling releases toxic substances into the water, and acoustic methods of prospecting are harmful to aquatic life. • Pollution Release of sewage into the water promotes microbial activity, which drains the water of oxygen and can produce “dead zones” where there is little to no aquatic life. Heavy metals, plastics, oil and pesticides are also incredibly harmful to the ecosystem. • Alien species introduction of non-native species into a delicately balanced ecosystem, whether intentional or not, can cause major stress, even disaster (“Marine Life May be on Brink of ‘Phase of Extinction,'” Indian Country Today, June 22, 2011, http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/06/marine-life-may-be-on-brink-of-phase-of-extinction/).

World wide, as a result of climate change, forests are in serious decline that absorb 25% of the carbon dioxide produced by human activity, slowing global warming. For example, Justin Gillis, “With Deaths of Forests, a Loss of Key Climate Protectors,” October 1, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/science/earth/01forest.html?ref=todayspaper, reports, “The trees spanning many of the mountainsides of western Montana glow an earthy red, like a broadleaf forest at the beginning of autumn. But these trees are not supposed to turn red. They are evergreens, falling victim to beetles that used to be controlled in part by bitterly cold winters. As the climate warms, scientists say, that control is no longer happening. Across millions of acres, the pines of the northern and central Rockies are dying, just one among many types of forests that are showing signs of distress these days. From the mountainous Southwest deep into Texas, wildfires raced across parched landscapes this summer, burning millions more acres. In Colorado, at least 15 percent of that state’s spectacular aspen forests have gone into decline because of a lack of water. The devastation extends worldwide. The great euphorbia trees of southern Africa are succumbing to heat and water stress. So are the Atlas cedars of northern Algeria. Fires fed by
hot, dry weather are killing enormous stretches of Siberian forest. Eucalyptus trees are succumbing on a large scale to a heat blast in Australia, and the Amazon recently suffered two “once a century” droughts just five years apart, killing many large trees” (This extensive New York Times article is one of a series examining the evidence for and the effects of climate change).

Chris Huhne, the British secretary of state for energy and climate change, was expected to release a statement, in mid-May, that the British government will set in law a goal to cut its greenhouse gas emissions about 50% of their 1990 levels by 2025. The reduction would exceed the European Union’s goal of cutting emissions 20% percent by 2020, and it would mean that Britain would make faster emissions cuts than other similar size countries, including Germany. The target might require households to spend on new energy-saving devices for the home, and could revive stalled government support for large projects, like those that capture power from tides and that bury carbon dioxide emissions (James Kanter, “Britain Set to Announce Ambitious Environmental Steps,” The New York Times, May 16, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/17/business/global/17carbon.html?ref=business).

Firmin DeBrabander, “The Green Revolution Backfires: Sweden’s Lesson for Real Sustainability,” CommonDreams.org, June 10, 2011, http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/06/10-3, reports that, “Through generous subsidies, Sweden aggressively pushed its citizens to trade in their cars for energy efficient replacements (hybrids, clean diesel vehicles, cars that run on ethanol). Sweden has been so successful in this initiative that it leads the world in per capita sales of ‘green cars.’ To everyone’s surprise, however, greenhouse gas emissions from Sweden’s transportation sector are up.” This has occurred because as cars have become less expensive to operate (and perhaps also because many people feel good about driving ‘green’ vehicles), people in Sweden are driving more. In the United States, “We need to pay attention to this as GM and Nissan roll out their new green cars to great fanfare...”

As efforts are ongoing to find ways to remove carbon dioxide directly from the atmosphere, a new study by the American Physical Society, made public May 9, 2011, finds that while removing CO₂ from the air is technically feasible, it appears that it will be prohibitively expensive (unless one does it naturally by planting trees and other plants faster than we remove them) (John Collins Rudolf, “Physicist Group’s Study Raises Doubts on Capturing Carbon Dioxide From Air,” The New York Times, May 10, 2011).

Natural gas companies have been overstating greatly both the amount of gas they are pumping and the quantity of natural gas they can extract from deep formations in North America, according to hundreds of industry e-mails and internal documents and an analysis of data from thousands of wells. (Ian Urbina, “Insiders Sound an Alarm Amid a Natural Gas Rush,” The New York Times, June 25, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/26/us/26gas.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).

Simon Romero, “New Fields May Propel Americas to Top of Oil Companies’ Lists,” The New York Times, September 19, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/20/world/americas/recent-discoveries-put-americas-back-in-oil-companies-sights.html?ref=world, reports, “Brazil has begun building its first nuclear submarine to protect its vast, new offshore oil discoveries. Colombia’s oil production is climbing so fast that it is closing in on Algeria’s and could hit Libya’s prewar levels in a few years. ExxonMobil is striking new deals in Argentina, which recently heralded its biggest oil discovery since the 1980s. Up and down the Americas, it is a similar story: a Chinese-built rig is preparing to drill in Cuban waters; a Canadian official has suggested that unemployed Americans could move north to help fill tens of thousands of new jobs in Canada’s expanding oil sands; and one of the hemisphere’s hottest new oil pursuits is actually in the United States, at a shale formation in North Dakota’s prairie that is producing 400,000 barrels of oil a day and is part of a broader shift that could ease American dependence on Middle Eastern oil.” But it also is creating serious environmental and human problems, especially in the Amazon where Indigenous people have been, and are being, seriously injured and threatened by oil and other extraction.

More than 70% of the Peruvian Amazon has now been allocated to oil companies, and a series of hydroelectric dams threaten to displace tens of thousands of indigenous people from their homes. Paraguay’s Indigenous Institute, INDI, recently declared that a separate plot of 34,000 hectares bought from ranchers would be handed over to the Ayoreo, but a date is yet to be set. Negotiations with other companies, including another Brazilian firm, Yaguareté Pora, have so far been unsuccessful as the beef barons refuse to sell back the Ayoreo’s ancestral lands. Survival’s director, Stephen Corry, said today, ‘These ranchers, much like the Totobiegosode, have nowhere left to hide. Satellite imagery makes it almost impossible for widespread deforestation to go unnoticed, but authorities must act before this happens, not after the forests have already been torn down’ ("Police charged for role in Bagua massacre," Survival International, April 7, 2011, http://www.survivalinternational.org/news/7160).

The World Bank signed an agreement, in late May, with mayors from 40 of the world’s largest cities to provide technical and financial assistance for projects to minimize the effects of climate change, easing access to financing for climate-change-reduction projects. It will make it easier for investors who have been hesitant to finance projects to assess city action plans by providing a standard approach, said Robert B. Zoellick, the World Bank’s president. It will also provide a common way to measure and report on the greenhouse gas emissions of cities. Mayors said they were eager to gain access to the World Bank’s climate investment funds, which totaled $6.4 billion in 2010. Mr. Zoellick said the bank hoped to use that money to attract as much as $50 billion in private capital. The meeting also provided an opportunity for mayors to exchange information on practical solutions they have worked on to reduce pollution, improve transportation and increase energy efficiency. The C40 meeting commissioned a pair of studies that provide, for the first time, a statistical baseline of greenhouse gas emissions produced by the 58 cities that are members of the organization, as well as a catalog of actions they are taking to reduce them. Nearly half of the largest cities reported that they were already dealing with the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels and higher average temperatures, and they reported more than 4,700 specific actions they have taken in the last five years to reduce emissions or adapt to climate change. Among those are converting buses to running on natural gas or hybrid-electric systems, recovering organic waste from landfills, retrofitting public buildings to make them more energy efficient and switching to less energy-intensive street and traffic lights. Former President Clinton discussed methods for reducing climate-altering gases, highlighting the need to curb landfill and animal waste emissions to control methane gas, which is a much more potent heat trapper than CO₂, saying, “The world could push back for 20 years the most destructive consequences of climate change and give us 20 more years to figure out what to do with carbon if we could make a dramatic reduction in methane and black carbon, which is largely caused by the burning of charcoal and wood for food and the flaring of natural gas.” He proposed that closing landfills and capturing methane as a power source “would solve a public health problem, give massive amounts of land back to cities, you would put huge numbers of people back to work. The financing has not been available for these things because they are looked at as eyesores, not gold mines.” New York’s Mayor Bloomberg commented, “Mayors can’t just talk about goals for the year 2050, which some congressmen in the United States want to set as a goal,” he said. “Cities are where you deliver services. Federal governments and state governments sit around talking and passing laws or recommendations that don’t have any teeth” (Alexi Barrionuevo, “World Bank to Help Cities Control Climate Change,” The New York Times, June 1, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/02/science/earth/02climate.html?ref=todayspaper).

Leslie Kauman. “A City Prepares for a Warm Long-Term Forecast,” The New York Times, May 22, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/23/science/earth/23adaptation.html?ref=us, reports on adaptations to climate change, that Chicago, “The Windy City is preparing for a heat wave — a permanent one”. Following up on climate experts projections that by 2100 the city will become hotter and wetter, more like Baton Rouge, LA than a Northern metropolis, before the end of this century, Chicago is taking a number of steps to prepare for the changed conditions. Public alleyways are being repaved with materials that are permeable to water. The white oak, the state tree of Illinois, has been banned from city planting lists, and swamp oaks and sweet gum trees from the South have been given new priority. Thermal radar is being used to map the city’s hottest spots, which are then targets for pavement removal and the addition of vegetation to roofs, while air-conditioners are being considered for all 750 public schools, which until now have been heated but rarely cooled.

The Nisqually River, that the Nisqually Indians have been relying on for 10,000 years, especially for its salmon, is expected to become shallower and warmer in the next hundred years as annual snowpack and the glacier that feeds the river decline, and rich held by the glacier falls into the river, worsening winter flooding. Therefore, the Nisqually tribal government formed a coalition with private partners and federal and local agencies to help the watershed and its inhabitants adapt, reserving land farther in from wetlands so that when the sea rises, the marsh will have room to move as well, promoting hundreds of rain gardens to absorb artificially warmed runoff from paved spaces and keep it away from the river, and it is installing logjams intended to cause the river to hollow out its own bottom and create cooler pools for fish (Leslie Kaufman, “Looking Ahead to Lead A River Through Hard Time to Come,” The New York Times, July 2, 2011).

The Japanese nuclear crises has been continuing. In mid June, the Fukushima Daiichi power plant began operating a huge filtration system to ease the amount of contaminated water produced at its damaged
reactors, but the filtration system had to be shut down after just five hours when a filter expected to last several weeks filled up with radioactive cesium, suggesting the presence of far greater radioactive material than anticipated. As the plant was running out of storage space for the highly radioactive water, unless it could get and keep the filtration system running it would have to dump large amounts of radioactive water into the ocean (Ken Belson, “Utility Starts Filtering Water at Stricken Japanese Nuclear Plant,” The New York Times, June 17, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/18/world/asia/18tepco.html?_r=1&hp; and Ken Belson, “Tepco Halts Filtering of Tainted Water at Japanese Plant,” June 18, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/19/world/asia/19tepco.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper). At the end of September, Japan ended the required (but by many no longer followed) evacuation of five towns outside the 12 mile evacuation zone surrounding the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear generating plant, despite fears that dangerous radiation may still exist in those towns, at least in some possible unidentified hot spots (Hiroko Tabuchi, “Japan Lifts Evacuation Advisories Near Nuclear Plant,” September 30, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/world/asia/japan-lifts-evacuation-advisories-near-damaged-nuclear-plant.html?ref=todayspaper).

In early May, the Japanese government shut down the aging Hamaoka nuclear power plant on the East coast of Japan southwest of Tokyo until its defenses against earthquakes and Tsunamis could be strengthened (Hiroko Tabuchi, “Japan Orders Another Nuclear Plant to Shut Down Its Reactors,” The New York Times, May 7, 2011).

Three hundred miles southwest of Fukushima, the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor — a long-troubled national project — has been in a precarious state of shutdown, since August of 2010, when a 3.3-ton device crashed into the reactor’s inner vessel, cutting off access to the plutonium and uranium fuel rods at its core. Engineers have tried repeatedly since the accident last August to recover the device, which appears to have gotten stuck. They were preparing, in June, to make another attempt to fix the problem. Critics have been warning warn that the recovery process is fraught with dangers because the plant uses large quantities of liquid sodium, a highly flammable substance, to cool the nuclear fuel. The Monju reactor was developed to be f the cornerstone of a national project by resource-poor Japan to reuse and eventually produce nuclear fuel. The $12 billion project, has a history of safety lapses. It was shut down for 14 years after a devastating fire in 1995. Even if the device can be removed, restarting the reactor would be risky. The plant is 60 miles from Kyoto, a city of 1.5 million people, and the fast-breeder design of the reactor makes it more prone to Chernobyl-type runaway reactions in the case of a severe accident, according to critics Hiroko Tabuchi, “Japan Strains to Fix a Reactor Damaged Before Quake,” The New York Times, June 17, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/18/world/asia/18japan.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).


Japan has decided to cancel plans to build additional nuclear reactors, and instead will expand use of renewable energy and conservation to meet future electric power needs (Martin Fackler, “Japan to Cancel Plan to Build More Nuclear Plants,” The New York Times, May 10, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/world/asia/11japan.html?ref=todayspaper). A new leak from a waste disposal building at Japan’s Fukushima nuclear complex, has set back efforts to contain radiation from the crippled plant, and stabilize the site, which was already expected to take several months or longer. The disclosure by Tepco raises the stakes in a race to complete by next month a system to decontaminate a massive pool of radioactive water at the site that critics see as a growing risk to both the nearby Pacific and groundwater (Kiyoshi Takenaka and Yoko Nishikawa, “New Leak Feared at Stricken Japan Nuclear Plant,” Common Dreams, May 26, 3022, http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2011/05/26-1).

The German government agreed, May 30, to phase out all of its nuclear power by 2022, following the recommendation of a special committee appointed by Chancellor Angela Merkel in the wake of the Fukushima Daiichi disaster in Japan. The older plants already taken off line will remain permanently shut down. Nuclear energy provides 22.6 percent of Germany’s electricity supply, according to the Energy Ministry, with coal providing more than 42 percent; natural gas, 13.6 percent; and renewable sources like wind and solar, 16.5 percent; with the remainder coming from other sources. Germany will work to increase its use of renewable energy to make up the difference (Judy Dempsey and Jack Ewing, “Germany to Halt Nuclear Power Production by 2022,” The New York Times, May 30, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/31/world/europe/31germany.html?_r=1&ref=world; Judy Dempsey, “Panel Recommends

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) found, in mid May, that recent inspections had found serious problems with some safety and backup equipment at some U.S. nuclear plants that would have made it unusable in an accident. Moreover, the commission admitted that its emergency planning had not sufficiently taken into account two factors that had contributed to the Fukushima nuclear disaster, simultaneous problems with more than one reactor, and a natural disaster that disrupted electricity, roads and other infrastructure around a plant (Mathew L. Wald, “Disaster Plan Problems Found at U.S. Nuclear Plants,” The New York Times, May 13, 2011). Critics of the NRC have long contended that the agency is too close to the industry it regulates to do so properly, and have listed numerous cases where the agency has allowed plants to operate at too low a safety standard, failed to adequately enforce standards, or has been lax in its oversight of nuclear power (Tom Zeller Jr., “Nuclear Agency Beset By Lapses,” The New York Times, May 8, 2011). It was revealed, in July, that the NRC was divided on how quickly to act on recommendations from its staff on improving nuclear plant safety in light of the Fukushima disaster. 5 members of the commission wished to move slowly on the recommendations, that the commission’s chairman, supported by three other members, wished to move quickly on (Mathew L. Wald, “Split Within Nuclear Regulatory Agency,” The New York Times, July 21, 2011).

In the aftermath of the Fukushima Nuclear disaster, many critics, including some members of Congress, noting that cooling pools at U.S. nuclear generating stations usually contain more spent fuel rods than those at the Fukushima generating plant, that have, and still are, creating catastrophic problems, have been calling for a speed transferring of the spent fuel from such pools into dry casks, which while not immune from being broken open by sufficient force, such as explosives or an airplane crash, do not require cooling (Mathew L. Wald, “A Safer Nuclear Crypt,” The New York Times, July 6, 2011).

Flooding of the Missouri River, in late June, caused the nuclear power plants at Ft. Calhoun and Brownsville, NB to suffer some inundation by rising waters, but did not cause a major emergency or nuclear safety events at either plant. The events did raise concern about possible nuclear disasters at plants located in flood planes, of which there are a number in the U.S. The issue is becoming more important as climate change brings increasingly severe weather (A.G. Salzburger and Mathew L. Wald, “Flooding Brings Worries Over Two Nuclear Power Plants,” The New York Times, June 6, 2011).


Muhammad Salem, a Palestinian engineer who designs and installs small wind turbines for homes in the occupied territories has forged an alliance with Israeli engineer, Yanir Avital, with the goal of manufacturing and selling wind turbines together in both Israel and the Palestinian territories. They do not share a common cultural background, but they share a deep interest in wind energy as something that can benefit their peoples economically and environmentally. Salem notes that in the Palestinian territories, the main obstacle to a booming renewable energy sector is a general lack of knowledge. “If I speak about the environment or renewable energy in Palestine, they don’t understand exactly what it is. It’s not that nobody cares; nobody knows.” To increase awareness, he built a portable model home on a central street in his home town of Bethlehem, complete with a computer, a small refrigerator powered by solar panels, a wind turbine, and a banner, “Electricity without money.” The goal was to engage curious passersby and demonstrate the difference that renewable energy could make in their daily lives by either supplementing the electricity they now draw from the grid, or by entirely powering their rural homes. Avital stated that, for Israeli wind entrepreneurs, the main barrier to growth has been bureaucratic obstacles to obtaining permits, especially because some of the best sites for harnessing wind are in the heavily contested Golan Heights, thus, “It’s actually easier on the Palestinian side.” Moreover, “If I want to sell a turbine to countries that are hostile to Israel, it will be easier to sell if the turbine will be produced in the Palestinian territories and not in Israel.” Experts say that while Israel is an emerging leader in the clean technology field, it has invested less in wind technology than other renewable energy sources because the potential for wind power in Israel is rather limited. The Israeli Ministry of National Infrastructures projects that Israel and the West Bank could eventually rely on wind for a maximum of 5% percent of total energy, not considering offshore potential. “We have been blessed with wind, but in very isolated places,” said a ministry researcher. Israel aims to draw 10 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2020, and that legislation is being considered to facilitate more wind turbine installations (Tamer Elterman, “Partners in Wind Power
An approximate 28,000-barrel oil spill from an oil sands oil pipeline rupture in northern Alberta, Canada, near the Peace River in late April, has environmentalists and indigenous leaders calling for a cessation of all mining crude from the oil sands. According to the Globe and Mail, 300 workers are cleaning up the Alberta spill in the Rainbow pipeline system, near the Peace River. Fumes sickened members of a Cree community, forced the closing of a school and killed several animals. Part of the spill was being held in check by a beaver dam, the Globe and Mail said on May 6. The fumes caused officials in the Little Buffalo community in northern Alberta to suspend classes as nausea, burning eyes and headaches plagued the school’s K-12 students. Plains Midstream says it recovered about 1,900 barrels, or 7%, of the spilled oil, the week after the spill. On May 4 the company said it had contained the spill, repaired the pipeline and was awaiting regulatory approval to start up again. But Little Buffalo officials said that “community members report that the oil is still leaking into the surrounding forest and bog.” The Rainbow pipeline extends 480 miles from Zama to Edmonton, Alberta, with an additional 114 miles of gathering pipelines. The system pumped about 187,000 barrels per day during 2010 and has the capacity to pump 220,000 barrels daily. This is Alberta’s biggest pipeline spill in 36 years, since the Bow Valley line leaked 40,000 barrels (Alberta’s Biggest Oil Spill Since 1975 Casts More Doubt on Oil Sands,” Indian Country Today, May 9, 2011, http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/05/alberta’s-biggest-oil-spill-since-1975-casts-more-doubt-on-oil-sands/).

The Federal Department of Energy Natural Gas Subcommittee, noting serious water and air pollution problems from fracking to extract natural gas and oil, recommended much stricter rules for natural gas drilling, including eliminating diesel fuel from the fracturing fluids injected into the well, making public all chemicals used in fracking, better tracking and more careful disposal of waste that comes up in fracking, and tighter air pollution and greenhouse gas emission standards in gas drilling (Robbie Brown and Ian Urbina, “Panel Seeks Stiffer Rules For Drilling of Gas wells,” The New York Times, August 11, 2011).


A number of recent oil pipeline ruptures with resulting serious pollution in the United States, with evidence of inadequate safety practices, while the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration is chronically short of inspectors and lacks the resources needed to hire more, leaving too much of the regulatory control in the hands of pipeline operators, have raised major questions about oil pipeline safety and regulation on the 167,000-mile system of hazardous liquid pipelines crisscrossing the United States. In July, an Exxon Mobil pipeline carrying oil across Montana failed, sending an estimated 42,000 gallons of crude down the Yellowstone River, just weeks after a company inspection and federal review had found nothing seriously wrong. In Michigan, near Marshall, a 35 miles of the Kalamazoo, popular with swimmers and boaters, remained closed, in early September, nearly 14 months after an Enbridge Energy pipeline broke, spilling 843,000 gallons of oil that will cost more than $500 million to clean up. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, who oversees the pipeline agency, acknowledges weaknesses in the program and has requested Congress to pass legislation that would increase penalties for negligent operators and authorize the hiring of additional inspectors, which is not likely with the Republican dominated house opposed to new spending and stricter regulation. Federal records show that although the pipeline industry reported 25% fewer significant spills from 2001 through 2010 than in the prior decade, the amount of hazardous liquids being spilled, though down, remains substantial. There are still more than 100 significant spills each year — a trend that dates back more than 20 years. And the percentage of dangerous liquids recovered by pipeline operators after a spill has dropped considerably in recent years (Dan Frosh and Janet Roberts, “Pipeline Spills Put Safeguards Under Scrutiny,” The New York Times, September 9, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/10/business/energy-environment/agency-struggles-to-safeguard-pipeline-system.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).


Judge Carl J. Barbier of United States District Court in New Orleans ruled in relation to thousands of
cases relating to the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster that plaintiffs can seek punitive damages in some claims related to the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill. The judge dismissed claims filed under state law because they were “pre-empted by maritime law,” which can be refilled under federal maritime law. Barber also dismissed some maritime claims that “don’t allege physical damage to a proprietary interest” (“Punitive Damages Ruled Possible in Gulf Oil Spill,” The New York Times, August 26, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/27/business/punitive-damages-ruled-possible-in-gulf-oil-spill.html?ref=todayspaper).


Brazil’s Congress, in May, was fiercely debating changing a cornerstone environmental law, an action conservationists warned could roll back one of the most effective pieces of legislation protecting forests and biodiversity in Brazil and undermine the country’s efforts to slow greenhouse gas emissions. Major agribusiness interests and the government’s own plans for infrastructure projects have been pushing for the relaxation, against scientists and environmentalists concerned that the Brazilian Amazon, one of the world’s largest forests, could be reaching a tipping point in its deforestation. The law in question, the Forest Code, requires that 80% of a property in the Amazon, and 20 to 35% of land in certain other areas, remain forest. The proposed revisions would exempt small farms from those rules, potentially accelerating deforestation. Despite Brazil’s efforts to slow deforestation, scientists say the Amazon is approaching a tipping point where enough tropical biomass has been lost to cause large areas of the forest to shift irreversibly into savanna or other less biodiverse landscapes. Opening up more land to cultivation could reduce rainfall in the Amazon and place vast stretches of the tropical forest at risk of this “dieback,” researchers say. About 18% of the Brazilian Amazon has been deforested, according to official figures. Climactic changes in the rain forest have begun to alarm researchers. The Amazon suffered its worst two droughts on record last year and in 2005 (Alexei Barrionuevo, “Brazil Debates Easing Curbs on Developing Amazon Forest,” May 11, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/12/world/americas/12brazil.html?ref=world).

The Environmental Assessment Commission of Coyhaique, a regional government commission in southern Chile, in May, approved the HidroAysén project a huge hydroelectric project in the heart of Patagonia, setting off protests by environmentalists in several cities against the $3.2 billion project, which involves a series of five dams in the sparsely populated region of Aysén, which is dotted with nature reserves. However, A Chilean appeals court suspended the plan, a month later, in response to actions filed by environmental groups and legislators arguing that the government commission that approved dam project last month had not taken into account a technical review. The ruling temporarily halted the government’s approval process for the project. Government officials say the HidroAysén project is needed to help stave off an energy squeeze in Chile, which imports about 70 percent of its energy. Environmentalists say it will flood thousands of acres of largely undeveloped territory and damage ranching and tourism. The police arrested at least 60 people late Monday in Santiago at a downtown protest that attracted thousands. Hundreds of demonstrators also took to the streets in at least four other Chilean cities. Opponents, including some members of Chile’s Congress, said Tuesday that they would appeal in court, while opposition legislators said they would request a congressional investigation into irregularities in the project’s approval (Alexi Barrionuevo, “Chile: Power Project Approved,” The New York Times, May 11, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/11/world/americas/11briefs-ART-Chilebrf.html?ref=world; and Alexi Barrionuvo, “Chilean Court Blocks Plan for Patagonia Dam Project, The New York Times, June 20, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/21/world/americas/21chile.html?ref=todayspaper).

The massive Myitsone Dam under construction in Myanmar, or Burma, is generating a great deal of concerns and debate, among government officials as well as people. This would be the first dam across the Irrawaddy River, the iconic, even mythic waterway that has given life to centuries of Burmese civilization. Supporters say the project will generate needed electricity and money. Opponents complain that flooding an area four times the size of Manhattan it will displace thousands of villagers, disrupting their lives and culture, while causing irreparable damage to the Irrawaddy, the lifeline of millions of Burmese downstream. Moreover, in an authoritarian country that has begun to experiment with looser controls on the news media, the controversy has raised the rare prospect that public outrage might actually force the government to reconsider its plans (“Controversy Over Dam Fuels Rare Public Outcry in Myanmar,” The New York Times,” September 21, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/22/world/asia/controversy-over-dam-fuels-rare-public-outcry-in-myanmar.html?id=1r619&ref=world). At the end of September, the government yielded to protest, and canceled the Myitsone Dam project (Thomas Fuller, “Myanmar Backs Down, Suspending Dam Project,” September 30, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/world/asia/myanmar-suspends-construction-of-controversial-
Extreme weather consistent with global warming continues. In the U.S. Middle west and South a series of exceptionally large and strong storms have brought record flooding in a number of areas, much of which has brought record high waters on the Mississippi and considerable flooding. On May 14, the Mississippi, even with several flood gates open to flood rural areas and take pressure off the Mississippi, was at record levels in the 183 years since records were kept, and crested well above the previous record. The high water and flooding not only caused personal and economic problems to people whose homes, businesses and fields were underwater, but for a number of days barge traffic was stopped on portions of the Mississippi River (Campbell Robertson, “Record Water for a Mississippi River City,” The New York Times, May 15, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/16/us/16flood.html?ref=todayspaper). Leslie Kaufman,

One problem with the flooding, is that it washed numerous fertilizers and pesticides from farm fields down the river along with other toxic and other waste collected by flood waters into the gulf of Mexico. The expectation was that this would create the largest dead zone in history in the Gulf, but while it was large, it did not reach the anticipated size. (“Chemicals in Farm Runoff Rattle States on the Mississippi,” The New York Times, June 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/03/science/earth/03runoff.html?ref=todayspaper).


Meanwhile, a blizzard-filled winter and an unusually cold and wet spring, has caused more than 90 measuring sites from Montana to New Mexico and California to Colorado have record snowpack totals on the ground for late May, bringing the possibility of catastrophic flooding if much warmer weather in June brings sudden thaws, releasing millions of gallons of water through river channels and narrow canyons, and overflowing already very high reservoirs and lakes. If the weather warms up slowly and remains mild, serious flooding may be avoided, and the overly dry west may enjoy much needed reserves of water (“Record Snow packs Could Threaten Western States,” The New York Times, May 22, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/22/us/22snow.html?ref=todayspaper).

While it is impossible say whether any one storm or weather occurrence is related to global warming and the climate change it induces, and there are debates among scientists as to whether enough time has elapsed to say to say recent trends towards more and stronger storms are indeed a direct indication of the impact of global warming, there is no question in the mainstream of climate science that the current trend is consistent with global warming induced climate change. One example was end of August Hurricane, later tropical storm, Irene extending on the U.S. East Coast from North Carolina to Connecticut and inland through the rest of New England to Canada, though not intense, at category 1, was extremely large – covering about as much area as the state of California. The threat of flooding from its very large expected storm surge, for the first time brought the city of New York to evacuate low lying areas, and also for the first time, to close its subways. While New York City suffered limited flooding, and none in its subways, there was extensive flooding and power outages, including in inland areas of upstate New York and New England overwhelmed by huge amounts of rain, and other cities, including Philadelphia experienced flooding. Particularly in Vermont – where Senator Sanders stated that this was the worst natural disaster in the history of the state, and upstate New York, damage was very wide spread to houses, businesses, infrastructure and crops, and total damage in dollars estimated from Irene to be among the top 10 of all storms battering the United States in its history. Then when the remnants of tropical storm Lee worked its way from the Gulf coast to the Northeast less than two weeks later, many areas received a second round of horrendous flooding – some at record levels - the evacuation of at least 120,000 people while surging waters threatened major population centers, including along the Susquehanna River, which stretches more than 400 miles from

The pattern of heavier than normal rain and snow, sometimes in large storms, that plagued the U.S. this winter and spring, including with heavy and sometimes record flooding on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers (e.g., the Mississippi reached record levels in Vicksburg, MS, Campbell Robertson, “Record Water for a Mississippi River City,” The New York Times, May 15, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/16/us/16flood.html?scp=1&sq=Mississippi%20RiverCity%20Gets%20an%20Unwelcome%20View%20of%20the%20Floodwaters&st=cse) also caused near record, and record, flooding further North into late June, particularly along the Red and Missouri Rivers in North Dakota (A.G. Sulzberger, “Even Boom States Get the Blues,” The New York Times, June 27, 2011). And in Vermont, Lake Champlain rose to its highest recorded level, surpassing food stage by three feet and destroying or damaging hundreds of homes (“Vermont: Lake Champlain Hits Record,” The New York Times, May 7, 2011). Over all, the weather in the United States had already caused record economic loss in 2011, by August, with nine as opposed to the normal three or four $1 billion weather disasters (and there have been more since) (Katharine Q. Seelye, “Year Packed With Weather Disasters Has Brought Economic Toll to Match,” The New York Times, August 20, 2011).

The extreme dryness in the U.S. Southwest had already sparked a record fire season, by mid-June. As of June 16, more than 700 square miles of Arizona and more than 4,300 square miles of Texas have been swept by huge wildfires, while the largest wildfire in Arizona history is burning into New Mexico, whose numerous wildfires this spring include the largest in the state's history. Containment of the spreading fires has been extremely difficult in hot windy weather in drought suffering areas (Chip Ward, “How the West Was Lost: The American West in Flames,” TomDispatch.com, June 16, 2011, http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/06/16-3). By September, late annual ‘monsoons’ have begun to ease the drought and wildfires in Arizona and New Mexico, the extremely harsh drought and accompanying wildfires have continued in West Texas. In early September, a huge series of wildfires in Bastrop and Travis Counties and other parts of Central and East Texas, had burned 34,000 acres, the largest fire in Texas history, destroying nearly 500 homes, with at least 5,000 people being evacuated, an at least two deaths, September 4 and 5, 2011, and as the fire continued, as of September 11, 1500 homes had been destroyed by this one set of fires. In Bastrop County, school district officials canceled classes for September 6 and transformed the local middle school into a shelter for evacuees. In the worst fire season in Texas history, since November, 2010, continuing fires had burned more than 2500 homes, as of September 6, with fires still spreading. Texas had the hottest June through August on record for any state in the United States, with an 86.8 average temperature that exceeded Oklahoma’s 85.2 degrees in 1934 (Manny Fernandez, “Wildfires in Parched Texas Kill 2 and Destroy Homes,” The New York Times, September 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/us/06wildfire.html?ref=todayspaper; and Manny Fernandez, “With Calmer Winds, Texas Firefighters Make Progress Against Vast Blaze,” The New York Times, September 6, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/07/us/07wildfire.html?ref=us; “Texas: Heat Is a Record,” The New York Times, September 8, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/09/us/09brfs-recordheat.html?ref=todayspaper; and “Texas Wildfire Destroys More Than 1,500 Homes,” The New York Times, September 11, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/12/us/12wildfire.html?ref=todayspaper).

Central and northernmost California, after having experienced heavier than normal rains earlier in the year, have more recently been drier. On September 12, lightning-caused wildfires became serious in three groupings of fires in Kern County, covering a total of 87 square miles on September 13. Two fire complexes were southeast of Bakersfield, near Arvin and Tehachapi, and a third complex in the northern part of the county had reached Sequoia National Forest. Several hundred homes faced mandatory evacuations in parts of Stallion Springs, and the Caliente School District was closed because the fire conditions. To the north, fires in Tehama and Shasta Counties were contained (“California: Fires Threaten Kern County,” The New York Times, September 13, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/13/us/13brfs-fires.html?ref=todayspaper).
The worst flooding in 150 years in western Canada has forced more than 1,100 First Nation people from their homes. In April, in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, putting at least 50 aboriginal communities in danger across the prairie region. A mixture of snow melt and heavy rains were responsible for the record high waters in the three affected provinces. Although the floods impacted numerous towns and cities, First Nations reserves were less protected and suffering disproportionately. Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo told the Canadian Press that while towns prone to flooding in southern Manitoba have received flood-prevention assistance, such as dykes to hold the river back, many First Nations communities have little more than sandbags despite repeated requests to have their homes moved to higher ground (“Unprecedented Flooding Hits First Nations Hard,” Indian Country Today, April 22, 2011, http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/04/unprecedented-flooding-hits-first-nations-hard/).

Possibly showing a new pattern as part of climate change (though it is too early to know), for the Second year in a row Pakistan has received disastrously heavy monsoon rains, again causing wide spread flooding. As of September 20, 2011 at least 220 people had died in the monsoons, some 665,000 homes were destroyed and more than 1.8 million people displaced (“In Pakistan, Monsoon Rains Bring Disaster for a Second Year,” The New York Times, September 20, 2011). This coincides with two consecutive years of more severe weather, and a shifting weather pattern, in North America, especially in the winter, reported in these pages. While it will take a longer period of time to know if such changes are climate change, and not just a temporary phenomenon, they are consistent with global warming induced climate change. Meanwhile, in Late July, a month of unusually heavy rains set off mudslides in Korea killing at least 32 people (Choe Sang-Hun, “Heavy Rain in South Korea Sets Of Deadly Mudslides,” The New York Times, July 28, 2011). In Southern Brazil, in mid-March, heavy rains bringing floods and landslides forced 31,000 people from their homes and caused some deaths (“Brazil: Floods Ravage Southeast,” The New York Times, March 15, 2011).


Despite some rains, drought remains a major problem in China. A severe, five month (as of mid-May) drought along the Yangtze River region in central China has made almost 1,400 reservoirs in Hubei Province temporarily unusable, devastated farm fields and made drinking water scarce, as water levels in the middle part of the Yangtze have fallen to a near-record low. For the second time since the Three Gorges Dam, the world’s largest hydroelectric project, began operating, officials have had to make emergency water discharges from it to help ease the drought. It was reported that one-fourth of all small reservoirs had only what officials called “dead water” remaining, which could be pumped for use only in an emergency. Meanwhile, North China is dying, as a chronic drought is ravaging farmland, the Gobi Desert is inching south, and the Yellow River, the so-called birthplace of Chinese civilization, is so polluted it can no longer supply drinking water. The rapid growth of megacities — 22 million people in Beijing and 12 million in Tianjin alone — has drained underground aquifers that took
millenniums to fill. Following its usual pattern of recent years, the Chinese government has initiated the South-North Water Diversion Project its most massive, hugely expensive project, yet, as an attempted solution: diverting at least six trillion gallons of water a year hundreds of miles from the Yangtze River, to meet the needs of the north China plain and its 440 million people. This is equivalent to moving water from the Mississippi River to meet the drinking needs of Boston, New York and Washington. At $62 billion, its projected cost is twice that of the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydroelectric project. Just as the Three Gorges Dam, which Chinese officials have admitted has "urgent problems," the water diversion project is increasingly producing concerns about its cost, its environmental impact and the sacrifices poor people in the provinces are told to make for those in richer cities. The South-North Water Diversion Project is planned to encompass three artificial channels from the Yangtze that would transport water from the south, itself increasingly afflicted by droughts, with the region suffering its worst one in 50 years. The project's human cost along the middle route, which begins in Hubei Province at a giant reservoir and winds 800 miles to Beijing, includes relocating 350,000 villagers to make way for the canal. Many are being resettled far from their homes and given low-grade farmland; in Hubei, thousands of people have been moved to the grounds of a former prison. Around 150,000 people had been resettled by last spring. Some Chinese scientists say the diversion could destroy the ecology of the southern rivers, making them as useless as the Yellow River. They charge that the government has neglected to undertake proper impact studies. There are precedents in the United States, such as Lakes in California that were damaged and destroyed when the Owens River was diverted in the early 20th century to build Los Angeles. In Hubei, more than 14 million people would be affected if the project damaged the Han River, the tributary of the Yangtze where the middle route starts, said Du Yun, a geographer at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in the provincial capital of Wuhan. Officials in provinces south of Beijing and Tianjin have privately raised objections and are haggling over water pricing and compensation; midlevel officials in water-scarce Hebei Province are frustrated that four reservoirs in their region have sent more than 775 million cubic meters, or 205 billion gallons, of water to Beijing since September 2008 in an "emergency" supplement to the middle route. Overseers of the eastern route, which is being built alongside the Grand Canal, an ancient waterway for barges, have found that the drinking water to be brought to Tianjin from the Yangtze is so polluted that 426 sewage treatment plants have to be built; water pollution control on the route takes up 44 percent of the $5 billion investment, according to Xinhua, the official news agency. The source water from the Han River on the middle route is cleaner. But the main channel will cross 205 rivers and streams in the industrial heartland of China before reaching Beijing. Dai Qing, an environmental advocate who has written critically about the Three Gorges Dam, commented, "When water comes to Beijing, there's the danger of the water not being safe to drink" (Edward Wong, "Plan for China's Water Crisis Spurs Concern," The New York Times, June 1, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/02/world/asia/02water.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper; and Edward Wong, "Central China Hit by Drought, as Reservoirs Become 'Dead Water'," The New York Times, May 16, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/17/world/asia/17drought.html?ref=world) Ian Johnson, "China Faces 'Very Grave' Environmental Situation, Officials Say," The New York Times, June 3, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/04/world/asia/04china.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper, notes, "China's three decades of rapid economic growth have left it with a 'very grave' environmental situation even as it tries to move away from a development-at-all-costs strategy, senior government officials said," June 1. Officials from the Ministry of Environmental Protection delivered their 2010 annual report, pointing to major improvements in water and air quality, with targets the ministry had set five years earlier met, with pollutants in surface water down 32 percent, and sulfur dioxide emissions in cities down 19 percent. However, officials cautioned that many other problems were serious and scarcely under control. Vice minister Li Ganjie said, "The overall environmental situation is still very grave and is facing many difficulties and challenges." Noting, biodiversity was declining with "a continuous loss and drain of genetic resources." The countryside was becoming more polluted, he added, as dirty industries were moved out of cities and into rural areas. He stated that reversing the countryside's deterioration was a major focus for the coming five-year plan. He also pledged to control contamination by heavy metals, which resulted in nine cases of lead poisoning last year and seven more in the first five months of this year. He said China needed a law to regulate heavy metals, and he was confident it would be written and passed soon. When the environmental protection office was founded in 1998, it had little authority, as the government and party were focused on development at all cost, in part to promote social and political stability, and prevent unrest. But as it has been relaxed that the resulting environmental degradation is increasingly causing unrest, the agency has gained prominence and power. It was upgraded to a ministry in 2007, and is increasingly being given more resources and power. Li noted that some areas were very fragile and were to be protected from development. However, He said that more than a fifth of the land that has been se aside as nature reserves had been illegally developed by companies, often with local government collusion. But he said the ministry had deployed a satellite that could detect illegal development and would put pressure on local governments to stop the work. Failing this, Mr. Li said, the ministry has the power to influence officials' prospects for promotions because environmental compliance is now a part of their performance evaluation. Independent observers have commented that this is part of a gradual
change to give the ministry more power. In the past, powerful ministries could get around the environmental ministry, but this is now changing. Recently, the ministry canceled a high-speed train line that had not obtained its approval. Last year, Mr. Li said, the ministry turned down 59 projects worth $15 billion that had not been approved. Among the recent public outcries against environmental degradation and the harm it is causing to people were protests in Inner Mongolia, in late May, partly due to concerns that industries such as coal and mining — largely dominated by ethnic Chinese — are destroying the grasslands used for herding by the indigenous Mongolians. Similar conflicts have arisen in other sensitive ethnic areas like Tibet and Xinjiang. Kieth Bradsher, “China Moves Swiftly to Close Chemical Plant After Protests,” The New York Times, August 15, 2011, informs that after thousands of protestors complaining of the danger from toxins from a chemical plant damaged by a storm in Dalian, China, in mid-August, municipal authorities quickly closed the plant. In September, another plant in China was closed following protests, this one making solar voltaic cells that produce highly toxic residue that the plant was not disposing of properly.

Edward Wong, “Three Gorges Dam Is Said to Hurt Areas Downstream,” The New York Times, June 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/03/world/asia/03china.html?ref=todayspaper, reports that, “A Chinese official says the planners of the Three Gorges Dam failed to properly gauge its effects on lakes and other bodies of water downstream” “As a result, the dam has contributed to lower water levels in two of China’s largest freshwater lakes, raising the threat to them during long droughts”. Large areas of central and southern China are suffering from the worst drought in 50 years, and the levels have fallen drastically in the Yangtze River and other bodies of water. The official said that water levels in the two lakes — Dongting in Hunan Province and Poyang in Jiangxi Province — had fallen in part because of the storage of water in the reservoir behind the dam, which is on the Yangtze. The dam also has had an impact on fish breeding and the growth of plants in the lower reaches of the Yangtze, said Mr. Wang, who works in a flood control and drought relief office that is linked to the Yangtze River Water Resources Committee. He said proper discharge from the reservoir would help the lakes. He stated, “We failed to think of all the impacts that the dam might bring about when designing the dam, but its advantages should outweigh the disadvantages.” In 2010, the dam provided 84 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity. (See also, Michael Wines, “China Admits Problems With Three Gorges Dam,” The New York Times, May 19, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/20/world/asia/20gorges.html?ref=todayspaper, that reports that a high-level government body acknowledged, in May, that the Three Gorges Dam is troubled by urgent pollution and geologic problems).

In order to meet China’s tightening environmental standards, Chinese coal companies are now importing cleaner and better burning than domestic coal, which is reducing slightly the amount of coal being burned in China, and thus helping slightly to reduce China’s contribution to global warming, as well as other toxic pollution. Critics are concerned that anything that makes using coal cheaper in China will encourage its continued use, rather than switching to cleaner, less greenhouse gas producing energy sources (Keith Bradsher, Cleaner Coal May Still Feed Global Warming,” The Ne York Times, June 17, 2011).

The May 6, 2011 issue of the Journal of Science reports that global warming induced climate change has substantially reduced expected crop yields in some countries so that this may be a factor in global food price inflation. For example, wheat yields in the last few years have dropped by 10% in Russia, and to a lesser extent in China, India and France compared to what they would have been expected to be if temperatures had not risen. Corn production is similarly down by a few percent in Brazil, China and France. At the same time, there have been some agricultural gains in some countries, as the increased amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere acts as a fertilizer. As a result, the overall impact so far is a small world wide agricultural yield reduction from global warming (Justin Gillis, “Global Warming Reduces Expected Yields of Harvests in Some Countries, Study Says,” The New York Times, May 6, 2011).

New gravity measuring technology from satellites in space Scientists have been using small variations in the Earth’s gravity to identify places around the planet where people are making unsustainable demands on groundwater, one of the planet’s main sources of fresh water. The problem areas include North Africa, northern India, northeastern China and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley in California, mainstay of the state’s $30 billion agricultural industry. All the large changes in water, whether as liquid or ice and snow, are being tracked, redefining the field of hydrology, which itself has grown more critical as climate change and population growth draw down the world’s fresh water supplies. The technology also tracks areas of political sensitivity over ground water where groundwater basins are often shared by unfriendly neighbors — India and Pakistan, Tunisia and Libya or Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinian territories — that have a tendency to suspecting one another of excessive use of this shared resource (Felicity Barringer, “Groundwater Depletion Is Detected From Space,” The New York Times, May 30, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/31/science/31water.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).
The government of Egypt released a plan, in May, to increase, greatly, production of important crops, with the goal of becoming self-sufficient in wheat and to “restore the glory” of Egyptian cotton after years of neglect under the 30 year regime of President Hosni Mubarak. At the same time that Egyptian population has risen, markedly, wheat production has dropped, so that Egypt as become the largest wheat importer in the world, while the number of cotton fields in production fell to an all-time low in the country. The process of ending reliance on imports of wheat, a basic food for the 86 million people in the country, will be a long and difficult one, as Egypt lacks sufficient silos, suffers from poor yields and offers few incentives for farmers to grow the crop on a more regular basis. At the heart of a multistage plan is a measure to increase prices offered to wheat farmers by 25% percent this year, while offering Farmers additional money if they improve the “cleanliness” and “quality” of their wheat. With the new rate for wheat being announced well in advance of the next season, which starts in November and ends in April, the number of hectares of wheat is expected to jump to 1.5 million, or 3.7 million acres, from 1.2 million hectares. An additional 30,000 hectares recently seized from the Saudi investor Prince Waleed bin Talal after it was determined that he had bought the land below market prices will be devoted to growing wheat. The government also pledged to supply farmers with high-yield seeds and asked them not to keep any seeds from the current crop because of its poor yield. Under the plan, wheat farmers will receive more regular and intensive counseling to “help them plant at the right time, use correct amounts of fertilizers and harvest the crop for the maximum benefit,” said Abdelsalam Gomaa, an adviser to the government and an expert on wheat cultivation. The government also will subsidize research that, along with better seeds, could sharply increase productivity, and it vowed to remove red tape that complicates the process of setting up companies seeking to grow grains, especially wheat. The plan also calls for providing better information and advice to farmers, while at the same time supplying them with affordable fertilizers and pesticides. The government also has promised to work to open new markets for Egypt’s cotton exports and says that producing cotton will become profitable as international prices rise, luring more farmers into the business. After the government announced the agricultural reforms in April, a group of Egyptians in the United States and Saudi Arabia said they would set up a joint company whose goal would be to start a project for “self-sufficiency” in wheat production in Egypt. The company plans to raise 3 billion pounds by encouraging ordinary Egyptians to buy directly into the company. The company says it will plant about 200,000 hectares of wheat next winter.

President Obama, on September 2, 2011, rejected a proposed rule from the Environmental Protection Agency that would have significantly reduced emissions of smog-causing chemicals, saying that it would impose too severe a burden on industry and local governments at a time of economic distress, and should be put off until a scheduled reconsideration of acceptable pollution limits in 2013. The E.P.A., following the recommendation of its scientific advisers, had proposed lowering the so-called ozone standard of 75 parts per billion, set at the end of the Bush administration, to a stricter standard of 60 to 70 parts per billion. The change would have left hundreds of counties in the U.S. out of compliance with the Clean Air Act and required a major enforcement effort by state and local officials, as well as new emissions controls at industries across the country. While business groups and republicans in Congress had pressured heavily against the proposal, environmentalists were sharply critical of the administration for not following good science, and some dismay was expressed within the E.P.A. (John M. Broder, “Obama Administration Abandons Stricter Air-Quality Rules,” September 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/03/science/earth/03air.html?ref=todayspaper).


One impact of climate change in tropical forests, such as in Panama, is that there has been increase in the growth of woody climbing vines, that is choking trees and reducing their transformation of carbon dioxide into oxygen and carbon (Henry Fountain, “A Tree hugger with a Twist,” The New York Times, May 24, 2011). Meanwhile, in an area of Russia’s northern east coast, in which shark attacks were previously unknown, several such attacks took place, in May, bringing authorities to ban swimming on some beaches in the region, coastal Primorsky Krai, along the Sea of Japan (Michael Schwitz, “Russia Stunned by Shark Attacks in East,” The New York Times, August 19, 2011).


In what may be a major turnaround in policy, the government India, which has often allowed very destructive mining on the lands of local people, many of them indigenous, against their wishes, often
destroying the basis of their livelihood, including with massive pollution, has charged one of the country’s most powerful mining barons, Janardhana Reddy whose political clout and wealth have made him a controversial national figure, with illegal mining and fraud, concerning his extensive mining and export of raw materials operations in Karnataka and Andhra. The move against Reddy appears to be a result of the current popular campaign against corruption in India (See Asian developments, below) (Jim Yardley, “India Charges Mining Baron With Fraud,” The New York Times, September 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/world/asia/06india.html?ref=todayspaper).

“Government U-turn halts tribal eviction from India’s national parks,” Survival International, May 16, 2011, http://www.survivalknaisation.org/news/7278, reports, The Indian government has reversed its controversial policy of expelling tribal people from wildlife-rich areas to turn them into national parks. Under new proposals, tribal people can only be evicted with their free, prior and informed consent. Tiger reserves, however, are excluded from the new policy. Survival International has written to the Environment and Forests Ministry urging it to apply the same rules to tiger reserves. The previous policy had to be hastily withdrawn following criticism that it would ‘inevitably lead to violations of people’s rights and [to] greater displacement [of tribal peoples].’ Tensions have been growing between those advocating for the rights of India’s 84 million tribal people, and those fighting for wildlife reserves to be people-free ‘wildernesses’. The withdrawn policy had assumed that people would have to be removed from ‘critical wildlife habitats’. An estimated 100,000 people are already conservation refugees following eviction from conservation areas in India. These refugees lose access to the lands and resources they have relied on for generations, and often have sacred sites and burial grounds from which they are barred, with terrible impacts on their mental and physical health. The government’s new draft policy recognizes that coexistence between people and wildlife is possible in some (but not all) cases, and that where it is, forest dwelling communities should be involved in the management of the park. Survival’s Director, Stephen Corry said today, ‘The vast majority of the world’s best conservation areas are home to tribal peoples. This is no coincidence. It is madness to suggest that the best way to preserve wildlife is to evict the very people who have protected it for so many years. The Indian government seems to be beginning, finally, to see sense.’

“Bangladesh: Ban Coal Mine, Save Forests and Farms,” Cultural Survival, downloaded May 14, 2011, http://www.culturalsurvival.org/take-action/bangladesh-ban-coal-mine-save-forests-and-farms, reports that thousands of local people, many Indigenous, have been protesting the plan of a British company, Global Coal Management Resources (GCM) to bulldoze 12,000 acres of Bangladesh’s most productive agricultural land and replace it with one of the world’s largest open-pit coal mines. By their own account, they would forcibly displace 40,000 people in the Phulbari region, including at least 2,200 Indigenous people whose history in the area dates back 5,000 years. A government-sponsored study estimates that 130,000 people in more than 100 villages would be immediately displaced, and another 100,000 would gradually be forced to leave as their wells and irrigation canals run dry from the mining. Independent researchers and the Jatiya Adivasi Parishad (National Indigenous Union) estimate that 50,000 Indigenous people belonging to 23 different tribal groups would be displaced or impoverished by the mine. Tens of thousands of Bangladeshi citizens have protested against the Phulbari mine project since 2005. After government forces opened fire during a nonviolent protest in 2006, killing three people and wounding hundreds, a national strike closed down the country for four days. It ended when the government agreed to ban open-pit coal mining in Phulbari and eject the British company (then known as Asia Energy) from the country—a pledge they have not fulfilled. Instead, the government will announce a new coal policy by June 2011, and Global Coal expects to be in business soon thereafter. The National Indigenous Union and a broad coalition of human rights and environmental organizations are appealing for international support to prevent an ecological and humanitarian disaster in Phulbari.

In the Philippines, where the Palawan tribe strongly opposes Nickel mining on Palawan island that threatens to devastate the ancestral land, Dr Gerry Ortega was shot dead in January, following death threats linked to Dr. Ortega’s anti-mining activism. A suspect was arrested in the murder. Despite the Palawan tribe’s opposition, in December 2011, the local government granted clearance to mine on the tribe’s land to Companies Macro Asia and the Ipiian Nickel Mining Corporation. Final permission from the governor of the island was expected to grant by the end of January 2011. Survival has been appealing to the governor of Palawan to reject mining on the tribe’s land without their consent. The proposed mines will destroy the forests the Palawan tribe rely on. Numbering around 40,000 people, the Palawan are shifting cultivators, clearing a small area of the forest for food production before moving on and allowing the forest to regenerate. They hunt wild pig and collect and sell resin, rattan canes and wild honey. Artiso Mandawa of the local indigenous organization ALDAW (Ancestral Land/Domain Watch), has also received repeated death threats. He says, ‘I will continue to fight for my people and my land, until the president of the Philippines puts a halt to all those mining investments that are genocidal to indigenous people’ (“Anti-mining activist shot dead in Philippines,” Survival International, January 28, 2011, http://www.survivalinternational.org/news/6933). The Palawan people are now also
being threatened by the expansion of palm oil production for biofuel and other uses onto their lands that the Philippine government is promoting. "Palm oil expansion threatens Palawan tribe," Cultural Survival, January 23, 2011, http://www.survivalinternational.org/news/6876, reports that Palm oil plantations are expanding into land the Palawan use for shifting cultivation and for collecting plants for medicines, food and house building. In some places, plantations have taken over cultivated areas such as rice fields. The Palawan are shifting cultivators, clearing a small area of the forest for food production before moving on and allowing the forest to regenerate. They hunt wild pig and collect and sell resin, rattan canes and wild honey. The lowland Palawan also plant coconuts and raise livestock. The plantations destroy forest, directly take Palawan agricultural land, and deteriorate the broader environment. The Palawan tribe has had little say in the development of the plantations, having not been properly consulted by Agumil Philippines Inc., the company responsible for the plantations, or by the government authorities, nor do they have a clear understanding of agreements that have been made in their name, without their permission. Artiso Mandawa, chair of the local indigenous organization, ALDAW (Ancestral Land/Domain Watch), notes, “There is absolutely no transparency in the company’s dealings with local communities.” “It is well known that this crop benefits better-off farmers and entrepreneurs, rather than small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples. We look forward to more sustainable investments for improving agricultural productivity of marginalized farmers. Meanwhile, a moratorium on oil palm expansion should be implemented with haste.”

Fisherman in the U.S. Northeast have agreed with researchers, regulators and engineers to change fishing equipment to reduce bycatch in which species other than the one being fished are caught, killed or injured in the fishing process (Cornella Dean, “Fishing Gear Altered to Ease Collateral Costs to Marine Life,” The New York Times, August 23, 2011).

On the Island of Sumatra, in Indonesia, two families of endangered tigers were filmed in forest outside the Bukit Tigapuluh National Park that is scheduled to be destroyed by logging by Asia Pulp and Paper (J. David Goodman, “Indonesia: Tigers Spotted in Forest Where Paper Mill Saws Are Coming,” The New York Times, June 10, 2011).

Tanzania has decided not to build a major highway through the Serengeti National Park that would have interfered with major animal migrations (“Tanzania: No Serengeti Highway,” The New York Times, June 28, 2011).

After the government of El Salvador refused a final permit to allow the Canadian Company Pacific Rim to open a gold mine - in response to public fears of devastating pollution, in spite of company promises to take extraordinary steps to contain pollutants - the company brought suit against the government for $77 million in lost profits in an international trade court claiming jurisdiction under free trade agreements. This one of hundreds of cases in which disappointed companies have and are suing governments of developing countries (Randal C. Archiabald, “First a Gold Rush, Then the Lawyers,” The New York Times, June 26, 2011).

With a shortage outside of China of rare earths, the world’s largest rare earths refinery is being built in Kuantan, Malaysia. Internal company memos and outside critics indicate that the plant has serious environmental design flaws, and could spew massive toxic pollution (Keith Bradshaw, “Fear of a Toxic Rerun,” The New York Times, June 30, 2011).

Cultural Survival reported, March 15, “The World Bank has stepped in to support the dumping of toxic waste from the Ramu nickel mine into the seas off Papua New Guinea after the European Union decided to pull its funding. A World Bank review in 2003 said categorically that marine dumping should not be used in areas such as coral reefs that have important ecological functions or cultural significance or in coastal waters used for subsistence purposes, but that does not appear to be troubling the World Bank today. For more information go to: http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?llr=g7ptvccab&et=1104762663018&s=5868&e=001UwauFINyY8fQNzixfPXP6JgJULXKpfJasF8VTMx22Dtgq-qMowJE1LnfGShjKATH2cEBPP_3jOYQuvbN1I6mEY-p_dGKFza93pbcQXL-_OGUv4Eybg8blqHu0TdnQ8cblih6Qxk27Diiv23r1S3IU0T9-7-IhfpBNUR2paySappZScXQWRp5nr6.

In order to bring the return of salmon migration, and increase salmon breeding, two very large hydroelectric dams will be torn down on the Elwa River in Washington State (William Yardley, “Removing Barriers To Salmon Migration,” The New York Times, July 20, 2011).

Excerpts from, Adam Dunstan, “Environmental Developments - Spring/Summer 2011,” Indigenous Policy, “Summer 2011, www.indigenouspolicy.org, are as follows:

In Canada, we also are seeing important environmental developments with the tribes. One is in how Nunavut’s government is responding to climate change. “Climate change is already having a significant
impact in Nunavut" said Daniel Shewchuk, environment minister for the (largely indigenous) Canadian territory of Nunavut. "Nunavummiut will need to prepare to adapt to these very real and tangible impacts that are affecting our land and way of life". In light of this, the Government of Nunavut has tabled a 30 page document entitled “Upagiaqavut – Setting the Course, Impacts and Adaptation in Nunavut”, which lays out the government’s activities to help Nunavummiut, government agencies, and Inuit organizations to “become more resilient and adaptive to climate change”. Shewchuk states “The document provides strategic direction to ensure that Nunavummiut are prepared with the tools, skills, and knowledge to adapt to a changing climate”. The document outlines actions the Government of Nunavut intends to take regarding climate change. In the document, their strategy is compared to the qamutik sled of a hunter. Actions will include ensuring climate change is part of school curricula, creation of a climate change website, setting up a climate change group tasked with working on community-based ways of adaptation, identifying economic opportunities of climate change, and incorporating climate change considerations into all government decision making. The Government of Nunavut has already developed climate change adaptation action plans in five pilot communities, set up a Permafrost Monitoring Network in 11 communities, began a sea level rise assessment, and completed other attempts to adapt to and monitor climate change. (Nunatsiaq News, “GN spells out plan to deal with climate change”, Nunatsiaq news, June 13, 2011, http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/130688_gn_spells_out_its_plan_to_deal_with_climate_change/).

On the topic of renewable energy, wind power is on the rise. According to the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), 35% of the new power generating capacity built over the past 4 years has been from wind power sources. This means that more wind power capacity was installed than nuclear power and coal combined over the last four years. AWEA also reports that during the first quarter of 2011 there was 1,100 megawatts (MW) of wind power capacity installed in the United States – over double that installed in the first quarter of 2010. As of the end of 2010, there was 40,181 MW of wind power capacity installed across the United States total. There was a clear growth trend in wind power installation from 2007 to 2009, though it seems to have lagged in 2010. The growth of wind turbines could have important effects as placement concerns are discussed by the tribes. (Andy Soos, “Wind in 2011”, Environmental News Network, May 27, 2011, http://www.enn.com/business/article/42747).

First U.S. tidal power plant nearing approval – There is also hope for increased renewable energy in the form of tidal power. The first U.S. tidal energy power plant may soon be built, as part of a project that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has now recommended for approval. The project license was applied for by Verdant Power, and would involve the installation of 30 submerged turbines between Roosevelt Island and Queens in New York. Tidal power is an overlooked but potentially significant source of renewable energy, though it has high start-up costs. The FERC licensing process and other parts of the approval process necessitated an environmental impact review under the National Environmental Policy Act. The Environmental Assessment predicted that the tidal plant would have no significant adverse effects to the environment, and only minimal impacts on aquatic resources (local fisheries). There will now be an Environmental Impact Statement, a more thorough review of possible environmental impacts. (Jonathan Kalmuss-Katx, “Tidal Power Plant in East River Nears Federal Approval”, Sive Paget & Riesel P.C., June 6th, 2011, http://blog.sprlaw.com/2011/06/tidal-power-plant-in-east-river-nears-federal-approval/).

The Death of Coal? – Meanwhile, in both 2009 and 2010, new coal plants lagged completely. During these two years, no new coal-fired power plants were started in the United States. The coal industry has been halted in its growth by a number of facts: the recession, lower natural gas prices (and the associated spike in natural gas power), and environmentalist opposition. Natural gas is often being used in favor of coal, with America’s largest electricity generator, American Electric Power, planning to turn to natural gas for any additional power generation capacity being installed. Many power plants will be converting from coal to natural gas. Kevin Parker, at Deutsche Bank, is quoted as saying “Coal is a dead man walking”. Banks won’t finance them. Insurance companies won’t insure them. The EPA is coming after them...And the economics make it clean don’t work”. Despite this, coal still accounts for over half of all electricity generation in the U.S. and is also a powerful political lobbying group in the debates over cap-and-trade regulations. This will continue to be an issue of concern to the communities we work with, some of which hold coal deposits or house coal plants. (Steven Mufson, “Coal’s Burnout”, Washington Post, December 31, 2010; David A Gabel, “No Coal-Fired Power Plants Built in Past Year”, Environmental News Network, January 4th, 2011, http://www.enn.com/business/article/42191)

Coal Giant to drastically reduce US coal production due to EPA proposals – Recent EPA proposals as well could be affecting coal dramatically. One of the largest U.S. coal-burning utility groups, American Electrical Power (AEP), announced recently that it intends to close almost 25% of its coal fleet and do retrofit work, costing the company as much as $8 billion, to comply with proposed new pollution standards for water, air, and coal waste. The EPA has proposed new mercury emission limits under the Clean Air Act, more coal-ash disposal rules, rules on the use of cooling water towers, and updated limits on sulfur dioxide and nitrogen
oxides under the Clean Air Transport Rule. AEP would be retiring 6,000 megawatts of coal-fired power generation in states such as Virginia, West Virginia, and Ohio by 2014. It will also be converting some of its electricity generation to natural gas and investing heavily in this fuel as well as in emissions reduction equipment. The company warned that the costs of the new environmental regulations to local companies as well as consumers have “been vastly underestimated”, especially in the Midwest. The chairman of AEP, Michael Morris, said that “because of unrealistic compliance timelines in the EPA...proposals” they would have to prematurely shut off much of their coal generation and make these changes and that Midwest electrical reliability could be affected. Currently, coal generation accounts for about 65% of EP’s power generation. It would drop to 57% by the end of the decade. Morris said that the company would work with the EPA in hopes that the EPA would develop a more realistic compliance schedule. (Soma Das, Antonita Madonna Devotta, Eileen O’Grady, ed. Marguerita Choy, “AEP to retire 6,000 MW of U.S. coal generation”, Reuters, June 9, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/09/us-utilities-operations-aep-idUSTRE75877620110609).

Move to open Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling – Meanwhile, oil may be receiving a victory as republican legislators introduce a bill that would open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development. Senator Vitter said this “would unleash our vast domestic energy potential to create American jobs, help free us from our reliance on foreign oil and begin to reduce our $14 trillion national debt”. He claimed that this move would bring in $2 trillion in federal tax receipts over the next 30 years. There have been efforts in the past, of course, to block drilling in this refuge on environmental grounds. (Ayesha Rascoe, “Republicans in new push to drill in Alaska reserve”, Reuters, March 31, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/31/us-usa-republicans-energy-idUSTRE72U58D20110331).

Deep-water drilling regulations relaxed, slightly - Oil is also experiencing a slight victory in regards to deep-water drilling. Those of us working with coastal indigenous groups impacted by offshore drilling (whether by its environmental impact or its employment prospects) will be interested in recent development in deepwater project regulations. On January 3rd, the Obama administration eased newer environmental barriers to some oil and gas deepwater drilling projects. Still, these companies will need to meet strict standards before they can resume drilling. Some Republican lawmakers and oil companies had complained that the post-gulf oil spill regulations had brought drilling in the Gulf of Mexico to a standstill. Essentially, 13 companies who already had projects underway when the moratorium on offshore drilling was announced will be able to forego additional environmental reviews, depending on certain factors (worst-case scenarios). Still, this does not mean drilling will begin immediately, since these companies must still meet new offshore drilling regulations. (Ayesha Rascoe, “U.S. to ease requirements on some deepwater projects”, January 3, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/04/us-oil-drilling-permits-idUSTRE7023HY20110104)

New fuel efficiency labels – At the same time, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the EPA have recently released dramatically different fuel efficiency labels for automobiles, which now detail comprehensive fuel efficiency information as well as information on estimated annual fuel costs, savings, and, most importantly, environmental impacts, which will allow consumers to make more environmentally wise decisions regarding automobile purchases (Andy Soos, “Fuel Economy Labels by EPA”, Environmental News Network, May 26, 2011, http://www.enn.com/pollution/article/42744)

Fuel cell vehicles makes progress – Also, fuel cell vehicles may begin to offer an alternative to oil-guzzlers. Toyota has announced that it plans to start selling a fuel cell vehicle by 2015 or sooner, and it has started on the infrastructure necessary with the opening of the first pipeline-fed hydrogen refueling plant in the U.S., located in Torrance, California. These moves will be worth watching as we ponder, both as researchers and citizens, how to make our economy more ecologically sound. (David A Gabel, “First Pipeline-Fed Hydrogen Refueling Station Opens in the United States”, Environmental News Network, May 11, 2005, http://www.enn.com/business/article/42685).

Climate change is also likely to increase wildfire over the coming century, according to research published by NASA in October of last year. According to this model, fire activity in the West could increase by 30-60% from present levels by 2100, as the western U.S. warms and dries. The model was designed by NASA scientist Olga Pechony and Drew Shindell. Interestingly, according to the model the eastern half of the U.S. will actually experience a decline in wildfires as humidity increases. Model projections by Anthony Westerling of the University of California’s Sierra Nevada Research Institute and his colleagues published in the Journal of Geophysical Research show that warmer temperatures would cause the average area burned each year in the west by wildfire to spike by 54% by the 2050’s, which confirms Pechony and Shindell’s estimates. The NASA model of Pechony and Shindell simulates worldwide wildfire and climate conditions back to A.D. 850 and projects them forward to A.D. 2100. The model is based on scenarios published by the International Panel on Climate Change regarding greenhouse gas emissions, population growth and other factors. Under all three of these scenarios, rapid warming and regional drying would lead to an increase in fire activity world-wide after 2050. Not every part of the planet would experience increased wildfires, but they would increase in the Western U.S., southern Europe, India, central Asia, Siberia, southern Africa and Australia. In short, many regions we do research in and learn from
could experience dramatically negative impacts from increased wildfires due to climate change. Pechony and Shindell attempted to factor in and consider different variables affecting wildfire in their study, including human fire suppression and precipitation levels. By 2050, the primary factor in wildfires will no longer be human activity and suppression, as, at some point, temperatures rise so rapidly and the environment becomes so flammable that fire suppression efforts are no longer able to curb the increasing rate of wildfires. Warmer and drier conditions in the West over the past 30 years have already caused fuel loads to become more flammable, and the predictions of this model would be a continuance of this trend, according to Peter Hildebrand, director of the earth sciences directorate at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center. Hildebrand explained that as the earth warms, circulation systems change and the winter storm track is pushed further north, resulting in less precipitation, more evaporation, and higher temperatures in the Rocky Mountain West. (Brendon Bosworth, “Rocky Mountain Wildfires Set to Intensify?”, New West Development, June 12, 2011, http://www.newwest.net/topic/article/rocky_mountain_wildfires_past_and_present/C35/L35/; D. V. Spracklen, L. J. Mickley, J. A. Logan, R. C. Hudman, R. Yevich, M. D. Flannigan, and A. L. Westerling, “Impacts of climate change from 2000 to 2050 on wildfire activity and carbonaceous aerosol concentrations in the western United States”, Journal of Geophysical Research, vol. 114, 2009, http://ulmo.ucmerced.edu/pdfiles/09JGR_Spracklenetal.pdf).

Idaho and Montana Wolves lose Endangered Species Act protection – There has also been some very important national legislation and research regarding wildlife that is worth looking into. Firstly, in April, the U.S. Congress, for one of the first times ever, removed an endangered animal (partially) from the Endangered Species Act by legislative decree. This is something that is typically done only by federal agencies. This animal was the Gray Wolf (Canis lupus), and the removal applies to Montana and Idaho, two states that have had management issues with the wolves. As David Gabel notes, Congress choosing to act in this way could have dramatic effects downstream for how the Endangered Species List is managed. The legislation was part of the Continuing Budget Resolution agreed upon by Congress and the Obama administration. (David A Gabel, “Wolves Taken off the US Endangered Species List”, Environmental News Network, April 14, 2011, http://www.enn.com/wildlife/article/42584; Defenders of Wildlife, “Congress and administration sell out wolves on budget bill”, Press Release, April 09, 2011, http://www.defenders.org/newsroom/press_releases_folder/2011/04_09_2011_congress_and_administration_sell_out_wolves_on_budget_bill.php).

Atlantic Bluefin tuna put on government watch list – Also in wildlife news, the Atlantic Bluefin tuna has been labeled as a “species of concern” by the U.S. government, although it has not been listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act at this time. The government will be monitoring for impacts from the BP oil spill on this fish, which spawns in the Gulf of Mexico near the Deepwater Horizon spill, though so far there is no evidence of this harming the species. (Deborah Zabarenko, “Atlantic Bluefin tuna on U.S. environmental watch list”, Reuters, May 27, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/05/27/us-bluefin-tuna-idUSTRE74Q5ET20110527).

Bumblebees experience catastrophic declines – Bumblebees are another wildlife group of concern. Over the past few decades, several bumble bee populations in the U.S. have declined dramatically, with some species down to 4% of their original population. According to recent research, this is partially caused by low genetic diversity and pathogens, but the underlying cause is less certain. A recent report in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, which tracked eight bumble bee species for three years, found that four of the eight species had declined by up to 96%, and that their ranges had declined by 23-87%. These are obviously catastrophic declines, which is especially important since bumble bees are important pollinators for wild ecosystems as well as cultivated crops. Pollinator decline is now a global issue, and has raised concerns over global food production. (Morgan Erickson-Davis, “U.S. bumblebees experiencing significant declines”, mongabay.com, January 04, 2011, http://news.mongabay.com/2011/0104-morgan_bumblebee_decline.html).

Removal of Barred Owls to help Spotted Owls – Despite two decades of conservation efforts, spotted owls also continue to decline. Wildlife officials in the U.S. will be releasing a new plan in June to help reclaim their populations that may be very controversial: the removal of the closely related Barred owl. The Spotted Owl has not made a significant recovery since the federal government set aside many acres of forest for their protection in the controversial Pacific Northwest logging battles of the 1990’s. Biologists believe this is due to the invasion of their territory by the Barred Owl, originally from the eastern U.S. but in Washington for decades. The Fish and Wildlife Service hopes to deal with this challenge via “permanent removal” such as shooting. (Lauren Sommer, “Killing One Owl Species to Save Another”, National Public Radio, June 12 2011, http://www.npr.org/2011/06/12/137090033/killing-one-owl-species-to-save-another?ft=1&f=1025).

Bonneville Power Administration adjusts hydropower for salmon – The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), power giant of the northwestern U.S., is curtailing coal, natural gas and wind power production in the Pacific Northwest so that it can focus on increasing its hydropower output due to an unusually large snowpack this year. Allowing more water through the dams for hydropower at this time of high flow will allow for less water to spill over the dams. Spill-over water can be a serious threat to endangered salmon. Runoff has raised dissolved gas levels at eight federal dams to levels triggering action

Hottest summers will become average – At what point does climate change entirely alter our perception of what is ‘normal’ weather?  Noah Diffenbaugh, an assistant professor of environmental Earth system science at Stanford, will be publishing a study in June in the journal Climate Change, along with Martin Scherer, detailing the effect of global warming on the summers we experience. According to their projections, large portions of the planet will warm so quickly by the middle part of this century that even the coolest summers will be hotter than the hottest summers experienced in the past 50 years.  If greenhouse gases continue to increase, this level of warming will be reached in the tropics 20 years from now, and within Europe, China and the US 60 years from now. The model seems to fit very well with historical data.  (Tim Wall, “Extreme Heat the New Norm”, Discovery News, June 8, 2011, http://news.discovery.com/earth/extreme-heat-the-new-norm.html#mkpUser=rssnews1).

Mega-dam construction approved – Indigenous groups in Brazil may soon be threatened with displacement by what is best called a “mega-dam”.  Brazilian authorities have given their final approval to the Belo Monte dam, which has been a controversial project on environmental and indigenous rights grounds.  The dam will be on the Xingu River, one of the largest Amazon River tributaries.  It will cost $11 billion but generate more than 10% of Brazil’s current energy capacity when completed in 2019.  It is backed by Brazil’s National Development Bank as well as a number of private companies, such as the mining group Vale. The Brazilian government has said that this dam’s construction would displace 16,000 individuals, but some environmentalists have actually put their estimates at 40,000 displaced individuals.  (“Amazon mega-dam gets final approval, mongabay.com, June 01, 2011, http://news.mongabay.com/2011/0601-belo_monte_approval.html).  For the second time, at the end of September, a court ruling has blocked the construction of the Belo Monte Dam.  The first court ruling was overturned on appeal.  The late September court decision is on the grounds that the project would harm fishing by indigenous communities.  The decision will likely be appealed (“Brazil: Again, Court Ruling Halts Giant Amazon Dam,” The New York Times, September 29, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/30/world/americas/brazil-again-court-ruling-halts-giant-amazon-dam.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).

Rate of deforestation declines for world’s three largest forests – Many indigenous groups rely on tropical rainforests, which is often a concern given the large rate of deforestation.  It might hearten us to know that there has been some recent good news (albeit restrained) on this front.  The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recently reported that the rate of destruction of the world’s three largest forests (the Amazon Basin, Congo Basin, and Southeast Asia) has declined by 25% this decade compared with the previous one.  These forests make up 80% of the world’s tropical forests.  The rate of deforestation for these woodlands has fallen from 7.1 million hectares annually in the 1990’s to 5.4 million hectares from 2000 to 2010.  Congo Basin deforestation has remained stable but low, while Southeast Asia (specifically Borneo Mekong) deforestation has been cut in half.  Government policy and better conservation efforts have helped slow the deforestation rate.  This is inspiring news, although there was mixed news in the report as well.  The FAO reports author, Mette Wilkie, notes that a growing global demand for food, expected to rise 70% by 2050, will put increasing pressure on these forests.  Also sadly, only 3.5% of the forests surveyed in the report are classified as under effective forest management.  In the Amazon basin, deforestation is mainly for large scale farming and crop, in the Congo forests are cleared for small scale conversion, and there is a mixture of reasons East Asia forests are felled.  (Jonny Hogg, “Destruction of world’s biggest rainforests down 25 percent: FAO”, Reuters, June 1, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/01/us-world-forests-idUSTRE7507VH20110601).

Cambodians rally to prevent rainforest destruction – A recent protest in Cambodia, where locals dressed as “avatars” from the film Avatar, should interest us all as indigenous scholars.  It is an interesting commentary on how groups, fighting for their land, represent themselves in a globalized world.  In May, 200 Cambodians rallied in the city of Phnom Penh to protest rampant destruction of one of Southeast Asia’s last intact lowland rainforests, Prey Lang.  Prey Lang is thought to contain nearly a third of Cambodia’s remaining primary forest.  Protestors donned make-up and dress similar to that of James Cameron’s Avatar, a film about indigenous and environmental destruction on an alien planet, to gain media attention during their protest.  (For more information, see: Jeremy Hance, mongabay.com, “Photos; Cambodians rally as ‘Avatars’ to save one of the region’s last great rainforests”, May 31, 2011, http://news.mongabay.com/2011/0531_preylang_avatar.html).

Wildlife conservation in Namibia– This should be of interest to those of us studying community-based conservation: David A Gabel of ENN (Environmental News Network) recently had interesting observations about community-based wildlife conservation in southern Africa.  The nation of Namibia has many wildlife conservancies that are community-run, he writes, with local communities calculating their own annual budgets, listing threatened species, and recording interactions of the human and wildlife populations.  There are 64 of these community-based conservancies, covering about 17% of Namibia, more land than is contained in the state-run parks.  Economically speaking, these conservancies generate $40 million for the
Namibian economy due to trophy hunting and wildlife tours. This article notes that local people take pride in watching over “their” animals. Transferring ownership of wildlife conservation to the people may work so well in Namibia because of the low population density, but it is nonetheless a success story worth noting and applying in other areas. (David A Gabel, “Namibia Wildlife Conservation”, Environmental News Network, May 23, 2011, http://www.enn.com/wildlife/article/42730).

Paper released on effects of resource extraction on minority regions - The Unrepresented Peoples and Nations Organization (UNPO), which reports regularly to the UN, recently released an issue paper detailing the often devastating effects of resource extraction on minority communities. The report is entitled “Development of natural resources in minority regions” and is available at http://www.unpo.org/downloads/82.pdf. The 20 page document is an excellent read and of particular interest to those in AIDs and indigenous studies. On page 4, the paper says “Many minority populations occupy territories far from the centers of political and economic power, which are often the first places to be exploited for their resources given their lack of political power to oppose such actions”, a situation that many of us have seen in our work and which is likely to increase as resources become increasingly scarce. This issue paper details economic and human consequences of such resource extraction. For example, unregulated logging on Mapuche-occupied land in Chile, as well as in many areas throughout the world, causes heavy losses of forest cover, which in turn leads to landslides, flooding, and loss of that most precious of commodities for any resource-dependent community, soil. Such communities often lose access to forest-based medicine, grazing land, and wood. At the same time as they lose these resources, they do not share significantly in the economic profits of logging, thus causing them a double disadvantage. To add insult to injury, local groups are often blamed for deforestation in their areas although they have lived sustainably on the land for many years. Oil and mineral extraction are also significant issues affecting marginalized communities. For example, gold mining takes significant amounts of fresh water from local communities and can cause contamination by chemicals, including cyanide, and other effects on the mined land. The effects of mining have been disastrous for indigenous communities in the Philippines, ruining 20,000 hectares of agricultural land in one province. Indigenous and minority communities are at times displaced due to massive hydroelectric projects and other forms of resource extraction. There are even reports of violent intimidation and corruption against minority groups in resource-rich areas by companies doing the extraction. The paper then details some of the barriers to minority groups effectively participating in management of their resources. Some policy issues include: lack of minority representation in overarching governments, fear of reprisals for public organizing and lack of basic political freedoms, laws which promote disenfranchisement rather than protection of vulnerable groups, government corruption which ignores illegal resource extraction, access to judicial systems, and lack of land rights for groups living in an area. A solution often advocated for these problems is what is known as “Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.” The term implies a non-coerced and informed agreement to extraction by a community. However, as the report notes, and as may interest us as scholars, this term presumes a monolithic community with one opinion on resource use in their area, an ideal that simply may not be present for many minority and indigenous groups. The concept is further complicated by the fact of groups editing what they say out of fear of reprisal. He paper notes in summary “overall, the large-scale development of natural resources without the consent or participation of affected communities has been shown in many cases to further the economic marginalization and vulnerability of these communities” (Page 14). For the full report, visit: http://www.unpo.org/downloads/82.pdf (UNPO Office of the General Secretary, “Development of natural resources in minority regions”, issue paper released December 2010, http://www.unpo.org/downloads/82.pdf).

Droughts in the Amazon and climate change – A recent study published in the prestigious journal Science (Lewis, et al.) reveals that a 2010 drought in the Amazon basin was even greater than the 2005 drought, which was previously thought to be a once in a century event. It is thought that these droughts may be exacerbated by climate change caused by the anthropogenic release of greenhouse gases. Simon L. Lewis, primary author of the study, stated in an interview with the magazine The Ecologist that if this is so, and if these droughts occur three or more times a decade, it could start a vicious cycle of recurring droughts. This is how that would work: droughts cause massive tree die off, dead trees tot, and rotting trees release CO₂. In some of the largest forests in the world this would lead to large increases in CO₂ in the atmosphere. This would cause- more climate change and thus even worse droughts. In effect, the Amazon, long counted as a sink, or storage, for CO₂, could soon become a contributor instead. (Simon L. Lewis, Paulo M. Brando, Oliver L. Phillips, Geertje M. F. van der Heijden, and Daniel Nepstad, “The 2010 Amazon Drought”, Science 331(6017):554, February 04, 2011; Tom Levitt, “Is the Amazon heading towards a `tipping point' as a carbon sink?”, May 27th, 2011, http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/906660/is_the_amazon_heading_towards_a_tipping_point_as_a_carbon_sink.html).

China, US lead in CO₂ emissions as global emissions spike – Global emissions of CO₂ rose in 2010 at their fastest rate in over four decades, rising 5.9 percent to 30.6 billion tons annually, according to estimates by the
International Energy Agency. These sharp increases in emissions are happening at the same time as U.N. climate talks seem unlikely to produce a new, legally binding climate agreement before the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012. China is the largest emitter of CO₂ according to BP data, making up 8.33 billion tons of the emission total, or about a quarter of global emissions. Information released by BP shows China's CO₂ emissions have risen 10.4% in 2010 from 2009 levels, a sharp rate of increase. Meanwhile, the U.S. is the second largest emitter with a 4.1% increase last year, producing 6.14 billion tons annually. On the more positive side, researchers at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California, as well as other researchers, note that China could reach its maximum CO₂ output within two decades as its demand for appliances, buildings, and much industry become “saturated”. (Nina Chestney, “China's CO₂ emissions rose 10 percent in 2010: BP data”, Reuters, June 8, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/08/us-energy-bp-emissions-idUSTRE75728120110608; Chris Buckley, “China carbon emissions could peak by 2025-2030: U.S. study”, Reuters, April 29, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/29/us-china-climate-emissions-idUSTRE73S1VV20110429).

Increases in energy consumption worldwide - Global energy consumption and production continue to increase rapidly, with some of that growth from renewable sources and much of it from nonrenewable sources. Global coal consumption increased by 7.6% in 2010, its fastest growth in production since 2003. Coal accounts for about 29.6% of global energy consumption, which is actually an increase from 2010. In 2010, coal accounted for 25.6% of global energy consumption, according to BP data. China accounts for about 48.2% of the global coal use, and is also a rapidly increasing producer of coal power. Coal production is also increasing rapidly in the U.S. and Asia, though falling in the European Union. Meanwhile, hydroelectric power output is up 5.3%, nuclear power generation up 2%, biofuels production up 13.8%, and renewable power generation generally up 15.5%, in large part because of rapid growth in the wind power industry. Renewable energy accounts for about 1.8% of global energy consumption, an increase from 0.6% in 2000. (Nina Chestney, “China’s CO₂ emissions rose 10 percent in 2010: BP data”, Reuters, June 8, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/08/us-energy-bp-emissions-idUSTRE75728120110608).

Costs of lax air pollution regulations in China - A recently released study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change shows that the effect of lax air quality legislation the economy in China has been dramatic - due to losses in worker productivity, sick days, etc. It focused specifically on air quality laws for ozone and particulate matter. The study modeled economic losses from 1975 to 2005, and estimated these losses at $122 billion to China's economy by 2005. This damage equals about 6-9% of Chinese GDP. Similarly, studies by the World Bank have found that air pollution has caused China damages of up to 4-5% of its GDP between 1995 and 2005. This should be a case in point for us as we work upon and decide national air pollution standards. (Allison Crimmins, Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change, “The price of fresh air: How costly are the health damages from air pollution in China?” June 6, 2011, http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2011/the-price-of-fresh-air.html).

World Overview

The International Crisis Group (ICG), “CrisisWatch” N°97, September 1, 2011, found, “Anti-regime protests continued across Syria despite increased crackdowns on the major flashpoint cities. Security forces, including tanks, snipers and navy gunboats were mobilized against protests in Latakia, Daraa, Damascus, Homs, Deir el-Zour and elsewhere. Over two thousand deaths have been reported since the unrest erupted in mid-March. The UN Human Rights Commissioner recommended that the Security Council consider referring the situation to the International Criminal Court on the basis of possible crimes against humanity. The international community condemned the violence, with the U.S. and EU calling for President Bashar Assad to step down. The month saw a breakthrough in Libya, where rebels have gained control of most of the west of the country. They seized key towns including Zlitan and Zawiya, took most of Tripoli on 21 August and launched an offensive towards the remaining regime stronghold of Sirte. The Transitional National Council reported hundreds killed during the battle for Tripoli. Evidence suggesting mass executions by pro-regime forces also surfaced. In Turkey the Kurdish PKK rebel group launched a wave of attacks against security forces in the southeast of the country, killing some 30 security personnel over the month. In retaliation the Turkish military bombarded PKK bases in northern Iraq, claiming it killed more than 150 rebels. The government has vowed a saying “The time for words is over. Now is the time for actions”. The situation remains tense in the north of Kosovo after the crisis that erupted in late July, when attempts by Kosovo special police to take control of two border gates with Serbia prompted a violent response from local Serbs. Kosovo's government has promised further actions to enforce its sovereignty in the Serb-held north. Observers fear violent reprisals by local Serbs if Pristina attempts to impose its institutions without prior agreement. Violence in the north could provoke ethnic Albanian reprisals against Serb communities elsewhere in Kosovo. CrisisWatch identifies a conflict risk alert for Kosovo for the coming month. In Nigeria's capital
Abuja, 23 people were killed and dozens injured in a car bomb attack on the UN headquarters on 26 August. Radical Islamist sect Boko Haram, which is behind an ongoing campaign of attacks on civilians and security forces in the north, claimed responsibility. Officials have named as a suspect a man with alleged links to al-Qaeda. 

Violence escalated still further in Mexico. At least 52 people were killed in an arson attack on a casino in Monterrey on 25 August. Five suspected members of a drug cartel have been arrested in connection with the attack.” ICG found: 

**Deteriorated Situations:** Mexico, Nigeria, Syria, and Turkey; **Improved Situation:** Libya; and **Unchanged Situations:** Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China (internal), Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, DR Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India (internal), Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar/Burma, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Nepal, Niger, North Caucasus (Russia), North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, Somaliland, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

Looking back over the proceeding three months, International Crisis Group (ICG), CrisisWatch N°94, June 1, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/crisiswatch/2011/crisiswatch-94.aspx, reports, “Amid mounting tensions between North and South Sudan over the disputed border area of Abyei, clashes broke out between the two sides at the beginning of the month. Northern Sudanese forces invaded Abyei on 20 May and asserted control in breach of existing peace agreements. Tens of thousands are reported to have fled south. The attacks threaten renewed conflict and weaken confidence between North and South as critical post-referendum arrangements remain unresolved. Tensions also increased over military control and the presence of armed forces in the transitional areas of Blue Nile and South Kordofan, and CrisisWatch identifies a conflict risk alert for North Sudan for the coming month. Violence escalated further in Yemen, where military forces loyal to President Saleh battled on several fronts, renewing fears that the continued political stalemate could erupt into civil war. Saleh reneged on signing a political transition plan for the third time, despite months of anti-regime protests. In the southern city of Taiz security forces cleared the site of the country's largest anti-regime sit-in, killing dozens. Government forces shelled the coastal town of Zinjibar after it was seized by Islamic militants emboldened by the growing security vacuum. CrisisWatch identifies a conflict risk alert for Yemen for the coming month. President Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria continued to use troops and tanks to violently suppress the ongoing revolt, with hundreds of protesters feared killed, thousands detained, and widespread reports of torture. The international community condemned the violence, with the EU and U.S. both expanding sanctions against the regime. The government maintains that the uprising is the work of Islamic extremists and armed gangs. In Pakistan, the U.S. killing of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad at the beginning of the month again raised questions about the military's possible involvement with jihadist groups. Despite strong denials from the army leadership, intelligence service and the government of any knowledge of bin Laden's whereabouts, the incident has worsened already tense relations with the U.S., and undermined the state's credibility domestically. Following the killing, the Taliban launched a string of high-profile attacks that have killed hundreds, including an assault on Karachi's Mehran naval base on 22 May. Local elections in Albania on 8 May proved even more troubled than anticipated as the race for the Tirana mayor's seat ended deep within the margin of error. Uncertainty over the outcome, and a controversial recount which saw incumbent mayor Edi Rama of the opposition Socialist Party stripped of his initial lead, fuelled tensions between the sides. In Guatemala, the Mexican Los Zetas cartel killed and decapitated 27 farm workers in the northern Petén department. The incident caused the government to declare a state of siege and send troops into Petén, and has again highlighted the growing influence of Mexican drug gangs in the country. In Serbia, war crimes fugitive Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb military leader accused of commanding the Srebrenica massacre and the siege of Sarajevo during the 1992-95 Bosnian war, was arrested after 16 years on the run. He was extradited to The Hague, where he will stand trial for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. His arrest was welcomed across the Balkans and internationally as a major step towards post-war reconciliation and integration for the region, and removes a major obstacle to Serbia's progress on EU accession. In Colombia, the Senate approved the Victims Law on 25 May, with full ratification expected shortly. The law provides land or financial compensation to more than four million victims of violence at the hands of paramilitaries, guerrillas or state security forces, and was hailed by the full political spectrum as a major step towards peace and reconciliation. The situation also improved in Honduras, where a deal allowing the return of former President Manuel Zelaya, ousted in the 2009 coup, raised hopes of ending the country's international isolation.” In May 2011 ICG noted as deteriorated situations: Albania, Guatemala, Pakistan, Sudan (Northern), Sudan (South), Syria, and Yemen; with improved situations in Colombia, Honduras, and Serbia. Declared unchanged situations were Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Basque Country (Spain), Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India (non-Kashmir), Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo,
The International Crisis Group (ICG), CrisisWatch N°95, July 1, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/crisiswatch/2011/crisiswatch-95.aspx, found, “Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) moved into North Sudan’s South Kordofan state capital Kadugli at the start of the month, triggering large-scale fighting with Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) units from the region. The UN reported heavy bombardment of villages by the SAF, widespread civilian casualties and at least 73,000 people forced to flee. It also accused the government of blocking aid deliveries and intimidating peacekeepers. Violence spilled over into South Sudan, with several villages bombed by the North. On 28 June the government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (North) signed an agreement on political and security arrangements for South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. The SAF clashed again with South Sudanese forces around Abyei. According to the UN, nearly 100 civilians have been killed and almost 100,000 displaced in Abyei since early May. In Afghanistan, a standoff between parliament and President Hamid Karzai threatens to deepen the country’s political crisis. On 23 June a controversial special tribunal set up by Karzai ruled that the victories of 62 MPs in last September’s parliamentary elections should be reversed due to fraud. Critics see this as a move by Karzai to fill the legislature with his own supporters. Parliament responded with votes of no confidence in several Supreme Court judges and pressed for the Attorney-General’s resignation. In the same month that U.S. President Barack Obama announced plans to withdraw 33,000 U.S. troops by September 2012, the Taliban struck in the heart of Kabul with an assault on the Intercontinental Hotel on 29 June that left 19 dead, including eight civilians. Myanmar/Burma saw its worst clashes since 2009, as fighting broke out between government forces and the Kachin ceasefire group. Tens of thousands have been displaced and some 20 reportedly killed. In Mexico, a number of incidents highlighted the deterioration in security around Monterrey, the country’s second city, industrial hub and capital of Nuevo León state. On a single day, 15 June, some 33 people were killed in drug-related violence, including two bodyguards of Nuevo León’s governor Rodrigo Medina. Almost 800 people have been killed in Monterrey this year, already topping the total death toll for 2010: an alarming development given the region was considered just a few years ago a relatively violence-free model for Mexico. In Venezuela, speculation about President Hugo Chávez’s health intensified, leading to infighting within his ruling PSUV party and highlighting the country’s lack of alternative leadership. Having been largely absent from the public since a 10 June medical operation in Cuba, Chávez at the end of the month confirmed that he had undergone surgery to remove a cancerous tumor, further adding to uncertainty over the country’s political future. A series of prison riots in which at least 20 inmates were killed were the latest manifestation of a chronic problem - conditions in the country’s penal system - long neglected by the government. Proposals by Senegal’s ruling party to amend the constitution were condemned by opposition politicians as undemocratic and sparked unprecedented violent protests. President Abdoulaye Wade quickly withdrew the proposals, but criticism continues over his controversial plans to run for a third term in 2012. Further unrest at the end of the month, sparked by prolonged power cuts, saw angry protesters attack government buildings in two cities.” ICG declared as deteriorated situations Afghanistan, Mexico, Myanmar/Burma, Senegal, Sudan (North), Sudan (South),and Venezuela, and found no improved situations. Seem as unchanged situations were” Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Cyprus, DR Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, India (non-Kashmir), Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Libya, Macedonia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Caucasus (Russia), North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Somaliland, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Western Sahara, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

The International Crisis Group (ICG), CrisisWatch N°96, August 1, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/crisiswatch/2011/crisiswatch-96.aspx, Finds that Syria continued to be a major conflict situation, as, “Scores were killed in Syria as security forces backed by tanks launched an assault on the restive central city of Hama and other towns and cities, at the end of a month which saw hundreds of thousands take to the streets as daily anti-regime protests continued to spread. Syrian rights groups reported that more than 1,600 people have been killed and at least 12,000 arrested since the unrest began in March. In Yemen violence escalated in Arhab, a mountainous area northeast of the capital Sanaa, where at least 40 were killed at the end of the month in clashes between government forces and armed tribesmen loyal to the opposition. Sanaa is divided roughly between troops of general Ali Mohsen in the northwest, tribesmen loyal to the al-Ahmars in parts of the north, and forces loyal to Saleh in the southeast and southwest. Both pro-Saleh and anti-Saleh forces are preparing positions in the capital for a potential confrontation. The UN declared a state of famine in Somalia’s Bakool and Lower Shabelle regions, both controlled by Islamist militant group Al-Shabaab, following the worst drought in half a century and protracted instability. Tens of thousands have fled the worst hit parts of the South, while aid agencies are hampered by restrictions imposed on operating in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas. Al-Shabaab dismissed the scale of famine and the UN’s
announced as "sheer propaganda", but its position on aid deliveries appears confused. There were hopes for political reconciliation in Burundi, as opposition parties welcomed President Pierre Nkurunziza's 30 June Independence Day speech inviting opposition leaders to return from exile and resume talks with the government. However, the month also saw an upsurge in violence. Attacks by armed groups against the police and ruling CNDD-FDD party officials intensified, mainly in former rebel National Liberation Forces (FNL) strongholds, but also in the capital and the south of the country. In Malawi security forces used live ammunition to disperse thousands of anti-government protesters from 20–21 July, leaving at least eighteen people dead. Fears have mounted over the possibility of further repression as President Mutharika, having initially responded with calls for calm and peaceful dialogue, later accused opposition leaders of treason and blamed them for the violence. At least one presidential guard was killed on 19 July during two separate attacks on the home of Guinea's President Alpha Condé. Security forces arrested 38 people in connection with the attacks, including 25 military personnel. Most of those arrested have links with former junta leader Sekouba Konaté. Ethnic violence flared in Pakistan's second city and commercial hub Karachi, leaving more than 200 people dead. July was the deadliest month in decades for clashes between supporters of the mainly Pashtun Awami National Party and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, representing the Urdu-speaking majority. The government deployed thousands of paramilitary troops to regain control of the city and launched a "peace campaign" towards the end of the month, but rights groups claimed it was not doing enough to prevent further violence. In Afghanistan, the Taliban stepped up their assassination campaign against government officials and key allies of President Hamid Karzai. Ahmed Wali Karzai, the president's half-brother and influential governor of volatile Kandahar province, was killed by his own bodyguard on 12 July, while the mayor of Kandahar city and a top adviser to the president died in separate suicide attacks later in the month. Analysts warned the killings could leave a potentially dangerous power vacuum in the south. The assassinations came as the UN reported that the civilian war-related death toll in Afghanistan for 2011 has been the highest at any point since the 2001 invasion. Tensions soared in Kosovo late month after Kosovo special police attempted to take control of two customs posts in the north to enforce a new ban on imports from Serbia, triggering a violent response from Kosovo Serbs. A police officer was shot dead during clashes on 26 July, and the next day some 200 Serbs attacked and set fire to a border security post and fired at NATO KFOR forces. KFOR sent reinforcements to take control of the two posts. For July 2011 ICG designated as Deteriorated Situations Afghanistan, Burundi, Guinea, Kosovo, Malawi, Pakistan, Somalia, and Syria; found no Improved Situations: while indicated as unchanged situations: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China (internal), Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Djibouti, DR Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India (non-Kashmir), Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Macedonia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar/Burma, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Caucasus (Russia), North Korea, Philippines, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Somaliland, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Western Sahara, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

The United Nations annual report, titled "Peoples Under Threat", finds that armed conflicts are causing an unprecedented number of civilian deaths and injuries, many of them intentional and violations of human rights punishable by the International Criminal Court. – Afghanistan has suffered the greatest rise of any country in civilian in 2010, according to a new report by the London-based Minority Rights Group International (MRG), with the number of civilian deaths having increased every year of the last five. And the 2011 total is expected to exceed the 3,000 civilians killed in 2010. 75% of those killing were at the hands of the Taliban or other anti-government forces, many by suicide bombing, assassination or terror attacks. Of the 440 civilian killings ascribed to pro-government forces, according to the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, including and U.S. and NATO forces, over 170 were killed in air attacks. Briefing the Security Council Tuesday, U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos offered higher of 7,000 civilians were killed and injured in Afghanistan in 2010, an increase of 19% over 2009, with anti-government elements reportedly responsible for over 5,000 of those deaths and injuries. Military operations by pro-government forces accounted for some 800 civilian casualties. The MRG study also found civilian deaths have increased in Côte d'Ivoire, Yemen, Kyrgyzstan and Libya. Amos said she was appalled at the violence leveled against civilians in Bahrain, Yemen and recently Syria, and at the loss of life and other human rights violations. Other countries where civilians have borne the brunt of the attacks include Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Colombia, the Central African Republic and Sri Lanka, where 40,000 civilians "may have died in the final stages of the conflict" in May 2009. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened investigation into crimes committed in some of these nations, and also in Libya, following referral of the situation by the Security Council in February. Amos warned the Security Council that when it comes to protecting civilians in the conduct of hostilities, "The picture is stark and it will remain so in the absence of determined efforts by parties to conflict to comply with the law." As those reports made clear, aside from the fundamental responsibility of the parties to conflict themselves, the Security Council has a responsibility to promote compliance, she noted. First, by using all available opportunities to condemn violations and to remind parties of, and demand compliance with, their obligations. Second,
by applying targeted sanctions against the leadership of parties that routinely violate their obligations to respect civilians. And third, by promoting accountability, including by mandating commissions of inquiry to examine situations where concerns exist regarding serious violations, with a view to identifying the perpetrators and ensuring their prosecution at the national level, or referring the situation to the ICC (Thalif Deen, “Armed Conflicts Claim Unprecedented Number of Civilians,” Service, Thursday, May 12, 2011, http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2011/05/12-6).

In world of huge transnational corporations, larger in wealth than many nations, large and often international security firms, and nations whose revenues from extraction are proportionally large for their populations (though in other instances as well), mercenaries are a notable element in the current world. In Afghanistan and Iraq, private security forces have been huge, and not being controlled by any military have often been a problem – recently leading the Afghan government to move to phase them out. In the U.S., during hurricane private security officers acted as police – but without the public supervision of police – some of whom were alleged to have acted very improperly, and during the Bush administration there were concerns that perhaps 50,000 mercenaries, many of them foreign, might be contracted to support border patrolling, creating a potential threat to democracy if they then might be used for crowd control or to quell protests.

Currently, in Libya, Qadafi has augmented his own forces with mercenaries, while in the United Arab Emirates Backwater Founder Erik Prince, allegedly with $529 million from the oil sheikdom, has established an 800-member battalion of foreign troops is intended to conduct special operations missions inside and outside the country, defend oil pipelines and skyscrapers from terrorist attacks and put down internal revolts. Such troops could be deployed if the Emirates faced unrest in their crowded labor camps, were challenged by pro-democracy protests such as those sweeping the Arab world this year, or were threatened from abroad by such powers as Iran (Mark Maxxetti and Emily B. Hager, “Secret Desert Force Set Up by Backwater’s Founder,” The New York Times, May 14, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/world/middleeast/15prince.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).

While there are some legitimate uses of such security forces, particularly if they are properly and sufficiently legally controlled, their extensive use raises many issues including providing openings for human rights abuses, increasing the ability of regimes – or private parties – to suppress legitimate protest and expression, and the direct suppression of democracy. As anyone who reads Machiavelli’s Prince knows, this also has the potential for coups de tete, and short of that, for undo influence. Similarly, there is the increasing possibility of the use of private armies by mining, drilling and development companies to illegally take land and protect highly improper and greatly damaging operations to people and the environment.


Scott Shane and Thom Shanker, “Strike Reflects U.S. Shift to Drones in Terror Fight,” The New York Times, October 1, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/02/world/awlaki-strike-shows-us-shift-to-drones-in-terror-fight.html?ref=world, notes, “C.I.A. drone strike that killed Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born propagandist for Al Qaeda’s rising franchise in Yemen, was one more demonstration of what American officials describe as a cheap, safe and precise tool to eliminate enemies. It was also a sign that the decade-old American campaign against terrorism has reached a turning point. Disillusioned by huge costs and uncertain outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Obama administration has decisively embraced the drone, along with small-scale lightning raids like the one that killed Osama bin Laden in May, as the future of the fight against terrorist networks.”

Advances in laser technology that might allow them to be used to easily convert ordinary uranium into sufficiently enriched uranium for nuclear fuel or bomb grade material have created a concern that terrorists might soon have easier access to either atomic bombs or dirty bombs (conventional explosives that can spread highly radioactive material) (William J. Broad, “Laser Advances Raise Fears of Terrorist Nuclear Ability,” The New York Times, August 21, 2011).

With increasing world wide problems with computer hacking, in May, the Obama administration proposed the creation of an international computer security standards with penalties for countries and organizations violating the standards. While no nation was specifically mentioned, several administration officials said privately that the hope was that the initiative would pressure China and Russia into allowing more Internet freedom, cracking down on intellectual property theft and enacting stricter laws to protect computer users’ privacy. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke stated, “The effort to build trust in the cyberspace realm is one which should be pushed in capitals around the world,” The approach calls for officials from the State Department, the Pentagon, the Justice Department, the Commerce Department and the

Piracy off the West African Coast by Nigeria and Benin have escalated, approaching the levels of often far flung piracy originating from Somalia, with the International Martine Bureau reporting 18 such attacks in the first six months of 2011, and there were probably more that are unreported involving ships carrying illegal cargoes (“Nigeria, Piracy Rises off West Africa,” The New York Times, August 12, 2011).

The United Nations refugee agency, “2010 Global Trends” report, made public in mid-June, that as of last year, 43.7 million people around the world had been forcibly displaced from their homes by conflict or persecution, the highest number in 15 years. 80% of refugees were being sheltered in the world's poorest countries, and the agency warned that they could not continue to shoulder the burden unaided. The agency’s said that Pakistan, Iran and Syria were the world’s biggest hosts of refugees, sheltering three million people among them, 1.9 million in Pakistan alone. The industrialized country with the largest refugee population was Germany, hosting 594,000 people. António Guterres, the United Nations high commissioner for refugees, stated, “Fears about supposed floods of refugees in industrialized countries are being vastly overblown or mistakenly conflated with issues of migration. It’s poorer countries that are left having to pick up the burden.” He urged industrialized nations to address the imbalance by increasing the number of people they accept. For 2010, the refugee agency estimated that 747,000 places were required for people in need of resettlement; the 22 countries that accept such refugees, led by the United States, Canada, Australia, Sweden and Norway, took in 98,000 people. The agency estimated that 805,000 places would be needed in 2011. In 2010, 7.2 million people had been in exile for five years or longer, the highest level since 2001. That number was so high because of the length of the conflicts, which prevented people from returning to their homes. Only 197,600 refugees returned home last year. Guterres’s office said the number of refugees registered with it and the agency for Palestinian refugees was 15.4 million in 2010. Another 27.5 million people were displaced by conflict within their own countries’ borders, the highest level in a decade (Aroline Brothers, “U.N. Reports Steady Rise of Refugees,” The New York Times, June 19, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/20/world/20refugee.html?ref=todayspaper).

The Council of Europe’s rights commissioner, Thomas Hammarberg, noting that the 10-year anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks was a moment to analyze whether the official responses have been proper and effective, commented “in attempting to combat crimes attributed to terrorists, countless further crimes have been committed in the course of the U.S.-led ‘global war on terror,’ many of those crimes have been carefully and deliberately covered up.” The 47-nation Council of Europe believes that more than a dozen European nations colluded, sometimes by allowing use of their airports or air space, in the C.I.A.’s rendition program, which involved capturing suspects and sending them to third-party countries for questioning in secret prisons. (“Official Blasts Antiterror Actions,” The New York Times, September 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/02/world/europe/02briefs-Europe.html?ref=todayspaper).


The continued political turmoil in Greece, as of mid June (and still in September, plus fiscal problems in Spain and Italy, following government attempts to tighten budgets amidst continuing economic crisis, combined with financial problems in several other European countries, have left continued uncertainty in the international economy, which combined with a slow down in the economic recovery, with continuing high unemployment in the United States, leave open the possibility of further economic, and thus social and political crisis, around the globe. As of September 2, overall economic data seemed to indicate continued very slow growth in the United States, with a mix of positive and negative economic indicators. One of the indications of U.S. economic slow down is that job growth was zero in August, 2011. With the Republicans resisting any large scale stimulus spending, which history shows has been necessary to pull out of deep recessions and depressions in a short to medium period, unemployment is likely to continue high in the U.S., while several economies in Europe and Asia have slowed in their growth. In early October, as Greece was having trouble making payments on its debt, even as China’s economy had cooled, there were indications that Europe might drop into a double dip recession that would spread to the rest of the world, likely bringing social and political problems and increased unrest (Rachel Donadio, “Greek Turmoil Raises Fears of Instability Around Europe,” The New York Times, June 16, 2011,
Bad economies, lack of jobs, food inflation, bad government economic related policies, and other economic related issues have ranged from being major factors to primary issues in demonstrations, unrest and revolutions across the world in recent months. The Arab spring, which involved many issues at its starts in various countries, including opposition to oppressive authoritarian governments, was largely catalyzed by economic problems – most obvious in Egypt where the labor movement and a number of critical strikes played a major role in the democracy movement. Israel has experienced a major protest, or “tent” movement, on economic and related social issues since summer began. Several places in Sub-Saharan Africa have also experienced protests and violence because of the bad economy, including Malawi, which had a largely peaceful decade ended with rioting and a harsh crackdown. Greece has experienced many demonstrations and much unrest over government austerity policies required for bailouts to keep the country from defaulting on loans. Britain has had serious riots related to high unemployment and cut back of government programs, and there have been demonstrations elsewhere in Europe, even in Germany. The United States saw massive demonstrations in Madison Wisconsin (and to a lesser extent in other states) responding to anti union legislation put forth by Republican Governors in the context of state budget crunches, supported by many demonstrations elsewhere, while there have been nation wide demonstrations against cut backs and layoffs in the U.S. post office, and, as of October 1, for two weeks there has been an ongoing “take over” of Wall Street, which is ongoing, with a major union supported march in New York and local demonstrations around the U.S. in support. All of this comes out of demonstrations around the U.S. that began with the Madison Wisconsin protest of to the anti Union legislation, which also authorized privatizing Wisconsin’s state owned electric power plants and placing restrictions on public schools (see Ongoing Activities, above). In many places in Latin America, Asia and the Pacific there are massive resistances, by Indigenous Peoples and others, to extracting, land grabs, and development projects, including dams, while some of those nations have experienced protests on other economic related issues. (In addition to reports elsewhere in this and past issues of NCJ, for example see in The New York Times: Rachel Donadio and Scott Sayare, “Violent Clashes in the Streets of Athens,” June 30, 2011 N.R. Kleinfield and Cara Buckley, “Wall Street Occupiers, Protesting Till Whenever,” September 30, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/national/wall-street-occupiers-protesting-till-whenever.html?ref=todayspaper; and on Indigenous resistance see the issues of Indigenous Policy, primarily the On Going Activities and Developments sections, www.indigenouspolicy.org).

UNICEF and the World Health Organization reported, September 15, 2011, 12,000 fewer children under 5 years of age perish daily in 2010 than in 1990, as the number of children under five years of age dying each year declined from more than 12 million in 1990 to 7.6 million in 2010, and from 88 deaths per 1,000 live births to 57. An annual report on child mortality found that in sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the highest number of under-five deaths in the world, the speed at which the under-five mortality rate is declining doubled from 1.2% a year during 1990-2000 to 2.4% a year during 2000-2010. Unfortunately, this rate of progress is still insufficient to meet the UN Millennium Development Goal 4 (MDG4), which calls for a two-thirds reduction in the under-five mortality rate by 2015. For more information on child mortality estimates visit: http://inside.unicefusa.org/site/?r=i=euNKL6sep6SYn1KpzeWg.

Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan

A statement, September 1, 2011, by the head of Iran’s atomic energy agency, Fereydoon Abbasi, about Iran moving its nuclear fuel production program and increasing its output, supports Western intelligence findings that Iran is moving its most critical nuclear fuel production to a heavily defended underground military facility outside the holy city of Qum, where it will be less vulnerable to attack from the air and, perhaps, the kind of cyber attack that crippled its nuclear program. Western intelligence agencies believe that Iran is speeding up its program of developing atomic weapons. Inspectors of the International Atomic Agency stated, September 2, that Iran had begun to put into operation new equipment that would speed its nuclear enrichment program. The inspectors said they did not believe this equipment would be used immediately to make bomb grade
balances in the state system giving ammunition against corruption has eroded as a result, and this, together with troubling authoritarian tendencies, is that already have brought down three regimes in the region. The government's credibility in the fight for political advantage and intimidating critics to prevent a replication of government has exacerbated the problem by interfering in anti

This, in turn, has contributed yet in the meantime, it has allowed corruption to become entrenched and spread throughout its institutions.

The state appears to be consolidating by reducing violence sufficiently to allow for a semblance of normalcy.

In Iran's first counterproposal in two years to ease the confrontation with the West over its nuclear program, Fereydoon Abbasi, the head of Iran's atomic energy agency, offered, September 4, 2011, to allow international inspectors “full supervision” of the country's nuclear activities for the next five years, on the condition that the increasing sanctions against Iran are lifted. It is not clear what, “full supervision” means, but the offer is a starting point for negotiations, if Tehran will engage in them seriously (David E. Sanger, “Easing Stance, Iran Offers Inspectors ‘Supervision’ of Nuclear Program,” The New York Times, September 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/world/middleeast/06iran.html?ref=todayspaper).

While political difficulties in the Iraqi government have been continuing, the security situation has been deteriorating, particularly with an increase in suicide bombings across the country, in August, inflicting deaths and injuries and raising fears of failing security as U.S. troops move towards completing their withdrawal by the end of the year (Michael S. Schmidt and Durais Adnan, “28 Are Killed in Bombing at a Mosque in Baghdad,” The New York Times, August 28, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/29/world/middleeast/29iraq.html?ref=todayspaper). However, September was the first month since the U.S. Iraq invasion that there have been no U.S. military deaths, in large part because of an Iraqi crackdown on Shiite militias following great pressure from the U.S. to do so (Michael S. Schmidt “Iraq War Marks First Month With No U.S. Military Deaths,” The New York Times, August 31, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/01/world/middleeast/01iraq.html?r=1&ref=todayspaper).

A paper, “Casualties in civilians and coalition soldiers from suicide bombings in Iraq, 2003–10: a descriptive study” in the British journal, The Lancet, September 1, 2011, http://www.thelancet.com/themed-911 found that more than 12,000 Iraqis have been killed in at least 1,000 suicide attacks since the U.S.-led invasion. The paper is part of a series by the London-based medical journal on the health consequences of the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, which set off wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in which suicide bombings have become common, as they have in Pakistan.


Meanwhile, on the political side progress in Iraq has been difficult and extremely slow. Michael S. Schmidt and Tim Arango, “Bitter Feud Between Top Iraqi Leaders Stalls Government,” June 25, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/26/world/middleeast/26iraq.html?ref=todayspaper, wrote, “Fifteen months after an election that was supposed to lay the groundwork for Iraq’s future, the government remains virtually paralyzed by a clash between the country’s two most powerful politicians, who refuse to speak to each other. The paralysis is contributing to a rise in violence, and it is severely complicating negotiations on the most difficult and divisive question hanging over the country: Whether to ask the United States to keep a contingency force here after the scheduled withdrawal of American troops at the end of the year. The longer the deadlock persists, the harder it becomes for the American military to reverse or slow the withdrawal of the roughly 48,000 troops, the pace of which will pick up over the next few months.”

The International Crisis Group (ICG), “Failing Oversight: Iraq’s Unchecked Government,” Middle East Report N°113, September 26, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-syria-lebanon/iraq/113-failing-oversight-iraqs-unchecked-government.aspx, warned, “After years of uncertainty, conflict and instability, the Iraqi state appears to be consolidating by reducing violence sufficiently to allow for a semblance of normalcy. Yet in the meantime, it has allowed corruption to become entrenched and spread throughout its institutions. This, in turn, has contributed to a severe decay in public services. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s government has exacerbated the problem by interfering in anti-corruption cases, manipulating investigations for political advantage and intimidating critics to prevent a replication of the type of popular movements that already have brought down three regimes in the region. The government’s credibility in the fight against corruption has eroded as a result, and this, together with troubling authoritarian tendencies, is giving ammunition to the prime minister’s critics. To bolster its faltering legitimacy, Maliki’s government will have to launch a vigorous anti-corruption campaign, improve service delivery and create checks and balances in the state system. As violence spread following the 2003 U.S. invasion, the state suffered in equal measure to
the general population. In an environment of escalating kidnappings, explosions and assassinations, public services were thoroughly devastated. In the wake of the dramatic February 2006 Samarra bombing, entire ministries were empty, as officials dared not travel to work. Longstanding projects were abandoned overnight. Judges and parliamentarians found they had become targets. Oversight agencies, which should have been less exposed to risk because of their lack of direct contact with the general population, were forced to roll back their operations, leaving state institutions without effective safeguards against corruption or abuse. As a result, state output declined dramatically for a number of years, even as the annual budget steadily increased due to elevated oil prices. The state’s paralysis contributed to the proliferation of criminal elements and vested interests throughout the bureaucracy. By 2009, a combination of factors allowed the state to reassert itself. The U.S. surge (2007-2009) was an important initial factor in improving security, but insofar as institutions were concerned, the rebuilt security forces sufficiently enhanced safety to enable officials to go back to work without protection or assistance from the U.S. military. Today judges are protected by interior ministry forces. The Council of Representatives (parliament) is reliant solely on local police and private contractors for its security. The state has resumed most of its functions. Despite this improved environment, public services continue to be plagued by severe deficiencies, notably widespread corruption, which spread like a virus throughout state institutions during the years of lawlessness that prevailed until 2008. One of the major causes of this depressing state of affairs is the state’s failing oversight framework, which has allowed successive governments to operate unchecked. The 2005 constitution and the existing legal framework require a number of institutions – the Board of Supreme Audit, the Integrity Commission, the Inspectors General, parliament and the courts – to monitor government operations. Yet, none of these institutions has been able to assert itself in the face of government interference, intrinsigence and manipulation, a deficient legal framework and ongoing threats of violence. These factors have caused senior officials to resign, including most notably the head of the Integrity Commission on 9 September 2011. Even civil society organizations – confronted by government intimidation in the form of anonymous threats, arrests of political activists and violence, including police brutality – have proved incapable of placing a check on government. Although the perpetrators have yet to be found, the killing on 9 September 2011 of a prominent journalist and leading organizer of weekly protests against government corruption has contributed to rising fears of the Maliki government’s authoritarian streak. The current oversight framework was established by the U.S. Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in 2004. The CPA enacted a number of ill-considered reforms from the start. It stripped the Board of Supreme Audit, previously Iraq’s only such institution, of significant powers, including the exclusive authority to oversee public procurement and refer suspected corruption cases to the courts. The CPA transferred that authority to the Integrity Commission, an institution established in 2004 to act as the focal point for all anti-corruption activities. Despite having overcome serious threats to its existence in its early years, the Commission to this day cannot carry out its investigations independently, as a result of staffing problems and restricted access to certain government departments. It has, therefore, been dependent on the Inspectors General, another CPA-established institution that has placed auditors and investigators in all ministries and other state institutions. However, due to a seriously deficient legal and administrative framework, that institution has been incapable of organizing its work and remains one of the most underperforming state entities. The Council of Representatives, the most important body in the new oversight framework as it holds the key to reform in all areas of governance, is perhaps the most ineffective of all. Its inner workings are hopelessly sectarian, and its bylaws are so cumbersome and deficient that it has been incapable of enacting long-overdue legislation designed to repair the damage caused to state institutions since 2003. Moreover, as a result of the delicate political balances struck following both the December 2005 and March 2010 elections, which saw the rise of broad coalition governments deprived of a real parliamentary opposition, the Council has been unable to exercise effective oversight on government, for fear it might upset the political alliances that undergird it. Meanwhile, the judicial system (in particular the Federal Supreme Court, supposedly the arbiter of all constitutional disputes) has been highly vulnerable to political pressure. It decided a number of high-profile disputes in a way that gave the Maliki government a freer hand to govern as it pleases, unrestrained by institutional checks. The impact is palpable: billions of dollars have been embezzled from state coffers, owing mostly to gaps in public procurement; parties treat ministries like private bank accounts; and nepotism, bribery and embezzlement thrive. Partly as a result, living standards languish, even paling in comparison with the country’s own recent past. This applies to practically all aspects of life, including the health, education and electricity sectors, all of which underperform despite marked budget increases. Also of great concern has been the deterioration in environmental conditions, especially an alarming increase in dust storms and desertification. Pervasive corruption has impeded the state’s capacity to deal with these problems. If corruption has taken root, it is not because of a lack of opportunities for reform. Technical experts have excelled in presenting workable proposals, but almost none have been adopted. Because of its deficient framework, and also because of government obstruction, parliament has been unable to pass any of the legislative reforms that have been on the table since at least 2007. These include, among others, a law that would force political parties to disclose their financial interests; rules that would improve the oversight institution’s performance; and a law that would protect the Supreme Court’s independence. The few reforms that have been adopted restate the existing framework’s deficiencies and will not significantly improve the state’s performance. Until these, as well as other, actions are taken, the government will continue to operate unchecked, bringing with it the type of chronic abuse,
rampant corruption and growing authoritarianism that is the inevitable result of failing oversight.” The Crisis Group recommends, “To the Government of Iraq and to the Council of Representatives: 1. Strengthen the anti-corruption framework to allow for greater and more effective cooperation and coordination between the various state institutions involved in combating corruption, specifically by: a) allowing all anti-corruption and audit officials to refer criminal matters directly to the courts; b) guaranteeing the independence of the Inspectors General from government ministers, in particular by providing that ministers and the prime minister play no role in inspectors’ recruitment and dismissial; c) formalizing cooperation between oversight agencies by requiring them, notably the Inspectors General, to adopt standard operating procedures; d) increasing each oversight institution’s training budget to develop skills necessary to carry out auditing and investigatory missions independently of other institutions; and e) passing effective witness protection legislation and ensuring public access to government information. 2. Pass political party legislation requiring parties to display financial transparency and publish detailed annual accounts, including all sources of income and expenditures. 3. Reform the Council of Representatives’ bylaws, including by removing administrative matters from the speaker’s prerogatives, facilitating the formulation of legislative bills and accelerating the lawmaking process. 4. Streamline the legislative process by: a) clarifying and strengthening the working relationship between institutions involved in the preparation of new legislation; b) clarifying each institution’s role; and c) establishing clear lines of communication between these institutions. 5. Reform the Council of Representatives’ oversight function to focus on policy implementation through the questioning of senior technocrats and administrative officers rather than politicians. 6. Enact a law that would prevent the head of the Higher Judicial Council from occupying the position of chief justice, and protect the Supreme Court’s independence by forbidding any political interference.

To the United States and other members of the International Community: 7. Publicly express disapproval of the Iraqi government’s and parliament’s failures regarding long-overdue reform. 8. Provide immediate and direct support to the Council of Representatives by seconding experts in parliamentary development to work directly in the Council’s offices on a long-term basis. 9. Support efforts to reform the anti-corruption framework, notably through advice on rendering administrative functions more efficient.

The possibility of negotiation a settlement with of the Afghan war with the Taliban lessened at the end of September. As the U.S. and Afghanistan were perusing some negotiations with the Taliban, the United Nations Security Council voted, June 17, to treat Al Qaeda and the Taliban separately concerning sanctions to support the Afghan government’s reconciliation efforts and promote negotiations with the Taliban (“Taliban and Qaeda Sanctions Are Split,” The New York Times, June 17, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/18/world/18briefs-Unitednations.html?ref=todayspaper). However, in September, the peace process was dealt a devastating blow when, in a carefully planned attack, Burhanuddin Rabbani, the leader of Afghanistan’s High Peace Council and a former president was killed in his home by a suicide bomber (Alissa J. Rubin, “Assassination Deals Blow to Peace Process in Afghanistan,” The New York Times, September 20, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/21/world/asia/Burhanuddin-Rabbani-afghan-peace-council-leader-assassinated.html?src=me&ref=world). Then in late September, as U.S. Pakistani relations became more tense, Afghanistan’s president Karzi and other senior leaders announced that they were rethinking the country’s relationship with Pakistan and its negotiations with the Taliban because talks had yielded so little. As a result, the leaders said, they planned to work closely with the United States, Europe and India to plan the country’s future (Alissa J. Rubin, “Afghanistan’s Leaders Sour on Pakistan and Peace Talks,” September 29, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/30/world/asia/afghanistan-sours-on-pakistan-and-taliban-talks.html?ref=todayspaper). There is still some possibility that a negotiated settlement might still be reached. At the beginning of August, some increase in interest in negotiating a settlement was expressed by some Taliban leaders (Alissa J. Rubin, “Taliban Hint at Interest In Negotiated Settlement,” The New York Times, August 4, 2011).

Drone strikes killing civilians, including women and children, in Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to have counter productive effects (whatever their positive impacts) that alienate the local people who U.S. counterinsurgency policy is attempting to win over. Examples in Afghanistan in mid-May were reported in Sharifullah Sahak and Alisida J. Rubin, “For Second Time in 3 Days, NATO Raid Kills Afghan Child,” The New York Times, May 14, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/world/asia/15afghan.html?ref=todayspaper. Similarly other aspects of the kill/capture aspect of US-NATO counter insurgency action in Afghanistan, particularly the use of night raids, has been alienating to many Afghans, increasing tolerance for, active support, and recruiting for the Taliban, even when such raids do no direct harm and involve Afghan as well as NATO personnel, as reported on the PBS program Front Line, in early May. Front Line also indicated, that while kill/capture tactics do illuminate many Taliban, and a good number of mi-level Taliban commanders, new, though less experienced Taliban commanders, are quickly or soon created, while the Taliban are radicalized. The question is, can such an approach be successful without a far larger force in comparison to the size of the population, especially given the difficult geography, and without a far more legitimate government? In a strong warning concerning civilian casualties. Afghan President Hamid Karzai said, in late May, that NATO must stop air attacks on Afghan homes immediately, or face “unilateral action” from the Afghan government, saying that NATO

Overall, the situation in Afghanistan remains far from achieving physical and economic security. The International Crisis Group (ICG), “Aid and Conflict in Afghanistan,” Asia Report N°210, August 4, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en-regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/210-aid-and-conflict-in-afghanistan.asp, states, “After a decade of major security, development and humanitarian assistance, the international community has failed to achieve a politically stable and economically viable Afghanistan. Despite billions of dollars in aid, state institutions remain fragile and unable to provide good governance, deliver basic services to the majority of the population or guarantee human security. As the insurgency spreads to areas regarded as relatively safe till now, and policymakers in Washington and other Western capitals seek a way out of an unpopular war, the international community still lacks a coherent policy to strengthen the state ahead of the withdrawal of most foreign forces by December 2014. The impact of international assistance will remain limited unless donors, particularly the largest, the U.S., stop subordinating programming to counter-insurgency objectives, devise better mechanisms to monitor implementation, adequately address corruption and wastage of aid funds, and ensure that recipient communities identify needs and shape assistance policies. As early as 2002, the U.S. established Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that gave the military a lead role in reconstruction assistance in insecure areas and somewhat expanded civilian presence but without setting any standards for where and when they should shift from military to civilian lead and when they should phase out entirely. The 2009 U.S. troop surge, aimed at urgently countering an expanding insurgency, was accompanied by a similar increase in U.S. civilian personnel – attempting to deliver quick results in the same areas as the military surge, but without rigorous monitoring and accountability. In their haste to demonstrate progress, donors have pegged much aid to short-term military objectives and timeframes. As the drawdown begins, donor funding and civilian personnel presence, mirroring the military’s withdrawal schedule, may rapidly decline, undermining oversight and the sustainability of whatever reconstruction and development achievements there have been. NATO allies have set a timetable for gradually transferring authority to the Afghan government and plan to hand over full responsibility for security by the end of 2014. Transition officially began in July 2011 in several areas, but, for the most part, only in parts of the country where the insurgency has traditionally had but nominal influence. Yet, the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), despite receiving more than half of total international aid – about $29 billion between 2002 and 2010 – have thus far proved unable to enforce the law, counter the insurgency or even secure the seven regions identified for full Afghan control by mid-year. Part of that failure goes back to ignoring the rule of law sector at the outset; more recent efforts have been undercut by high levels of impunity. There is no possibility that any amount of international assistance to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will stabilize the country in the next three years unless there are significant changes in international strategies, priorities and programs. Nor will the Afghan state be in a position by 2015 to provide basic services to its citizens, further undermining domestic stability. Moreover, a rush to the exit and ill-conceived plans for reconciliation with the insurgency by the U.S. and its allies could threaten such gains as have been achieved in education, health and women’s rights since the Taliban’s ouster. The amount of international aid disbursed since 2001 – $57 billion against $90 billion pledged – is a fraction of what has been spent on the war effort. More importantly, it has largely failed to fulfill the international community’s pledges to rebuild Afghanistan. Poor planning and oversight have affected projects’ effectiveness and sustainability, with local authorities lacking the means to keep projects running, layers of subcontractors reducing the amounts that reach the ground and aid delivery further undermined by corruption in Kabul and bribes paid to insurgent groups to ensure security for development projects. Sustainability is virtually impossible since donors have largely bypassed Afghan state institutions, for years channeling only 20 per cent of development aid through the government. At the Kabul conference in July 2010, they committed to raise this to 50 per cent, in a bid to enhance Afghan ownership over aid. Some 80 per cent of these funds are to be dedicated to the state’s development programs. While this could contribute to growing government capacity in the long term, the overall neglect of state institutions by Kabul and its international partners alike has limited the government’s ability to raise revenues to cover operational costs or finance development expenditures in the absence of substantial international funding. Under a heavily centralized political and public financial system, created under the international lead, Kabul has handled all development expenditures directly, without allocating sufficient funds to the provinces. While acknowledging the need for provincial authorities to contribute to the annual national budget planning, efforts to enhance their role in determining budget allocations have been slow. If greater government control over development aid is to increase the state’s capacity to meet public needs and development objectives, President Hamid Karzai’s government must take tangible steps to improve the flow of funds from Kabul to the provincial and district levels. Equally important, the central government should devolve greater fiscal and political authority to the provinces, particularly through...
provincial development plans, to enable local authorities to implement development projects effectively and thus reduce public frustration and resentment against the government and its international partners. Only the donor-financed National Solidarity Program has managed to reach down to the district level to generate community involvement in program decisions through local development councils. Sustainability depends now on maintaining donor funding and establishing clear plans for shifting to government financing over the longer term. As more and more districts come under Taliban control, despite U.S. claims of substantial progress, and the insurgency spreads to areas regarded until recently as relatively secure, displacement and humanitarian needs are also rising. The U.S.-led counter-insurgency doctrine that aid should consolidate military gains has been at best unsuccessful, if not counter-productive. Quick impact stabilization projects, whether civilian or military-led, in areas retaken from the Taliban have failed to enhance public trust in government. The blurring of lines between needs-based assistance and the war effort has also challenged the ability of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to maintain their neutrality and independence and to operate in areas outside coalition and government forces’ control. As security deteriorates further, entire communities could be denied access to humanitarian assistance and basic services. The donor community should ensure that humanitarian, reconstruction and development assistance prioritizes Afghan needs rather than short-term military objectives, an approach that is more likely to win hearts and minds in a population exhausted by conflict. But if channeling more development funds through the government is to build state capacity, the international community will have to address the problems of an overly centralized, corrupt and inefficient administrative system. This will also require donors to put their own financial houses in order and adopt a more coherent, inclusive approach to engaging with the Afghan state that flags concerns about government accountability and protection of fundamental rights. After almost a decade of too much wasted aid and too many unmet expectations, it is time that donors acknowledge the convergence between effective aid delivery, good governance and stabilization. Time is running out before the international community transfers control to Kabul by the end of 2014, and many key objectives are unlikely to be achieved by then. Afghanistan will undoubtedly need continued political, economic and technical assistance to ensure that it does not unravel. Donors cannot delay devising a new, long-term development and humanitarian partnership with Afghanistan that goes beyond a narrow arrangement with the Karzai administration. They should indeed channel more aid and transfer more authority to the government, but if they do so without building local capacity and ownership over development, this strategy will amount to a quick handover on the way to the exit, rather than lay the foundations for a viable state.” ICG recommends: “To the International Community, especially the U.S. and other NATO allies and the European Union: 1. Delink non-military assistance from counter-insurgency targets, including by devising mandates and assessing requirements of civilian assistance independently of troop deployment levels. 2. Increase and broaden engagement with the Afghan state beyond Kabul and the Karzai administration to include elected provincial councils and provincial development committees in identifying funding needs, determining funding priorities and monitoring implementation. 3. Improve aid delivery by: a) prioritizing on-budget assistance through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), other multilateral trust funds and ministries and committing to this type of aid beyond 2014; but conditioning the release of such funds on the government meeting clearly defined benchmarks and withholding them when commitments are not fulfilled; b) limiting the use of private foreign contractors and discontinuing their role for non-infrastructure construction programs, working instead with Afghan and international NGOs in coordination with relevant line departments; c) working closely with provincial development committees and elected provincial councils to formulate achievable development plans that reflect province needs and developing the elected provincial council’s capacity to monitor the implementation of provincial development plans through regular training and provision of resources; and d) urging the central government to devote sufficient funds to the provinces to meet the requirements of provincial development plans. 4. Reduce military involvement in humanitarian, development and reconstruction assistance and, while it continues, improve coordination between military and civilian actors by: a) harmonizing Provincial Reconstruction Teams’ mandates, funding levels and coordination with local Afghan authorities and establishing clear standards for transitioning from military to civilian-led PRTs and then to normal civilian run development structures; b) limiting and ultimately eliminating the role of donor defense ministries/departments in non-military assistance; c) ensuring that military resources and personnel are not deployed to provide humanitarian aid unless required by civilian authorities, notably the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority, and in accordance with the Guidelines for Interaction and Coordination of Humanitarian Actors and Military Actors in Afghanistan; and d) shifting away from quick impact military or civilian stabilization programs, instead supporting programs such as the Afghan government’s National Solidarity Program (NSP) that have proved more effective in building state-citizen relations even in more volatile regions. 5. Work closely with the Afghan government in responding to calls for greater transparency in aid expenditure by: a) communicating data on funding status and programs regularly to the Afghan finance ministry’s aid management directorate; b) developing improved vetting mechanisms for contractors that includes consultation with the relevant local/national authorities, and in turn requiring contractors and grantees to report to the relevant donors any indications or allegations of fraud by Afghan institutions receiving donor funds; and c) promoting Afghan parliamentary oversight of the expenditure of donor funds and development programming. 6. Limit the misuse of aid, including by warlords, criminals and corrupt officials by: a) vetting personnel in companies bidding for security and development contracts thoroughly and terminating any contracts to private security companies run by former warlords or with criminal links; and b) urging the central government to
properly investigate allegations of fraud in commercial institutions, such as the Kabul Bank. 7. Build the Afghan state’s administrative and fiscal autonomy by: a) ending the practice of creating separate units within ministries, staffed with international advisers, to implement projects, instead providing line ministries with the requisite training and resource support; and b) investing in development of the energy, industrial and agricultural sectors, through such funding sources as the Asian Development Bank-managed infrastructure fund, to reduce Afghan dependence on external sources of revenue. 8. Prioritize rule of law programming as the centre of the counter-insurgency strategy by focusing on improving the quality, professionalism and retention rates of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Police (ANP); supporting judicial reform; and ending support for local militias. 9. Commit to principled aid by holding the government accountable to the international conventions it has signed, especially regarding the rights of women and minorities, including by withholding funds if these obligations are flouted; and protect women’s and minorities’ rights by ensuring that some sectors remain outside government control even as the Afghan state assumes more responsibility over aid. To the Government of Afghanistan: 10. Enhance transparency of aid expenditure by: a) engaging with parliament on development aid allocation and program implementation; and b) providing timely public information on funding status and development programming through the finance ministry’s Development Assistance Database (DAD), the Donor Financial Review (DFR) and the Development Cooperation Report (DCR).

11. Support provincial development and local government capacity building by: a) devolving authority to the provinces to formulate provincial budgets from locally generated revenue, while continuing to disburse development funds to provinces according to need; b) amending the 2007 Provincial Council Law to better define and enhance the provincial councils’ mandate, including guaranteeing political and fiscal autonomy and institutionalizing their role in overseeing the implementation of provincial development plans; and c) ensuring that provincial line departments and local authorities, including the provincial development committees and the elected provincial councils, have adequate resources to implement and monitor the provincial development plans. 12. Reduce aid dependency and generate revenue by investing in large-scale infrastructure development, particularly in the energy and agricultural sectors, and prioritize building tax and customs duty collection capacity.


The Afghan police force, under paid, and of generally low qualification, has long had a reputation for corruption and low competence. Now, Jack Healy, “Brutality by Afghan Local Police Is Reported,” The New York Times, September 12, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/13/world/asia/13afghanistan.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper, reports, “Local police forces trained and financed by the United States have killed and raped civilians, stolen land and carried out other abuses against the Afghan villagers they are charged with protecting, according to a report released on Monday by Human Rights Watch. The accusations of violence, theft and impunity raise new questions about whether the local police and government-supported militias in Afghanistan, which are meant to play a major role in defending small villages against the Taliban, are instead undermining security at a critical moment for the country and the NATO-led war effort.”

It is clear that a U.S. led military success in Afghanistan is not possible with a corrupt government in the center of the country, and that will be even more evident as U.S. and other NATO troops withdraw. Even in June, the International Crisis Group (ICG), “The Insurgency in Afghanistan’s Heartland,” Asia Report N°207, June 27, 2011,
The insurgency in Afghanistan has expanded far beyond its stronghold in the south east. Transcending its traditional Pashtun base, the Taliban is bolstering its influence in the central-eastern provinces by installing shadow governments and tapping into the vulnerabilities of a central government crippled by corruption and deeply dependent on a corrosive war economy. Collusion between insurgents and corrupt government officials in Kabul and the nearby provinces has increased, leading to a profusion of criminal networks in the Afghan heartland. Despite efforts to combat the insurgency in the south, stability in the centre has steadily eroded. Yet, with nearly one fifth of the population residing in Kabul and its surrounding provinces, the Afghan heartland is pivotal to the planned transition from international troops to Afghan forces at the end of 2014. Given the insurgency’s entrenchment so close to the capital, however, it appears doubtful that President Hamid Karzai’s government will be able to contain the threat and stabilize the country by then. Countering the insurgency in these crucial areas requires the implementation of long-overdue reforms, including more robust anti-corruption efforts, stricter oversight over international aid and greater support for capacity building in the judicial and financial sectors. Although the number of major attacks on Kabul has recently declined, insurgent networks have been able to reinforce their gains in provinces and districts close to the city, launching smaller attacks on soft targets. Outmanned and outgunned by the thousands of foreign and Afghan security forces in and around Kabul, Taliban attacks inside the capital are not aimed at controlling it physically but to capture it psychologically. Once that objective is achieved, the political and financial cost of doing business for foreign forces and diplomatic missions located in Kabul will be too high to sustain for the long haul. An aggressive campaign of assassinations of government officials and infiltration of Afghan security forces in neighboring provinces has, meanwhile, gutted the government’s ability to expand its reach to the periphery. In the rural areas of Ghazni, Wardak, Logar and other nearby provinces, where unemployment runs high and government presence is low, the insurgency has found safe havens far from the borders of Pakistan. A little more than a year after the transfer of additional U.S. troops was completed, violence increased across the country, hitting new peaks in May 2011 as the Taliban launched their spring offensive, which resulted in the highest recorded number of civilian casualties incurred in a single month since the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan began in 2001. It is unlikely that this trend will be reversed anytime soon. Following the announcement by President Barack Obama on 22 June 2011 of U.S. plans to withdraw 33,000 troops by September 2012, it appears likely that the insurgency will push forcefully to gain more ground before the military drawdown reaches its final phase by December 2014. Nearly a decade after the U.S.-led military intervention began, little has been done to challenge the perverse incentives of continued conflict in Afghanistan. Insecurity and the inflow of billions of dollars in international assistance has failed to significantly strengthen the state’s capacity to provide security or basic services and has instead, by progressively fusing the interests of political gatekeepers and insurgent commanders, provided new opportunities for criminals and insurgents to expand their influence inside the government. The economy as a result is increasingly dominated by a criminal oligarchy of politically connected businessmen. On the surface, security conditions in the capital city appear relatively stable. The nexus between criminal enterprises, insurgent networks and corrupt political elites, however, is undermining Kabul’s security and that of the central-eastern corridor. Afghan citizens, meanwhile, are squeezed on all sides – by the government, the insurgency and international forces. The insurgency’s penetration of the greater Kabul area has also intensified competition between Taliban fighters associated with Mullah Omar’s Quetta Shura (leadership council), the North Waziristan-based Haqqani network and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hizb-e Islami. Violent rivalries between commanders of these insurgent groups in places such as Kapisa, Logar and Wardak have resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives. Caught in the middle are ordinary Afghans who remain fearful of a Taliban return to power. Tasked with quelling the violence, NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is perceived as unable or unwilling to distinguish between civilians and insurgents and to reduce dependence on corrupt government officials in its counter-insurgency strategy. Stabilization and improving security beyond Kabul will depend on confronting corruption in the capital and outlying areas. This will require a comprehensive reassessment of current anti-corruption efforts, which so far have proven ineffective. Building capacity in the judicial sector while weeding out corruption is crucial for lasting reform. Afghan agencies with the combined mandate of countering corruption, organized crime and terrorism financing such as the Special Investigations Unit, the Major Crimes Task Force and the Financial Transactions Reports Analysis Centre of Afghanistan need more support. A broad review of the policies and operational practices of the country’s national intelligence agency, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), will also be important to ensure against abuses of power that may further fuel the insurgency. Fighting the insurgency is synonymous with providing citizens security and basic services and tackling corruption. The Afghan government and the international community must accept and prepare for the risks that come with targeting powerful political and business elites in and around Kabul for prosecution and sanctions. The potential short-term pain of political tensions that may arise over such prosecutions is worth the long-term gains associated with striking at the primary causes of the insurgency – poor governance, corruption and misuse of force by Afghan or foreign forces. With just three years left before the bulk of international forces withdraw, the window of opportunity to expand security outside Kabul is fast closing. It
is unlikely that this can be achieved unless a better balance can be struck between taking the fight to the field and countering the causes of the insurgency. Failure in Afghanistan is not inevitable, but without a recalibration of the current counter-insurgency strategy, success is far from guaranteed.”

ICG recommends, “To the Government of Afghanistan: 1. Invest more resources in building the state’s capacity to confront organized crime and corruption: a) fully reinstate the Major Crimes Task Force and Sensitive Investigations Unit as independent law enforcement bodies; outline and implement a public policy of non-interference in corruption investigations; b) expand the capacity of the Financial Transactions Reports Analysis Centre of Afghanistan and consider creating an agency liaison to parliament that regularly produces public reports about the agency’s findings; and c) clarify criteria for corruption investigations and harmonies policy on pursuing sensitive cases involving high-level officials; reinvest resources allocated for anti-corruption across judicial institutions with special focus on building capacity in the attorney general’s office. 2. Launch a full-scale review of National Directorate of Security operational and administrative practices: a) implement more aggressive procedures for the monitoring and oversight of operational funds at the provincial level; and b) enhance the powers of parliamentary Internal Security and Defense Committees to call security agencies such as NDS to account and adopt policies and legislation that provide for more detailed budgetary information about NDS to be submitted to parliament on a regular basis. 3. Conduct anti-corruption efforts in a more robust and public manner by prosecuting high-profile officials implicated in supporting the insurgency and by working with international partners to impose sanctions against individuals and firms who have financed it. 4. Provide stronger support to the attorney general’s anti-corruption unit by realigning the unit’s priorities to focus on the prosecution of racketeering, bribery and extortion schemes by government officials at all levels. 5. Enhance and enforce regulatory controls over currency trading through increased monitoring and investigation of informal currency traders; and adopt stricter controls over the import, export and trade of national and foreign currencies within the country’s borders by creating incentives for currency traders to register while imposing harsher penalties on unregistered ones. To the U.S. and NATO/ISAF: 6. Realign financial support to reflect concerns over corruption; insist on greater accountability for international aid spent on reconstruction and in support of Afghan national security forces, particularly for aid in support of NDS and other security organs. 7. Revise and implement counter-insurgency policy guidelines to encourage more rigorous review of information and broadening sources of information in order to minimize the risk of civilian casualties and wrongful detentions; increasing accountability mechanisms and encouraging greater transparency in the investigation of civilian casualties, alleged abuses and wrongful detentions. 8. Insist on more stringent vetting procedures for appointees in the Afghan security forces, particularly in NDS, and the swift removal and prosecution of security officials found to be involved in facilitating insurgent activities. 9. Strike a better balance between spending on the improvement of the tactical capabilities of Afghan national security forces and increasing the investigative capacity of law enforcement and counter-terrorism agencies. 10. Consider partially withholding funding for security sector development until the Afghan government demonstrates a genuine commitment to supporting the Major Crimes Task Force, Sensitive Investigative Unit and other anti-corruption agencies.

Leslie Gelb, “Mission Accomplished: Al Qaeda is no longer based there and the Taliban must be beaten by Afghans themselves,” The Wall street Journal, May 9, 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703859304576306942627633336.html, commented, “Afghanistan is no longer a war about vital American security interests. It is about the failure of America’s political elites to face two plain facts: The al Qaeda terrorist threat is no longer centered in that ancient battleground, and the battle against the Taliban is mainly for Afghans themselves. With Osama bin Laden now swimming with the fishes, the U.S. has but one sensible path: to draw down U.S. forces to 15,000-25,000 by the end of 2013, try cutting a deal with the Taliban, and refocus American power in the region on containment, deterrence and diplomacy.” “The U.S. beef is not with the Taliban. It was over their hosting al Qaeda, and now there is little to host. If the Taliban are prepared to restrict their fight to Afghanistan, stopping them from regaining power inside their own country is most certainly not vital to the United States. A second reason to demote Afghanistan as a strategic priority is that the terrorist threat has morphed since 9/11. A decade ago, the terrorist threat to America was centered in Afghanistan. Today the CIA wrings its hands far more about terrorists in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, London—or Newark. Then there’s Pakistan. Presidents Bush and Obama have both argued that Afghanistan’s fate would have a profound bearing on Pakistan’s. But that argument has exploded. As circumstances have improved recently in Afghanistan, they have deteriorated in Pakistan. The fate of Pakistan, which has a powerful army and five times more people than Afghanistan, rests almost entirely in its own hands.”

The ability of the Afghan army to find recruits among Pashtuns in the south of the country has been very limited, either because of fear, mistrust in, feelings of illegitimacy of, or doubts about the security of the Afghan government, or support for the Taliban (Ray Rivera, “Afghan Army Attracts Few Where Fear Reigns, The New York Times, September 6, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/07/world/asia/07afghanistan.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper). Meanwhile, the program to pay Taliban fighters in Afghanistan to stop fighting, and if possible, switch to the government side,
continues to have relatively few takers. Only the 1,700 fighters had enrolled in the 10-month-old program, as of mid-June, with only a handful midlevel commanders. Two-thirds of the participants are from the north, where the insurgency is much weaker than in the south. There are an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 Taliban insurgents involved in Afghanistan, and it is not certain how many of the fighters who have taken advantage of the program actually are Taliban, and not just men with weapons. Western governments, particularly the U.S. and Japan, have financed the program with $140 million of the pledged $150 million, much of which is in accounts of the Karzai government. Meanwhile, the Taliban leadership in Pakistan has yet to voice support for the idea of reconciliation... Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates acknowledged publicly, June 19, that the United States had begun preliminary reconciliation talks with members of the Taliban, but he expressed skepticism about the results. A number of diplomats have predicted that a significant number of Taliban fighters will not switch sides unless reconciliation talks advance (Alisa J. Rubin, “Few Taliban Leaders Take Afghan Offer to Switch Sides,” The New York Times, June 19, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/20/world/asia/20afghanistan-taliban.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).

Senator John Kerry, stated, in mid-May, that Osama bin Laden’s death will allow “a new phase” in the United States’ relationship with Afghanistan, one that could include reductions in troops and spending. Increasingly, members of congress and the administration, as well as members of the general public have been voicing the idea that with Bin Laden’s death, the diminution of al Qaeda, and its absence from Afghanistan, the reason for U.S. military involvement there is completed, and the U.S. should wind down its military operation, turning security over to Kabul (Alisa J. Rubin, “THE DEATH OF OSAMA BIN LADEN: Afghanistan May Be Open to New Path, Kerry Says,” The New York Times, May 15, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/16/world/asia/16afghanistan.html?ref=todayspaper).

Afghanistan is facing a deepening financial crisis after the IMF rejected proposals to resolve the Kabul Bank scandal, and has been increasingly having difficulty paying its bills. In June, the government of Hamid Karzai and the international community were still widely divided over plans to fund an $820m (£507m) bailout as well as how the disgraced former managers and shareholders who helped themselves to hundreds of millions of dollars should be prosecuted. As long as the IMF declares the plans to be inadequate, many countries, including Britain, are legally barred from pumping money into a government that is almost completely reliant on foreign cash to pay civil servants’ salaries (Jon Boone, “Afghanistan Facing Insolvency Within a Month, say Officials,” The Guardian/UK, June 17, 2011, http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2011/06/17-7). In early October, the IMF announced that the Afghan government had sufficiently improved its financial system so that the IMF could resume aid under a new agreement (Alissa J. Rubin, “Afghan Deal With I.M.F. Will Revive Flow of Aid,” October 6, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/07/world/asia/afghanistan-deal-with-imf-will-renew-credit-program.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).

The question of the extent of the support of the Pakistani intelligence service for the Taliban, and even al Qaeda, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, including terrorist activities in India, has been elevated publicly, and diplomatically, by the U.S. raid that killed Osama Bin Laden, in the safe house in which he lived and operated for a number of years in an upscale neighborhood very near a major Pakistani military facility. The issue is being given further visibility in the federal prosecution, in Chicago, of Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a Chicago businessman who is accused of providing financial and logistical support for the 2008 siege in Mumbai. He and a key witness, David Coleman Headley, claim involvement by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate. How these issues unfold is likely to have a profound effect on Pakistan's relations to the U.S., India and Afghanistan, and may have internal repercussions in Pakistan (Ginger Thompson and David Rohde, “Chicago Trial May Unmask Pakistan’s Links to Militants,” The New York Times, May 14, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/world/asia/15headley.html?ref=todayspaper; and David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt, “As Rift Deepens, Kerry Has a Warning for Pakistan,” The New York Times, May 14, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/us/politics/15diplo.html?ref=todayspaper).

Tensions have risen between Pakistan and the United States as outgoing chairman of the U.S. Joint Chief of Staffs, Admiral Mike Mullen, told a Senate hearing in late September that the particularly powerful and destructive Taliban group, the Haqqani network, acts as a "veritable arm" of the Pakistani intelligence service, and its fighters planned and conducted this month’s assault on the U.S. embassy in Kabul and on NATO bases in Afghanistan. (“Pakistan Holds Special Military Meeting Amid US Tensions,” Global Security.org, September 26, 2011, http://i.ni3.net/ltr6/?_m=3n.002a.310.xk0ao00c4I.a1r). Pakistan army chief General Ashfaq Kayani chaired an emergency meeting with his top commanders Sunday as a war of words with the United States escalated. The meeting rejected Admiral Mullin’s charges. Meanwhile, U.S. President Obama and Uzbekistan’s president, Islam Karimov, September 29, discussed expanding use of the Central Asian country as a route to supply troops in

Over all, Pakistani and U.S. relations have remained a mix of cooperation and conflict. For example, at the beginning of September American and Pakistani officials celebrated their cooperation as Pakistan announced the arrests of three men they identified as senior of Al Qaeda operatives who had been planning attacks on American and other Western targets. The change in tone was particularly noticeable for Pakistan, which has been bitter toward the United States in the four months since its military was surprised, humiliated and infuriated by the Navy Seals raid in Pakistan that killed Osama bin Laden (Salman Masood, “Pakistan Points to Help From U.S. in Qaeda Arrests, The New York Times, September 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/world/asia/06pakistan.html?ref=todayspaper). On the other hand, for instance, in May, Pakistani ground troops at Admi Kot Post in the North Waziristan tribal region of Pakistan opened fire on two NATO helicopters that crossed into Pakistan’s airspace from Afghanistan, leading to a brief firefight between NATO forces and Pakistan troops, that wounded two Pakistani soldiers, according to Pakistani officials (Salman Masood, “Pakistan and NATO Forces Exchange Fire,” The New York Times, May 17, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/18/world/asia/18pakistan.html?_r=1&hp).

Within Pakistan, conflict and considerable violence continues. Most notable have been conflicts in the tribal areas, spilling over with attacks elsewhere in Pakistan, as well as likely related inter-religious violence. A conflict of many decades is also raging in the Southwest of Pakistan in the province of Baluchistan, where many in the Baluch ethnic minority has never accepted being part of Pakistan, and there have long been conflicts over the control of oil and the presence of Pakistani military bases in the region (Carlotta Gall, “Pakistan’s Bitter, Little Known Ethnic Rebellion,” The New York Times, August 24, 2011).

Asian (including the Middle East) and Pacific Developments

Anthony Shadid and David D. Kirkpatrick, “Promise of Arab Uprisings Is Threatened by Divisions, The New York Times, May 21, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/22/world/middleeast/22arab.html?ref=todayspaper, comment, “The revolutions and revolts in the Arab world, playing out over just a few months across two continents, have proved so inspirational to so many because they offer a new sense of national identity built on the idea of citizenship. But in the past weeks, the specter of divisions — religion in Egypt, fundamentalism in Tunisia, sect in Syria and Bahrain, clan in Libya — has threatened uprisings that once seemed to promise to resolve questions that have vexed the Arab world since the colonialism era. From the fetid alleys of Imbaba, the Cairo neighborhood where Muslims and Christians have fought street battles, to the Syrian countryside, where a particularly deadly crackdown has raised fears of sectarian score-settling, the question of identity may help determine whether the Arab Spring flowers or withers. Can the revolts forge alternative ways to cope with the Arab world’s variety of clans, sects, ethnicities and religions?” “In Tunisia, a relatively homogenous country with a well-educated population, fault lines have emerged between the secular-minded coasts and the more religious and traditional inland.”


As of September 3, a harsh crackdown of mass arrests, shellings, shootings and maneuvers by Syrian troops, has failed to stop the increasingly angry protests against the government, though they were somewhat smaller in mid-May, then at their height before the intense crackdown attempt. However, protests have since grown larger again, on a number of occasions, as killings and woundings of citizens by government forces continue, with an attacks on the border towns sending large numbers of refugees into Lebanon. Lebanese border officials said, in mid-May, that at least 5,000 families had fled Syria since the beginning of the uprising in mid-March. The Syrian government said, in May, that it was about to begin a “national dialogue,” but nothing has come of it as the repression continues to stoke further peaceful protest across the country. More recently, there has been some fighting as a growing, but still relatively small, number of defectors from the Syrian Army engaged army troops. However, by the beginning of October, what may be the start of a civil war has begun in the city of Homs with armed “revolutionaries” engaging in regular combat with the security forces (“Syrian Troops Assault Border Town, Sending Hundreds Fleeing Into Lebanon,” The New York Times, May 14, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/world/middleeast/15syria.html?_r=1&ref=world; Anthony Shadid, “Syrian Protesters Defy Crackdown and Gain Momentum,” The New York Times, May 20, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/21/world/middleeast/21syria.html?ref=todayspaper; Key Syrian City Takes On the Tone of a Civil War,” The New York Times, October 1, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/02/world/middleeast/homs-syria-spirals-down-toward-civil-war.html?hp).
In late May, the Obama administration imposed sanctions on President Bashar al-Assad and six other senior officials, and European nations began to increase their sanctions. As the Assad regime has continued its deadly crackdown, sanctions have been increasing, with the European Union banning all oil imports from Syria, on September 2 (Nada Bakri and Steven Erlanger, “E.U. Bans Syrian Oil as Protests Continue,” The New York Times, September 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/03/world/middleeast/03syria.html?ref=todayspaper). The Turkish government has also joined the harsh criticism of much of the international community, after failing to convince President Assad to take a more peaceful course.

Anthony Shadid, “New Loyalties and Old Feuds Collide in Syria,” The New York Times, July 24, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/25/world/middleeast/25syria.html?hp, reports, “Syria is awash in such stories of solidarity these days, bridging traditional divides that have colored the country’s politics for generations. But far from disappearing, the old divisions of geography, class and, in particular, religious sect are deepening.” “As was the case in Iraq, a sectarian lens is often unfairly imposed on Syria’s diversity, with its sizable communities of Christians, Alawites and ethnic Kurds. Other divisions are no less pronounced — between cities like Damascus and Aleppo, among classes, between the countryside and urban areas and within extended clans, especially in eastern Syria. Residents of Hama said they long felt discriminated against, especially in the military, which carried out a brutal crackdown there in 1982. Hama and Homs were traditional rivals in central Syria.” An important aspect of the sectarian divide is that President Asaad and many of his supporters are Alawites, so that the long deepening battle between the President and the opposition has been developing an ethnic dimension.

An important aspect of the continuing Syrian rebellion and crackdown is that, as of the beginning of September, the civil struggle is not yet evident in the capital of Damascus, either in visible events or amongst leading topics of discussion among people (“Life in Syria’s Capital Remains Barely Touched by Rebellion,” The New York Times, September 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/world/middleeast/06damascus.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).


ICG, “Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (VII): The Syrian Regime’s Slow-motion Suicide,” Middle East/North Africa Report N°109, July 13, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-syria-lebanon/syria/109-popular-protest-in-north-africa-and-the-middle-east-vii-the-syrian-regimes-slow-motion-suicide.aspx, finds, “Desperate to survive at all costs, Syria’s regime appears to be digging its grave. It did not have to be so. The protest movement is strong and getting stronger but yet to reach critical mass. Unlike toppled Arab leaders, President Bashar Assad enjoyed some genuine popularity. Many Syrians dread chaos and their nation’s fragmentation. But whatever opportunity the regime once possessed is being jeopardized by its actions. Brutal repression has overshadowed belated, half-hearted reform suggestions; Bashar has squandered credibility; his regime has lost much of the legitimacy derived from its foreign policy. The international community, largely from fear of the alternative to the status quo, waits and watches, eschewing for now direct involvement. That is the right policy, as there is little to gain and much to lose from a more interventionist approach, but not necessarily for the right reasons. The Syrian people have proved remarkably resistant to sectarian or divisive tendencies, defying regime prophecies of confessional strife and Islamization. That does not guarantee a stable, democratic future. But is a good start that deserves recognition and support. Taken by surprise by the outbreak of unrest, the regime was lucky that protesters initially were unable to press their advantage. That gave the authorities time to regroup and put in place a multi-faceted response: stoking fear, especially among minorities; portraying demonstrators as foreign agents and armed Islamists; pledging limited reforms. Most of all, though, was brutal repression. The violence that has ensued is clouded in some mystery. Crude propaganda from the regime and its policy of banning outside reporters has ensured this. Protesters claim they are entirely peaceful, but that assertion is hard to reconcile with witness testimony and with the vicious murder of several security officers. More plausibly, criminal networks, some armed Islamist groups, elements supported from outside and some demonstrators acting in self defense have taken up arms. But that is a marginal piece of the story. The vast majority of casualties have been peaceful protesters, and the vast majority of the violence has been perpetrated by the security services. The regime had a purpose. By sowing fear of instability, it sought to check the ex-casualties have been peaceful protesters, and the vast majority of the violence has been perpetrated by the security services.

Desperate to impose the regime’s less committed detractors. But while it appears to have had the desired impact on some Syrians, the balance sheet has been overwhelmingly negative from the authorities’ standpoint. The security services’ brutal and often erratic performance has created more problems than it has solved, as violence almost certainly has been the primary reason behind the protest movement’s growth and radicalisation. As the crisis deepened, the regime gradually recognized the necessity of reform.
Playing catch-up with protester demands, it always lagged one if not several steps behind, proposing measures that might have had some resonance if suggested earlier but fell on deaf ears by the time they were unveiled. This was particularly true of Bashar’s most recent (20 June 2011) speech. His suggestions of far-reaching constitutional reforms, including the end of Baath party rule, encapsulated much of what the protest movement, at its inception, had dreamed. By then, however, demonstrators had turned to something else. It is not regime reform they are pursuing. It is regime change. What is more, by giving a relatively free hand to security forces, the regime has become increasingly dependent on and indebted to its more hard line elements. This has made it far less likely that it ultimately will carry out what it has proposed; even assuming it truly wishes to. Officials argue that many Syrians still see things differently, that they are wary of the protest movement, suspecting it is a Trojan horse for Islamists and that the fall of the regime would mean sectarian civil war. They have a point. Largely due to regime scare tactics – but also to some of the violence against security forces – the country has become more polarized. A growing number want to see the end of the regime; many still cling to it as better than an uncertain alternative, particularly in Damascus. The middle ground has been shrinking. The result has been an apparent stalemate. Protesters gain ground but have yet to cross the crucial threshold that requires enlisting the capital. The regime scores some points by rallying its supporters, but the crisis of confidence with much of the population and loss of legitimacy is almost surely too deep to be overcome. But it would be wrong to bet on the status quo enduring indefinitely. Economic conditions are worsening; should they reach breaking point – a not unimaginable scenario by any means – the regime could well collapse. Predominantly Alawite security forces are overworked, underpaid and increasingly worried. Should they conclude that they ought to protect what still can be salvaged – their own villages – rather than try to defend what increasingly looks doomed – the existing power structure – their defection also would precipitate the end of the regime. Under the circumstances, is there anything the international community can usefully do? Many commentators in the U.S. and Europe in particular believe so and are clamoring for a more muscular response. In truth, options are limited. Military intervention is highly unlikely; it also would be unquestionably disastrous. It could unleash the very sectarian civil war the international community wishes to avoid, provoke further instability in an already unstable neighbourhood and be a gift to a regime that repeatedly has depicted the uprising as the work of foreign conspirators. Sanctions against regime officials can be of use, though this instrument almost has been exhausted; going further and targeting economic sectors that would hurt ordinary Syrians would backfire and risk a repeat of the unfortunate Iraqi precedent of the 1990s. International condemnation is valuable insofar as it keeps the spotlight on – and potentially deters – human rights violations. In this respect the visits by Western ambassadors to Hama, where the prospect of major violence threatens, were welcome. But there are limits to what such steps can accomplish. To do what some are calling for (denounce the regime as illegitimate, insist that Bashar step down) are feel-good options that would change little. Ultimately, what matters is the judgment of the Syrian people; while many clearly wish to topple the regime, others have yet to reach that conclusion. A premature determination by the international community potentially could be viewed by those Syrians as undue interference in their affairs. The world’s cautious attitude has been a source of deep frustration and even anger for the protesters. That is entirely understandable, yet such caution might well be a blessing in disguise. The regime is unlikely to respond to international pressures, regardless of their provenance. Ultimately, the burden lies with the protesters to counter the regime’s divisive tactics, reassure fellow citizens – and in particular members of minority groups – who remain worried about a successor regime, and build a political platform capable of rallying broad public support. Already their ability to transcend sectarian divides has confounded many observers. More importantly, it has given the lie to a regime that has made a business out of preying on fears of a chaotic or Islamist alternative to its own brutal reign.

For the first time, in early September, Iran’s President, called for the government of Syria to end its violent crackdown of protesters, bringing Iran into the long list of nations criticizing the actions of President Asad (Neil MacFarquhar, “In Shift, Iran’s President Calls for End to Syrian Crackdown,” The New York Times, September 8, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/09/world/middleeast/09iran.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).

The long civil struggles in both Syria and Yemen, compounded in Syria by international sanctions, have badly damaged the two countries economies and made every day life very difficult (Robert Worth and Laura Kasinof, “Chaos in Yemen Drives Economy to Edge of Ruin,” The New York Times, June 3, 2011).

The months old conflict in Yemen continues, in late September, with the government increasingly firing on peaceful protesters, and antigovernment people, including troops that have defected, returning fire, while armed conflict continues in some areas of the country with the government and some tribes fighting anti government tribes and al Qaeda, while the U.S. has increased drone attacks against suspected al Qaeda people and positions (For example, from The New York Times see: Laura Kasinof, “Mortars Fall on Yemeni Capital


The International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), in late May, was preparing to initiate ten workshops for 200 trainers from Sa‘ada province to deal with conflicts and social peace-building in the capital of in Sana’a. The workshops focus on ways of spreading culture of peace and resolving conflicts, as well as creating a culture of dialogue and social peace among the community (“Islamic Relief implements social peace-building workshop,” Yemen News Agency, Saba, May 21, 2011, http://www.sabanews.net/en/news241746.htm).

While the government crackdown in Bahrain continues against the opposition uprising, at the beginning of July Saudi Arabia withdrew most of the 1200 troops it had sent to help its neighbor put down the revolt three months earlier (Nada Bakri, “Saudi Forces To Withdraw From Bahrain,” The New York Times, June 29, 2011). ICG, “Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (VIII): Bahrain’s Rocky Road to Reform,” Middle East Report N°111, July 28, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iran-gulf/bahrain/111-popular-protest-in-north-africa-and-the-middle-east-viii-bahrainis-rocky-road-to-reform.aspx, proposes, “Following a spasm of violence, Bahrain faces a critical choice between endemic instability and slow but steady progress toward political reform. The most sensible way forward is to launch a new, genuine dialogue in which the political opposition is fairly represented and to move toward changes that will turn the country into a constitutional monarchy. In order to create an environment in which such talks could succeed, the regime should take immediate steps to address the human rights crisis, including by releasing political leaders jailed for peacefully expressing their views, and reverse the alarming sectarian polarization that has occurred. In February and March 2011, Bahrain experienced peaceful mass protests followed by brutal repression, leaving a distressing balance sheet: over 30 dead, mostly demonstrators or bystanders; prominent opposition leaders sentenced to lengthy jail terms, including eight for life; hundreds of others languishing in prison; torture, and at least four deaths in detentions; trials, including of medical professionals, in special security courts lacking even the semblance of due process of law; over 40 Shiite mosques and other religious structures damaged or demolished; the country’s major independent newspaper transformed into a regime mouthpiece; a witch hunt against erstwhile protesters who faced dismissal or worse, based on “loyalty” oaths; serious damage to the country’s economy; a parliament left without its opposition; and much more. More significant for the long term perhaps, the violence further polarized a society already divided along sectarian lines and left hopes for political reform in tatters, raising serious questions about the island’s stability. The regime – a Sunni monarchy headed by the Al Khalifa family – gave a pseudo-legal cast to the repression it unleashed by issuing a “law of national safety”, emergency legislation that
permitted some of the human rights violations listed above. And it enveloped itself in the protective embrace of its neighbours, fellow members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), avowedly to ward off a victory by the perceived proxies of Iran, its own Shiite population. As the crisis escalated in the second half of February and first half of March, two parallel battles unfolded within the opposing camps: a reformist crown prince wagered his political future on reaching out to a pragmatic segment of the (mostly Shiite) opposition, angering more hard-line regime elements, including the septuagenarian uncle of the king, who is the world’s longest-sitting unelected prime minister. In turn, the largest licensed opposition society, Al-Wifaq, risked alienating its popular base, including many of the protesters gathered at the central Pearl roundabout in Manama, by agreeing to engage in informal, semi-secret talks with the crown prince. While mostly calling for political reform leading to a constitutional monarchy in the uprising’s early days, protesters steadily began to embrace the more radical demand for the regime’s replacement with a democratic republic, and they began to radiate throughout the capital to bolster this demand. Feeling threatened, the regime lashed back. This spelled the end of talk about dialogue and reform and weakened dialogue’s main protagonists. Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad appears marginalized within the royal family, at least for the time being; Al-Wifaq is struggling to hold onto its popular base, as it seeks to keep reform prospects alive while opposition leaders remain in jail and repression continues. Under pressure from its Western allies, mostly the U.S. and UK, and seeking to recover from the shock to its economy, King Hamad bin Isa lifted the emergency law on 1 June, agreed to an independent international investigation of the events of February and March and ordered a “national consensus dialogue”, which began on 5 July. While on their face these are positive developments, the lifting of the state of emergency and the start of a national dialogue appear designed more to placate these same allies than to significantly alter the regime’s approach toward its own citizens. Repression has eased but not ended, and none of the worst excesses – the lengthy prison sentences for political offences, job dismissals based on participation in peaceful protests, mosque destruction – have been reversed. Foreign troops remain on Bahraini soil, with the prospect of a prolonged GCC military presence at some level. And the “national consensus dialogue” appears to strive for neither consensus among an inclusive group representative of society nor genuine dialogue between opponents; so far it has been instead an exercise in make-belief. The only positive development that has the potential to trigger a course correction is the independent commission, headed by international war crimes expert Cherif Bassiouni, but it is not expected to complete its work until the end of October. There is reason to fear that Bahrain is heading for prolonged political stalemate, enforced by a heavy security presence backed by foreign troops and punctuated by protests when circumstance permits. The consequences could be costly. Already, divisions between Sunnis and Shiites are deeper than ever; many Shiites have a family member or friend killed or in jail. By oppressing Shiites as a group, the regime is erecting communal boundaries; by closing off any avenue of political participation and targeting even moderate opposition groups such as Al-Wifaq, it is laying the groundwork for a potential future uprising. In this tense atmosphere, any further provocation or violent action could trigger an explosion; unfortunately, hardliners in both the Shiite and Sunni communities as well as within the regime seem to be preparing for precisely this. Further repression and violence will not unlock this complex political equation or defuse this combustible situation. The better alternative is for the parties to find a path to dialogue and inter-communal accommodation, paving the way for a constitutional monarchy that treats its subjects as citizens with full political rights. As a first step, the regime should take a series of confidence-building measures, including freeing those arrested for their participation in peaceful protest, ending its stigmatization of the Shiite community and halting the practice of destroying or damaging Shiite mosques and prayer houses. Backed by Saudi Arabia and other GCC states, the regime will not contemplate such measures in the absence of a combination of pressures. Some are likely to occur no matter what. Already, the regime is aware of mounting economic cost after investments shrank, businesses suffered a downturn in their profits, banks began contemplating the possible relocation of their operations, and major events were cancelled, such as Formula One’s annual Grand Prix. But this alone is unlikely to produce a change, as it seems to believe it can survive economically as long as oil prices remain high, and Saudi Arabia maintains financial support. Should it remain inflexible, the royal family also in all probability will confront pressure in the form of renewed protests by those who have been discriminated economically and marginalized politically, mostly members of the majority Shiite population. This could well be effective, but only if opposition leaders can persuade their followers and other protesters to continue to pursue peaceful means. Finally, Western states and notably the U.S. have a key role to play. Washington, which has enormous assets and interests in the Gulf, including Bahrain, would do well to step up its efforts, in coordination with influential allies such as the UK, to persuade the regime to loosen the reins and institute meaningful reform. Failing such steps, and facing an Al Khalifa family unresponsive to its entreaties, the U.S. should also be prepared to take more dramatic action, including a reduction in its military support. For its part, the opposition should seek to reassure the royal family, and the Sunni community that largely supports it, that it seeks an expansion of political rights, not the monarchy’s overthrow, and that it accepts the concessions offered by the crown prince in mid-March as the starting point for negotiations.” ICG recommends: To the Government of Bahrain: 1. Establish an environment for direct dialogue leading toward meaningful political reform, including by: a) freeing all those jailed for the peaceful expression of their views, including those already sentenced and especially including opposition leaders; b) ending all trials by special security courts and retrying those convicted by such courts in regular criminal courts; c) ceasing destruction of Shiite mosques, on any ground, and providing licenses regulating their construction; and d) reinstating those dismissed for participation in peaceful protests, absence from work during the height of the crisis or other reasons linked with the February and March events.
Top military officers in Egypt signed an agreement at the beginning of October with leaders of about a dozen political parties, including at least two Islamist groups — one founded by the Muslim Brotherhood and another by Muslim traditionalists known as Salafis — apparently allowing foreign election observers, while political parties take a greater role in creating a permanent government. The military ruling council made concessions on several issues amid mounting criticism that their management of the transition has been opaque and inconsistent, suggesting that the military is concerned about bolstering its public support. The agreement includes a transition timetable that might put off the election of the next Egyptian president until 2013 or later. The previous week, the military announced Parliamentary elections would be held in stages beginning in late November and ending no later than April 2012. The agreement stipulated that Parliament’s two chambers will choose a panel to draft a new Constitution, in a process that will likely extend for at least a year. Most analysts here expect the new Constitution to lean toward a strong Parliament and perhaps a prime minister, with a relatively weak president. The agreement states, “Doors will be then open for the registering of presidential candidates in the next day after approving the new Constitution,” implying an election date in late 2013 or 2014. The agreement provides for two-thirds of the seats in Parliament to be filled by party lists through proportional representation, and one-third by individual candidates elected in head-to-head races. Candidates on party lists could also run individually. The most far-reaching part of the weekend agreement may be the guiding principles it sets down for drafting the Constitution, which continues to be a political flashpoint. The agreement appears to prevent the military from setting ground rules unilaterally or defining its own role. It provides for “agreement on a set of principles to be adopted by all the signatory parties when drafting the new Constitution,” adding, “Those principles are to be considered an informal code of ethics endorsed by the parties.” Liberals have proposed a binding preconstitutional bill of rights to prevent a potential Islamist majority from limiting individual freedom in the name of religious morality. Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood, object to that idea as undemocratic. Others, are concerned that the military might build in a role for itself as a guarantor of a secular state. The agreement includes an endorsement for the embattled military leaders, saying that the signers “have declared their full support of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces’ decisions and appreciate the efforts made by the military for a safe and sound transition of power.” On Friday, September 30, thousands of protesters gathered in Tahrir Square on the day that the military had once called the start of the weekend, a reminder of how taking control of the country has worn away the military’s popularity since it forced President Hosni Mubarak from power eight months ago. Numerous political activists at the demonstration denounced the dozen parties who signed the agreement (David D. Kirkpatrick, “In Egypt, Concessions by Military on Politics,” The New York Times, October 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/03/world/middleeast/military-gives-ground-on-politics-in-egypt.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper).
In Egypt, in early September, thousands of demonstrators went from Tahrir Square in Cairo and tore down a wall around the Israeli Embassy and broke into the embassy ransacking much of it, while others defaced the headquarters of the Egyptian Interior Ministry. The demonstration became violent, and it was reported that 448 people were injured and 17 protesters were arrested in the clashes, mostly around the Israeli embassy (David Kirkpatrick and Heba Afify, “Protest of Thousands in Cairo Turns Violent,” The New York Times, September 9, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/10/world/middleeast/10egypt.html?ref=todayspaper).

Although many Muslim Egyptians have been supportive and protective of the Coptic community, fighting between Islamists and Coptic Christians resumed at least twice, while 28 people were arrested for involvement in the conflict in the working-class neighborhood of Imbaba. The Islamic attack and resultant fighting the previous week left at least a 15 dead and two churches in flames. Following the second attack, hundreds of Copts angry at the failure of the Egyptian police and armed forces to protect their churches more effectively held a sit-in outside the state television building, known as Maspero (David D. Kirkpatrick, “Muslims and Coptic Christians Clash Again in Egypt,” The New York Times, May 15, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/16/world/middleeast/16egypt.html?ref=todayspaper).

In May, a surge in crime and jail breaks in Egypt, with an unpopular police force afraid, was a difficulty in returning to normal life and remaking the nation (David D. Kirkpatrick, “Surge in Crime Imperils Effort to Remake Egypt,” The New York Times, May 13, 2011).

Ethan Bronner, “Dispute Grows as Egyptian Gas Is Still Not Flowing to Israel,” The New York Times, June 1, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/02/world/middleeast/02egyptgas.html?ref=todayspaper, reports, “More than a month after saboteurs blew up an Egyptian pipeline supplying natural gas to Israel, the line is repaired but gas is not flowing and foreign shareholders of the company suspect politics to be the reason. They are threatening legal action against Egypt.” Egypt supplies Israel with 40% of its natural gas. The pipeline has since been bombed again.

In May, Egypt’s transitional government stated that it was permanently opening its border with Gaza, despite Israeli objections. However, as of early June, the “open Egyptian-Gaza border,” was turning out not to be as open as Egyptian diplomatic statements implied, as the Egyptians are limiting who, and how many people a day can cross from Gaza into Egypt (David Kirkpatrick, “Egypt to Open Border With Gaza, in the Face of Israeli Objections,” The New York Times, May 25, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/26/world/middleeast/26egypt.html?ref=world; Ares Akram, “Open Border at Gaza Is Not So Open, Palestinians Find,” The New York Times, June 1, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/02/world/middleeast/02gaza.html?ref=todayspaper).

New tensions developed, in late August, between Israel and Egypt amid a number of militant Palestinian attacks into Israel, and Israeli counterattacks that have broken the informal truce between Hamas and Israel. The first attack was by a group of Palestinians on the Israeli resort in southern Israel in which eight Israelis were killed. Israeli forces pursuing suspects killed three Egyptian security officers in the Egyptian Sinai, creating anger in and from Egypt. Israeli officials said the perpetrators and planners of the terrorist attack were originally from Gaza, and Israel retaliated with a series of strikes in Gaza that have killed at least 23 Palestinians. Hamas officials in Gaza said they know nothing about the source of the attack. With at least acquiescence from Hamas, on August 24-25 some 20 rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel, wounding one Israeli child, while Israeli response attacks were reported to have killed 9 Palestinians. Efforts have been underway to reestablish a Hamas Israeli cease fire and to calm Egyptian relations with Israel (Fares Akram, “Israeli Strikes in Retaliation Kill 9 Gazans,” August 25, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/26/world/middleeast/26gaza.html?_r=1&ref=world).

In May, in light of the changed situation in the Middle East, President Obama began a new effort to break the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, setting out a starting point for negotiations reiterating that the 1967 should continue to be viewed as the foundation for a peace agreement, with a formula of land swaps to compensate for disputed. Disregarding previous Israeli policy, Prime Minister Netanyahu immediately protested, saying that for Israel to return to its pre-1967 borders would leave it “indefensible.” President Obama recognized Israeli security concerns, saying a Palestinian state would have to be “nonmilitarized.” He also stated that the unity agreement between the two main Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, raised “profound and legitimate questions for Israel,” noting, “How can one negotiate with a party that has shown itself unwilling to recognize your right to exist?” he said, referring to Hamas, which the United States has designated as a terrorist organization.
“In the weeks and months to come, Palestinian leaders will have to provide a credible answer to that question.” Obama’s emphasis on territory and security stress the issues on which the United States believes the Israelis and Palestinians can bargain. He said they should leave until later the more deeply emotional questions such as the status of Jerusalem and the fate of Palestinian refugees. Meanwhile, President Obama stated that the United States was squarely aligned with democratic protests across the Arab world, and sharply criticized repressive Arab governments, but he did not indicate any change in U.S. policy. With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu strongly objecting to President Obama’s remarks, nothing came of the President’s efforts, and no new movement was made by Israel to renter negotiations with the Palestinians, until September, when they asked the United Nations for full recognition as a state with UN membership, discussed below (Mark Landler and Steven Lee Myers, “Obama Sees ’67 Borders as Starting Point for Peace Deal,” The New York Times, The New York Times, May 19, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/20/world/middleeast/20speech.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper; and Ethan Bronner, “Netanyahu Responds Icily to Obama Remarks,” The New York Times, May 19, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/20/world/middleeast/20mideast.html?ref=todayspaper).


On the anniversary of Israel’s creation, that Palestinians refer to as the “nakba,” or catastrophe, in May, thousands of Palestinians — marching from Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank attempted to break into Israel, bringing deadly clashes with Israeli security forces, leaving at least 12 people dead and many injured, as in an unprecedented wave of coordinated protests, the popular uprisings of the region touched Israel directly for the first time. As with the other protests of Arab Spring, plans for this one spread over social media, including Facebook, but there were also indications of official support in Lebanon and Syria, where analysts said leaders were using the Palestinian cause to deflect attention from internal problems. In Jordan and Egypt, government security forces stopped protesters from reaching the Israeli border. In Gaza, the Hamas police stopped buses carrying protesters near the main crossing into Israel, but dozens of demonstrators continued on foot, arriving at a point closer to the Israeli border than they had reached in years and drawing Israeli fire. Three weeks later, a similar deadly incident occurred when thousands of Palestinians again attempted to force entry into Israel from Syria on the Golan Heights (Ethan Brunner, “Israeli Troops Fire as Marchers Breach Borders,” The New York Times, May 15, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/16/world/middleeast/16mideast.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper; and Isabel Kershner, “Israeli Soldiers Shoot at Protesters on Syrian Border,” The New York Times, June 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/06/world/middleeast/06mideast.html?_r=1&hp).

The UN “Report of the Secretary-General’s Panel of Inquiry on the 31 May 2010 Flotilla Incident” (http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/Palmer-Committee-Final-report.pdf), released September 2, 2011, reviewing Israel’s 2010 raid on a Turkish-based flotilla attempting to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza, in which nine passengers were killed, finds that Israel’s naval blockade of Gaza is both legal and appropriate, but states that the way Israeli forces boarded the vessels trying to break that blockade was excessive and unreasonable (See also, Neil MacFarquhar and Ethan Brunner, “Report Finds Naval Blockade by Israel Legal but Faults Raid,” The New York Times, September 1, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/02/world/middleeast/02flotilla.html?ref=todayspaper). However, A panel of human rights experts reporting to the UN said Israel’s naval blockade of Gaza violates international law, disputing a conclusion reached by the Palmer Report on the Israeli raid on the Mavi Marmara. The panel said the blockade had subjected Gazans to collective punishment in "flagrant contravention of international human rights and humanitarian law." The International Committee of the Red Cross says the blockade violates the Geneva Conventions. Richard Falk, UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories and one of the five experts who issued Tuesday’s statement, said the Palmer report’s conclusions were influenced by a desire to save Turkish-Israeli ties (Just Foreign Policy News, September 14, 2001, http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/node/1021).

On September 2, Turkey downgraded relations with Israel and expelled the Israeli ambassador to Ankara as a demonstration of its displeasure over Israel’s refusal to apologize for its deadly commando raid, May 31, 2010, on the Turkish ship Mavi Marmara attempting to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza, (Ann Cowell, “Turkey Expels Israeli Envoy in Dispute Over Raid,” September 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/03/world/middleeast/03turkey.html?ref=todayspaper). On September 6, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey announced that Turkey is prepared to strengthen sanctions against Israel and would increase its naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, comparing Israel’s behavior to that

A flotilla of 15 ships carrying humanitarian aid and activists from 100 countries was to sail from Turkey for Gaza in June, but has been prevented from sailing from Greece by the Greek government, in a second attempt to break the Israeli blockade of the Palestinian territory. Among the ships in the flotilla is the Mavi Marmara, which was the ship raided by Israeli commandos in last years humanitarian sailing. However, the Turkish government prevented its sailing. There was some sabotage by unknown persons to at least two of the ships, and it is suspected it was carried out by Israeli operatives to prevent the ships from sailing (Susan Gusten, “A Year After Israeli Raid, 2nd Flotilla to Set Sail for Gaza,” The New York Times, May 11, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/12/world/middleeast/12iht-M12-TURK-FLEET.html?ref=world).

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas requested the UN to give Palestine full membership in the UN, in late September, despite objections from Israel and the U.S. (which has threatened to veto a Security Council motion to do so), leading to a major diplomatic effort, including by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to restart peace talks as an increasingly isolated Israel seeks to delay Palestinian UN recognition as a nation and the U.S. and other nations wish to avoid the U.S. having to veto Palestinian UN membership (which could still be approved on a lesser basis by the General Assembly), which would be seen unfavorably by much of the world, especially in Arab and Muslim countries (For example, see Neil Mac Farquhar and Steven Lee Myers, “Palestinians Request U.N. Status; Powers Press for Talks, The New York Times, September 23, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/24/world/palestinians-submit-statehood-bid-at-un.html?_r=1&_r=0). As Wikileaks have confirmed and observation of Israeli government actions made obvious, recent Israeli governments have gone through the motions of negotiating peace without negotiating meaningfully. The lack of a prior peace settlement now puts Israel in a worsening international diplomatic situation with increasing ominous possible implications. Thus there are pressures that might move Israel’s present government now to actually negotiate for a settlement with the Palestinians. However, many commentators believe that Netanyahu is just stalling for time, trying to put off Palestinian recognition and pressure from at home and abroad, if possible indefinitely, by seeming to negotiate, and then blaming the Palestinians, when talks break down.


comments, “It will be sad for Israel to discover that the stasis stemming from Benjamin Netanyahu’s refusal to accept the 1967 borders as the basis for talks on the grounds that they are indefensible will lose Israel the diplomatic depth it won in the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan.” It is in Israel's interest to restart talks with the Palestinians, for without that, with the upgraded diplomatic status after their application for membership in the UN, Israel may find itself dealing with growing waves of protest, particularly in Cairo and Ankara, but also in other neighbors, leading to increased violence from Palestinians.

ICG, “Curb Your Enthusiasm: Israel and Palestine after the UN,” Middle East Report N°112, September 12, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/israel-palestine/112-curb-your-enthusiasm-israel-and-palestine-after-the-un.aspx, cautions, “In diplomatic lexicon, September 2011 is shorthand for a Palestinian statehood bid at the UN, ensuing Israeli and U.S. retaliation and, in fine, a train-wreck. There are legitimate fears about the fallout, but obsession with what will happen at the UN and the disproportionate energy invested in aborting it are getting in the way of clear thinking. This could well produce a cure more lethal than the ailment. Were Palestinian President Abbas to back down, he could decisively discredit his leadership,
embolden his foes and trigger unrest among his people; quickly resuming peace talks as an alternative could lead to a breakdown with consequences far graver than anything that effort might induce. The focus should be on shaping a UN outcome that produces tangible gain for the Palestinians in their quest for statehood while providing some reassurance to Israelis, minimizes risks of violence or the Palestinian Authority’s collapse and enshrines core principles for a two-state solution. With little time remaining, the burden has shifted to the EU to craft this compromise. It has long sought that role. Now it must live up to it. The path to the UN has been a tale of collective mismanagement. Palestinian leaders, in a mix of ignorance, internal divisions and brinkmanship, oversold what they could achieve at the world body and now are scrambling to avoid further loss of domestic credibility. Israel, overdramatizing the impact of a UN move and determined to stop the Palestinians in their tracks, has threatened all manner of reprisal, from halting the transfer of tax clearance revenues, to dereeing the death of the Oslo agreement, to worse. The U.S. administration, unable to steer events, fed up with both sides, and facing a Congress that will inflict a price for any Palestinian move at the UN, just wants the whole thing to go away. Virtually all its (dwindling) attention on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the past months has been geared toward that goal: from President Obama’s 19 May speech laying out principles guiding the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to its last-ditch attempt to produce a Quartet statement that would enable resumption of talks. The difficulties of coming up with a satisfactory Quartet text aside, the effort is almost bound to backfire. Begin with the objective itself. It is hard to understand how negotiations can help get the parties out of their fix when (failed) negotiations are what led them there in the first place. If there is one thing on which U.S., Israeli and Palestinian officials concur, it is that it is virtually impossible in the present context for Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu to make substantial progress, let alone reach an agreement. Reasons abound: deep substantive gaps between the two parties; decreasing U.S. authority and enhanced domestic constraints in the run-up to a presidential election; Palestinian divisions; and the weight of the Israeli Right. Restarting talks now to prevent a so-called train wreck in September could well provoke a more dangerous crash when negotiations collapse. It is not enough to take care of September when the rest of the year looms. Attempts to persuade or pressure Abbas to renounce the UN bid also make short shrift of – or, worse, misread – the realities of Palestinian politics. If he were to postpone it or settle for an essentially symbolic UN resolution and then return to bilateral talks without a settlement freeze, he would likely face a crippling domestic challenge by constituents who have long lost any faith in negotiations and to whom the leadership has built up the UN option for months. Most Palestinians do not strongly support the UN bid; but they would strongly oppose a decision to retract it without suitable compensation. Abbas is said to live in fear of a second “Goldstone episode” – a reference to the attacks he endured when, under U.S. and Israeli pressure, he agreed to delay consideration of the report on the 2008-2009 Gaza War at the UN Human Rights Council. He has every reason to. Best then to forget the effort to produce a statement by the Quartet – the U.S., EU, Russia and the UN Secretariat – or at least not view it as a substitute for a UN resolution. The least harmful outcome at this point is a UN resolution that is viewed as a victory by the Palestinians but addresses some core Israeli concerns and preserves the option of a two-state settlement. Achieving that result requires some skilful third-party diplomacy. The U.S., which so far has been reluctant to engage on the content of a UN text, has taken itself out of the running. That leaves the Europeans, whose backing the Palestinians are desperate to receive and who therefore can leverage their support. Several considerations should guide the EU’s endeavor. First, it should persuade the Palestinians to forget about trying to obtain full membership in the UN through the Security Council. That would divide the EU, which very much wants to remain united, and force a U.S. veto that would paint Washington as the slayer of Palestinian aspirations – hardly a desirable reputation at a time of Arab turmoil. Besides, it makes no sense for the Palestinian themselves, who would start their quest for statehood with a setback and the associated loss of momentum. Secondly, the General Assembly resolution should include core parameters for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The U.S. has expressed concern that a UN text might harden the Palestinians’ position by endorsing concepts – such as the borders of 1967 without mention of swaps, or the right of return for refugees – that they would be hard pressed to walk back. What better way to address that fear than to ensure the parameters are balanced? The EU should thus condition its support on the text meeting not only core Palestinian requirements (the 1967 lines with agreed, equal territorial exchanges; Jerusalem as the capital of two states) but also important Israeli ones: the need for negotiations; the necessity that any agreement mark the end of the conflict; and the goal of establishing two states for two peoples (a step that is not tantamount to recognizing a Jewish state, an Israeli demand but for now a Palestinian taboo, but that can be understood as pointing in that direction). Thirdly, the resolution should upgrade the Palestinian status at the General Assembly to non-member observer state. That’s not quite full membership in the UN – Security Council approval is needed for that. But it is second best, a strong signal of support for statehood, and a path toward possible participation in certain international institutions. The U.S. and Israel have voiced a number of concerns about this option. Each is worth considering in turn. They worry that Palestinians, once the realization dawns that the UN vote will not change conditions on the ground, might erupt in frustration. The possibility of renewed upheaval cannot be discounted, particularly in light of broader regional events, though it is unlikely to be a result of such disappointment. Palestinians appear to realize that what happens at the UN will not immediately affect their
lives; if they choose to rise up, it will be because of the entrenched and seemingly unmovable realities of occupation, not because of what happens or not as a result of a UN vote. If anything, Abbas’s failure is more likely than his success to provoke unrest over the next months. A second apprehension involves Palestinian access to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its use as a forum to pursue Israelis. Put aside the incongruity of seeking to immunize any party from the reach of international law at a time when the international tribunal is considered a perfectly appropriate forum for others – Colonel Qaddafi the latest in line. Put aside the myriad obstacles Palestinians would need to overcome before a case could make it before the ICC. And put aside the fact that some Palestinians also could be hauled before the court if they are accused of war crimes – as they were during the last Gaza war. Still, this clearly is a major cause for anxiety and could prompt Israel to initiate severe moves in reprisal. In this respect, the EU, optimally in conjunction with the U.S., should urge restraint and wisdom from all sides in the aftermath of a UN vote – for the Palestinians not to overplay their hand, and for Israel not to overreact. Indeed, there is the potential for far-reaching financial retaliation by Israel and – compelled by Congress – the U.S. These are not idle threats. A cut off in aid or a halt in revenue transfers could have disastrous impact on the Palestinian Authority (PA); it would be up to the Arab states and the EU to try to make up for the losses. Israelis have evoked other potential harsh measures against the PA as well as intensified settlement construction. It is to be hoped that Jerusalem understands that taking such steps would be scoring an own goal: triggering upheaval, ending Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation, jeopardizing the PA’s survival and, ultimately, forcing Israel to carry the true burden (and costs) of the occupation. The possibility of a doomsday scenario is not to be entirely dismissed. It remains within the grasp of Palestinian, Israeli, U.S., and EU policymakers to ensure it is not so. To that end, they will have to show far more wisdom and political savvy in extricating themselves from this mess than they displayed getting into it.” ICG recommends, “To the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO): 1. Reach agreement with the EU on a UN strategy. 2. Forego applying for full membership in the United Nations at the current time. 3. Promote a resolution in the General Assembly that: a) enshrines the principles of a two-state solution, including: i. a border based on the pre-5 June 1967 lines, with agreed, equal land swaps; ii. Jerusalem as the capital of both Israel and Palestine; iii. security arrangements that protect both states’ security, preserve Palestine’s sovereignty, and deal effectively with existing and emerging threats facing Israel; and iv. a negotiated final settlement that ends the conflict on the basis of two states for two peoples. b) upgrades Palestine’s status at the UN from observer entity to non-member observer state. 4. Display restraint in the aftermath of a positive UN vote in order not to provoke a harsh Israeli response. To Member States of the European Union (EU): 5. Reach agreement with the PLO on a resolution along the lines described above. 6. Seek an implicit, U.S.-backed understanding with Palestinians and Israelis to exercise restraint in the aftermath of a UN vote and, in particular: a) press Israel not to initiate harsh retaliatory measures, notably a halt in tax clearance revenue transfers to the Palestinian Authority; and b) press the Palestinians not to overplay their hand in international bodies. 7. Seek to make up, together with Arab countries, any shortfall in PA assistance. To the Government of Israel: 8. Refrain from punitive actions in response to the UN bid, such as withholding tax clearance revenues and a new wave of settlement expansion. 9. Make clear to the U.S. Congress that a cut-off of assistance would harm Israeli interests, in particular by jeopardizing the PA’s survival and security cooperation. 10. Exercise maximum restraint, in particular regarding the use of live fire, in dealing with Palestinian protests. To the Government of the United States: 11. Press Congress to preserve as much Palestinian funding as possible and to maintain security assistance. 12. Press Israel to maintain transfer of tax clearance revenues. To the Palestinian Authority: 13. Ensure that any protests remain non-violent and avoid steps that could lead to violence. To Fatah, Hamas and Other Palestinian Factions: 14. Speed national reconciliation and undertake a dialogue on the significance of the UN bid and the role it can play in national strategy. To the Arab States: 15. Fulfill funding obligations to the PA promptly and, in coordination with the EU, augment aid to compensate for any budgetary shortfall resulting from the UN bid.

The former head of Israel’s intelligence agency, the Mossad, Meir Dagan, has expressed concern about the judgment of the current Israeli government leadership, specifically Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Barak, saying that they had failed to put forward a peace initiative and foolishly ignored the Saudi peace proposal promising full diplomatic relations in exchange for returning to the 1967 borders, leaving Israel now to be pushed further and further into dangerous isolation. Dagan also feared that under Netanyahu and Dagan’s leadership, the government might over react to the Palestinian attempt to obtain UN recognition and full membership, possibly by attacking Iran, which would set off a regional struggle, giving Iran the best possible reason to develop nuclear weapons, and giving Israel an impossible regional challenge. Dagan stated that he is concerned that his resignation, in January, accompanied by resignations of the head of the internal security agency and the military chief of staff, laves the government in a dangerous situation, because the three of them have acted as a counter weight to the Prime Minister and his defense minister (Ethan Bronner, “A Former Spy Chief Questions the Judgment of Israeli Leaders,” The New York Times, June 4, 2011).

Two reports published in late September found that Palestinian public institutions are improving, but the Palestinian economy has experienced slower growth amid a fiscal crisis. A report from the World Bank stated
that while Prime Minister Salam Fayyad has made substantial progress in building strong state institutions, “the onset of an acute fiscal crisis, accompanied by declining economic growth,” may undermine those achievements. The International Monetary Fund reported that economic growth in the West Bank, which had been positive for the past three years, slowed from 8% in 2010 to 4% in the first half of 2011 (Ethan Bronner, “Reports See Fiscal Woes Undermining Palestinians,” The New York Times, September 11, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/12/world/middleeast/12palestinians.html?_r=1&ref=todayspape1). As of the end of July, the Palestinian Authority was in severe economic crisis. 150,000 employees, who support a million people, had had their salaries cut in half, and some ministries were operating without electricity from nonpayment of bills. Palestinian banks had lent the PA $1 billion and were unwilling to loan additional funds. The immediate cause of the crisis is foreign, mostly Arab, donors failing to fulfill their promises, but Israel and the U.S. have said they will not financially support a PA that includes Hamas and is attempting to gain UN membership. One concern is the possible impact on the Palestinian security forces who have played a major role in keeping order in the West Bank (Ethan Bronner, “Before a Diplomatic Showdown, a Budget Crisis Saps Palestinians’ Confidence,” The New York Times, July 28, 2011).

With a relaxation of Israel’s blockade, Gaza, in June 2011, was experiencing its first real period of economic growth, amid continued harsh conditions, since the siege began in 2007. Two luxury hotels opened in Gaza that month. Thousands of new cars are plying the roads. A second shopping mall, with escalators imported from Israel, was scheduled to open in July. Hundreds of homes and two dozen schools were being constructed, and a Hamas-run farm on the site of former Jewish settlements was producing enough fruit that Israeli imports were dropping off. Ala al-Rafati, the economy minister for Hamas, the militant group that governs Gaza, said that nearly 1,000 factories are operating in Gaza, and he estimated unemployment at no more than 25% percent after a sharp drop in jobless levels in the first quarter of 2011. “Yesterday alone, the Gaza municipality launched 12 projects for paving roads, digging wells and making gardens,” he said. At the same time, thousands of homes that were destroyed in the Israeli antirocket invasion two and a half years ago have not been rebuilt. Hospitals have canceled elective surgery for lack of supplies. Electricity remains exceedingly irregular, the opening of the Egyptian boarder has been so restricted that people remain trapped in Gaza. While a considerable number of Gazans are living better, for the vast majority in Gaza, things are not improving. The number of residents living on less than $1.60 a day has tripled in four years. Three-quarters of the population rely on food aid. In assessing the condition of the 1.6 million people who live in Gaza, there are issues of where to draw the baseline. It has never been among the world’s poorest places. There is near universal literacy and relatively low infant mortality, and health conditions remain better than across much of the developing world. A World Health Organization official in Gaza noted, “We have 100% vaccination; no polio, measles, diphtheria or AIDS.” “We’ve never had a cholera outbreak.” The Israeli government and its defenders use such data to portray Gaza as doing just fine and Israeli policy as humane and appropriate: no flotillas need set sail. Israel’s critics say the fact that the conditions in Gaza do not rival the problems in sub-Saharan Africa only makes the political and human rights crisis here all the more tragic — and solvable. Israel, they note, still controls access to sea, air and most land routes, and its security policies have consciously strangled development opportunities for an educated and potentially high-achieving population that is trapped with no horizon. Pressure needs to be maintained to end the siege entirely, they say, and talk of improvement is counterproductive. The recent changes stem from a combination of Israeli policy shifts and the chaos in Egypt. The new Egyptian border policy has made little difference, but Egypt’s revolution and its reduced policing in the Sinai have had a profound effect. For the past year, Israel has allowed most everything into Gaza but cement, steel and other construction material — other than for internationally supervised projects — because they are worried that such supplies can be used by Hamas for bunkers and bombs. A number of international projects are proceeding, but there is an urgent need for housing, street paving, schools, factories and public works projects, all under Hamas or the private sector, and Israel’s policy bans access to the goods to move those forward. So in recent months, tunnels under the southern border that were used to bring in consumer goods have become almost fully devoted to smuggling in about 3000 tons of building materials a day, allowing construction to proceed, now that the Egyptians are no longer stopping smuggling. Another result of the regional changes is the many new cars in Gaza. Israel allows in 20 a week, but that does not meet the need. Hundreds of other vehicles have arrived in recent months from Libya, driven through Egypt and sold via the unmonitored tunnels. May of the vehicles are thought to have come from the same dealership in Benghazi, Libya, that was looted after the uprising there began. Hamas appears to remain firmly in control of Gaza, and with looser Egyptian efforts to prevent smuggling through the tunnels, there is also greater access to weapons as well. At the same time surveys show that its more secular rival, Fatah, is more popular. That may explain why an attempt at political unity with Fatah is moving slowly: the Hamas leaders in Gaza are likely to lose their jobs. The hospital supply crisis is a direct result of tensions with Fatah in the West Bank, which has kept the supplies from being shipped to Gaza.
A document obtained under freedom of information laws has disclosed that around 140,000 Palestinians who left the occupied to study or work had their residency rights revoked by Israel, between 1967 and 1994. "The mass withdrawal of residency rights from tens of thousands of West Bank residents, tantamount to permanent exile from their homeland, remains an illegitimate demographic policy and a grave violation of international law," said Hamoked, an Israeli NGO that filed the freedom of information request (Harriet Sherwood, “Israel Stripped 140,000 Palestinians of Residency Rights, Document Reveals: Thousands of Palestinians who left the West Bank to work or study between 1967 and 1994 had residency rights revoked,” The Guardian/UK, May 11, 2011, http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2011/05/11-2).

Radical Jewish settlers continue to create huge harm in the West Bank. A group of ultra-orthodox settlers broke into Al-Nurayn mosque in Qusra, south of Nablus, in early September, smashing windows and spray painting on a wall in Hebrew, “Mohmad is a pig” before setting fire to used tires inside the building, local residents told a Ma’an correspondent. Palestinian Authority settlement affairs official Ghassan Doughlas confirmed the incident and urged the international Quartet - the US, EU, UN and Russia - to pressure Israel to stop such attacks (“PA: Settlers torch Nablus mosque,” Ma’an News Agency, September 7, 2011, http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=417695). A few days later, settlers were reported to have thrown stones at Palestinian vehicles, in the vicinity of Nablus (“Settlers pelt Palestinian vehicles with stones near Nablus,” Ma’an News Agency, September 9, 2011, http://www.maannews.net/). In early October, the attacks spread to an Arab community in Israel, where a Mosque was set afire and an outside wall defaced with Hebrew Graffiti. Police suspect the arsonists of being radical settlers as part of a campaign known as “price tag,” which seeks to exact a price from local Palestinians for violence against settlers or from Israeli security forces for taking action against illegal construction in Jewish outposts in the West Bank. (Isabel Kershner, “Mosque Set on Fire in Northern Israel, The New York Times, October 3, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/04/world/middleeast/mosque-set-on-fire-in-northern-israel.html?ref=todayspaper).

Some aspects of Israeli policy remain essentially the same. More new Israeli housing keeps being approved in East Jerusalem and the West Bank settlements (e.g., Eric Gladstone, “East Jerusalem Is Approved For Building New Homes,” The New York Times, August 12, 2011), while Israeli raids continue in the West Bank, as occurred at the beginning of August, when two Palestinians were killed by the IDF during a raid on the Palestinian refugee camp at Kalandia, after the security personnel had raided several houses and were met by stone throwing Palestinians (Ethan Bronner, “Israel Kills Two Palestinians as Raid in West Bank Refugee Camp Goes Awry,” The New York Times, August 2, 2011).

A UN “Report by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, James Anaya, August 22, 2011, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/rapporteur/docs/A-HRC-18-35-Add-1.pdf, found, “According to the information received, the Bedouin have inhabited the area known as Negev since the seventh century, maintaining a semi-nomadic lifestyle, engaging in subsistence farming and raising livestock. Their land use practices were governed by an intricate system of customary land and water distribution and management. Allegedly, since 1948 the State of Israel has failed to recognize Bedouin legal entitlement to their traditional lands in the Negev, and instead most all of the lands in the Negev are officially designated as under ownership by the State. Rather than adopt a land policy that recognizes the villages established by the Bedouin in the Negev, from the 1960s to the 1980s the Government planned and created seven towns in the Negev and relocated Bedouin from their villages to these urban area. These planned towns are Rahat, Ar’ara BaNegev, Tel Sheva, Kuseifa, Segev Shalom, Lakiya and Hura. Even though the Government has committed significant resources toward Bedouin housing and delivery of essential services within the planned towns, the people in the Government-created towns reportedly rank at the bottom of all the indicators used by the State to measure social and economic wellbeing. Furthermore, the Bedouin have complained that they cannot continue to live in their traditional manner in these urban areas, given that raising crops or animals in the towns is not allowed. Reportedly, out of approximately 155,000 Bedouin living in the Negev today, around half live in the recognized towns created by the Government and half live in 47 so-called “unrecognized villages”. According to the information received, although officially unrecognized, the majority of these villages were established prior to the creation of the State of Israel, and virtually all were established prior to the creation of the Government-created towns. The unrecognized villages are denied all forms of basic infrastructure and are not allowed to build or develop in any way.” “The Special Rapporteur considers there to be strong indications that Bedouin people have rights to certain areas of the Negev based on their longstanding land use and occupancy, under contemporary international standards. It is undisputed that the Bedouin have used and occupied lands within the Negev desert long before the establishment of the State of Israel and that they have continued through the present to inhabit the Negev, maintaining their culturally-distinctive land tenure and way of life. Yet, claims have persisted that the rights of the Bedouin to the lands they traditionally use and occupy in the Negev have not been adequately recognized and respected by the Government of Israel, either historically or today. The land tenure situation of the Bedouin in the Negev has been identified as a matter of concern by both the Human Rights Committee, in its review of Israel’s compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and by the Committee on the Elimination of All
Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), in its review of Israel’s compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. 2. In particular, the Human Rights Committee has stated that Israel “should respect the Bedouin population’s right to their ancestral land and their traditional livelihood based on agriculture” (CCPR/C/ISR/CO/3, para. 24) and similarly, CERD has recommended that Israel give “recognition of the rights of the Bedouins to own, develop, control and use their communal lands, territories and resources traditionally owned or otherwise inhabited or used by them” (CERD/C/ISR/CO/13, para. 25). 7. The Special Rapporteur notes that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples sheds further light on the obligations of the State in relation to the Bedouin. The difficulties of the Bedouin in maintaining their distinct cultural identities and connections to their traditional lands are akin to the problems faced by indigenous peoples worldwide. The specific relevance of the Declaration, as evident by its terms, and of the various United Nations programs and mechanisms concerning indigenous peoples, including the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, is to those groups indigenous to a territory that are in non-dominant positions and that have suffered and continue to suffer threats to their distinct identities and basic human rights, in ways not felt by dominant sectors of society. “Further, the Special Rapporteur is concerned that there appears to be no effective land claim procedure for the Bedouin people to invoke, prior to their removal from lands they occupy or to the demolition of the unrecognized villages. The Special Rapporteur notes that, as provided by the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, States have an affirmative duty to establish a process for identifying and protecting indigenous land rights, and this process should be carried out in cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned. 3. Given the failure of the State to establish a mechanism through which Bedouin may seek to have any existing rights to lands and resources recognized, Bedouin people appear to have been defenseless in the face of threats to their rights to lands and resources, threats that have materialized into the destruction of unrecognized Bedouin villages and forced removal of Bedouin people.” “In light of the foregoing the Special Rapporteur would like to make the following recommendations to the Government of Israel: The Government should ensure that all laws and administrative practices related to lands and development align with international standards concerning rights of indigenous peoples to lands, territories and resources. To this end, the Government should undertake a comprehensive review of its land and development policies that affect Bedouin people living in the Negev, giving due attention to the recommendations in relevant reports of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. As part of this review, Israel should establish a mechanism to identify and protect the lands in the Negev over which Bedouin people have legal entitlement, in accordance with relevant international standards. Israel should immediately cease to carry out any further demolitions of Bedouin villages in the Negev or any forced relocations of Bedouin from unrecognized villages to recognized townships, unless in consultation with affected Bedouin and pursuant to their free, prior and informed consent. Israel should establish an adequate mechanism under which affected Bedouin can apply to receive redress for any restrictions or infringements of their rights to lands and resources, including such restrictions or infringements resulting from demolitions and evictions carried out. Redress should include comparable alternative lands and monetary compensation for lands, resources and other property that have been lost, and the State should also provide the option of the return of groups to their traditional lands, at a future date, if possible and if they so desire. Israel should ensure the delivery of essential services to Bedouin people, both within and outside of the recognized towns. In this connection, the Special Rapporteur supports and reiterates the recommendation of the Human Rights Committee that Israel should ‘guarantee the Bedouin population’s access to health structures, education, water and electricity, irrespective of their whereabouts on the territory of the State party’. The Government should embrace a long-term vision for social and economic development of the Negev, including in the unrecognized Bedouin villages, bearing in mind the historical and cultural importance of these villages to the Bedouin and to the society at large. This long-term vision for development of the Negev should enable Bedouin to become active participants in and direct beneficiaries of any development initiatives affecting the lands the Bedouin traditionally use and occupy within the Negev. These observations and recommendations represent only an initial assessment of this situation, and the Special Rapporteur would welcome the opportunity to maintain a continued dialogue with the Government of Israel in this regard. Therefore, the Special Rapporteur would like to reiterate his interest in carrying out an on-site visit to Israel to examine in greater detail the situation of the Bedouin in the Negev, in accordance with my mandate from the Human Rights Council to “examine ways and means of overcoming existing obstacles to the full and effective protection of the rights of indigenous peoples [...] and to identify, exchange and promote best practices” (HRC Res. 15/14).” The government of Israel responded to the issues raised by the Special Rapporteur, rejecting that the Bedouin were Indigenous people, and thus rejecting the findings of the report. A summary of that letter is attached to the report.

Under a 2007 order of the Israeli Supreme Court, the Israeli military, in June, was tearing down sections of the security fence under construction near the Palestinian West Bank Town of Bilin, and moving it closer to the Israeli settlement of Modin Ilit, to take less Palestinian land, and give Bilin residents access to two thirds of their agricultural land, from which they were being cut off. This was a victory for the Palestinian, Israeli and international protestors who for six years have been protesting the building the wall at Bilin (Isabel Kershner, “Israel Is Forced to Return Land to a Palestinian Village,” The New York Times, June 25, 2011).
The Palestinian Authority, in a follow up to the unity agreement in April between the PLO and Hamas, announced, May 17, that it was delaying local elections scheduled for July until late October in order to organize the voting in Gaza, which is controlled by Hamas. Because of the division, this will be the first Palestinian election in five years. It will indicate how each party is faring as it prepares for the legislative and presidential elections within a year called for in the unity accord. (Ethan Bronner, “Palestinian Authority Delays Elections,” The New York Times, May 17, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/18/world/middleeast/18briefs-gaza.html?ref=todayspaper).

The PLO and Hamas planned a late June meeting in Cairo to complete negotiating forming a unity government, however, the meeting was cancelled over inability to agree on a prime minister (Ethan Bronner, “Divided on Premier, Palestinians Cancel Meeting,” The New York Times, June 19, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/20/world/middleeast/20palestinians.html?ref=todayspaper). The inability of Fatah and Hamas to move forward together has continued. ICG. “Palestinian Reconciliation: Plus Ça Change...” Middle East Report N°110, July 20, 2011, reports, “Hamas and Fatah surprised all with their announcement of a reconciliation accord. What had been delayed since Hamas took over Gaza in 2007 and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas asked Salam Fayyad to form a government in the West Bank was done in Cairo in hours. Shock was matched by uncertainty over what had been agreed and the course it would take. Would the factions produce a national strategy and unify fractured institutions? Or would the agreement codify the status quo? Even some of the more pessimistic scenarios were optimistic. Reconciliation stumbled at its first hurdle, naming a prime minister – though that is not the only divisive issue. Neither side wants to admit failure, so the accord is more likely to be frozen than renounced, leaving the door slightly ajar for movement. Palestinian parties but also the U.S. and Europe need to recognize that reconciliation is necessary to both minimize the risk of Israeli-Palestinian violence and help produce a leadership able to reach and implement peace with Israel. The reconciliation accord signed on 4 May, is several agreements in one: the Egyptian Reconciliation Document, signed by Fatah in October 2009 but rejected by Hamas, which claimed it did not accurately reflect prior discussions; an additional five points, agreed on 27 April – the “Understandings”, which reflect many of Hamas’s reservations about the Egyptian Document; and unwritten, informal understandings, some of which undo provisions of the signed agreements. Taken together, they would alter politics in two ways. First, they provide for a single Palestinian government, with limited functions, of technocrats or independents, charged with unifying institutions and preparing for legislative, presidential and Palestine National Council elections in a year. Secondly, they call for a newly constituted, temporary leadership body operating in ambiguous partnership with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The key was the decision to delay security reform until after the elections. There were several reasons why the parties at long last reached an agreement, though a genuine change of heart was not one of them. Neither Fatah nor Hamas changed its views of the other, and their mutual mistrust did not somehow evaporate. Rather, the accord was yet another unpredictable manifestation of the Arab Spring. To an extent, it sensitized the two movements to the importance of public opinion which, among Palestinians, firmly favored unity. But that was not the main impetus. Instead, what made the difference were the strategic shifts produced by Arab uprisings. For Fatah and President Abbas in particular, it has meant the fall of a reliable ally in Cairo. Coming atop dwindling Palestinian faith in negotiations and acute disenchantment with U.S. President Barak Obama, Mubarak’s ouster signaled the need for a strategic reorientation. The deal with Hamas was one step in that direction; greater determination in turning to the UN as a forum for dealing with the Israeli occupation is another. For Hamas, the regional landscape shifted in two perceptible ways. Changes in Egypt both removed a thorn from its side and augured a likely improvement in bilateral relations; the prospect that the Muslim Brotherhood (Hamas’s parent organization) would play an increasingly central role in Egyptian politics further led the Islamist movement to gravitate toward Cairo. Far more than Iran, and more even than Assad’s Syria, Egypt in theory is Hamas’s natural partner in light of its geographic proximity to Gaza and the movement’s historical relationship with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Simultaneously, popular unrest in Syria called into question the sustainability of Hamas’s close ties to President Assad’s regime. Together, these developments significantly enhanced the movement’s incentive to say “yes” to Cairo and sign the unity agreement. Egypt’s newfound credibility among Arab publics is one reason why Fatah and Hamas are reluctant to walk away from the accord, even as both impede its implementation. The same applies to some extent to the U.S. and Europe, neither of which wishes to alienate the new regime in Cairo; the reconciliation accord represents its first foreign policy achievement, after all, and Western countries eager to show they are on the right side of history must think twice before openly opposing or blocking it. Besides, European capitals in particular seem to have learned a few lessons from the past and come to regret the approach they adopted the last time Palestinians sought to mend fences in 2007, when they kept their distance and contributed to failure. All of which explains why, to date, the European Union (EU) and, to a lesser extent, the U.S. (which is far more susceptible to domestic political pressure) have avoided verbal condemnation of the agreement and instead adopted a wait-and-see approach. But refusing to bury the accord is not the same as helping bring it to life. President Abbas and many in Fatah are loath to endanger the international legitimacy and support that they see as their chief asset; forming a new government, replacing Prime Minister Fayyad and reforming the PLO could put those at risk, as Washington has made abundantly clear. Likewise, Hamas finds it difficult to compromise on core issues after a long period of sacrifice in Gaza.
and the West Bank. The partisan rivalry has not abated; if anything, after five years of bitter feuding, it has intensified. So far, signing the reconciliation agreement simply has looked like a way for Fatah and Hamas to wage their struggle through other means. Israel and many in the West might see in this reason to celebrate, ignoring as they have in the past that a divided Palestinian leadership has less legitimacy, less room for flexibility and less ability to shape the outlook and behavior of increasingly frustrated constituents. The Arab world is boiling. Palestinian activists chafe at the current paralysis. The international community is contributing little of use. Meanwhile, the two leading Palestinian movements remain stuck in their ways. Plus ça change..." ICG recommends, “To the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah) and the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas): 1. Reach a consensus on a professional, qualified prime minister who enjoys international support, avoiding either insistence on or exclusion of a specific candidate. 2. Form a government composed of non-partisan technocrats chosen by the factions that: a) enforces a reciprocal Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire; b) defers to the PLO chairman’s negotiating agenda; and c) is eventually confirmed by the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). 3. Implement the provisions of the 4 May agreement simultaneously, not sequentially, by: a) beginning integration of the West Bank and Gaza-based Palestinian Authority by unifying the bodies that will oversee much of the process, including the Public Employees Bureau [diwan al-muwazifin al-ammm] and the Public Supervision Agency [haiat al-riqaba al-amma]; b) commencing reform of the civil police and civil defense branches of the security sector immediately, while deferring other branches to a later stage; c) providing sufficient support and resources to the social reconciliation committee; d) building internal confidence in reconciliation by ending questioning and detention on political grounds; redressing arbitrary firings of government personnel; providing freedom of expression and association; stopping incitement; and reopening shuttered political and non-govern mental organizations (NGOs) and allowing them to operate free from harassment; e) considering PLC review of all laws and decisions passed by both West Bank and Gaza governments since June 2007 and opening court cases that relied upon such legislation to review; f) conducting elections for unions, professional associations and related entities over the next year to prepare for Palestine National Council elections; and g) initiating a strategic dialogue to define the principles and priorities of the national movement. To the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas): 4. Affirm publicly that pending the reorganization of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), its chairman will be mandated to negotiate with Israel, that any agreement will be presented to a referendum and that the movement will respect the outcome. To the Governments of Europe and the U.S.: 5. Make clear that they will judge a unified Palestinian government based on its deeds, in particular whether it: a) enforces a reciprocal Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire; and b) defers to the PLO Chairman’s negotiating agenda. 6. Press Israel to maintain transfer of tax clearance revenues to a new PA government formed along the lines described above. To the Government of Egypt: 7. Facilitate movement through the Rafah crossing by increasing staffing and hours of operations to allow all those wishing to depart to do so in a timely fashion. 8. Consider allowing the movement of goods through the Rafah crossing in order to reduce smuggling under the Gaza-Egypt border. To the Governments of the States of the Arab League: 9. Make clear to Quartet members (U.S., Russia, EU, UN Secretary-General) that they will support a new Palestinian government along the lines described above and encourage others in the international community to engage with it. 10. Promptly fulfill financial commitments to the Palestinian Authority (PA). 11. Create a reporting, monitoring and dispute resolution mechanism to support implementation of the reconciliation agreement. To the Government of the United States: 12. Maintain budgetary assistance to a new Palestinian government formed along the lines described above. 13. In the event Congress mandates a cutoff in budgetary support to such a government, maintain development assistance to the population and refrain from applying sanctions, particularly in the banking sector, or otherwise impeding the assistance that other states may wish to supply. To the Government of Israel: 14. Maintain transfer of tax clearance revenues to a new PA government formed along the lines described above. 15. Allow the import of construction material into, and exports from, Gaza. To the international community: 16. Allow, to the maximum extent permitted by law, donor-funded projects to use construction materials that enter Gaza via the tunnels under its border with Egypt. 17. Encourage Israel to increase the movement of materials into and exports out of Gaza and Egypt to enhance the functioning of the Rafah crossing as described above.

In Israel, the summer has been marked by the rise of major protests over the high cost of living with wage stagnation, and for social justice, with the largest demonstrations to date, occurring September 3, with almost 400,000 Israelis protesting across the country. The protests also seem to be giving some lift to the Israeli peace movement (Isabel Kirshner, “Summer of Protest in Israel Peaks With 400,000 in City Streets,” The New York Times, September 3, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/04/world/middleeast/04israel.html?ref=todayspaper).

The UN launched tribunal investigating the assassination of Lebanon’s Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, on June 30, announced the indictment for the crime of four men, two suspected of being members of Hezbollah, the Shiite Muslim movement that is a major force in Lebanon. If very strong evidence of the suspects guilt is made public, the indictments may have strong political ramifications in Lebanon (Nada Bakri, “4 Indicted In Killing Of A Leader Of Lebanon,” The New York Times, July 1, 2011).

In the last few months North Korea’s continuing shifting between belligerence, with refusal to move on negotiating ending its atomic weapons program, and some moves and talk of conciliation, particularly with South Korea, accompanied by indications of a willingness to at least discuss its nuclear program, has moved in the conciliation direction. In July, a senior North Korean diplomat believed to be an important strategist in his government’s nuclear negotiations with the United States visited New York to discuss restarting talks seeking to end the North’s nuclear weapons program. In late August, North Korean leader, Kim Jong-il, repeated an earlier statement that he would return to the six-party talks on his country’s nuclear program with no preconditions. In mid-September, a senior South Korean official announced upcoming talks in Beijing between the top nuclear negotiators from North and South Korea concerning terms of restarting the long-stalled six-nation talks aimed at ending North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. The South Korean government later stated that the talks were productive, but made no breakthroughs. As in the past, it remains to be seen if the North is just undertaking another diplomatic stalling tactic, or if real progress can be made.

IGC, “Strangers at Home: North Koreans in the South,” Asia Report N’208, July 14, 2011, /en/regions/asia/north-east-asia/north-korea/208-strangers-at-home-north-koreans-in-the-south.aspx, notes, “As the number of defectors from North Korea arriving in the South has surged in the past decade, there is a growing understanding of how difficult it would be to absorb a massive flow of refugees. South Korea is prosperous and generous, with a committed government and civil society, and yet refugees from the North almost all fail to integrate or thrive. Part of this is the change in the people coming; it is no longer just senior officials and fighter pilots who were useful and privileged propaganda tools. Nowadays many are women who have endured terrible deprivation in the North and abuse on their way to the South. Reconfiguring programs for defectors to take account of this change is essential if new defectors are to find a place in their new home. The heart of the issue is humanitarian: those who arrive in the South are often fleeing material deprivation and political persecution and under South Korean law must be accepted and helped. But as with all humanitarian issues, it is complicated by politics. Defectors have been used by both sides. The South once rewarded them with wealth and public regard but that changed when rapprochement with the North began in the late 1990s. Defectors became something of an embarrassment, and policies to help them did not keep up with the numbers and types of people arriving. As the difficulties of absorbing North Koreans become clear, the South is also wrestling with the possibility that it one day might have to handle a vast outflow of refugees from a collapsing North. The two sides of the Demilitarized Zone have diverged so much in economics, politics, language and social organization that the people are now strangers to each other. South Korean law and opinion from some quarters would likely demand a rapid unification, but economic and social realities suggest such a move could be catastrophic. The difficulties of handling just over 20,000 refugees over a few decades should be a warning to those who wish to encourage the collapse of the North rather than a more gentle integration.” “The South Korean government has devoted significant resources to helping defectors, but its efforts have often lagged behind new developments. The lavish welcome defectors received in the past has ended, and there is a more practical approach to education and integration, but as the arrivals have soared, facilities have not kept up. Civil society, particularly religious groups, has stepped up to help, but relations with the government are often strained. Better coordination of such efforts, improved oversight to determine what works and a more sensitive approach to discrimination are all needed. Critically, policy on defectors needs to be insulated both from the occasional burst of belligerence from the North and from policy shifts in the South towards Pyongyang. What is clear is that the problems Northerners face on arrival take many years to resolve. What is needed is a long-term approach that allows a greater role for civil society and is less subject to change with each new government.” IGC states, “the government, particularly the Ministry of Unification, should Endeavour to be more responsive to the needs of defectors by listening to civil society groups and those who come from the North; there is a need for greater oversight to ensure that money is allocated to those programs that meet defectors’ needs most closely. This could be a role for the newly established North Korean Refugees Foundation; the government needs to improve public awareness among South Koreans to increase tolerance for Northerners,
as well as tough anti-discrimination laws and practices; and the international community should accept more refugees from the North and engage the South Korean government to provide help in such areas as English-language education.

Amnesty International reported that North Korea has expanded its bleak prisons holding an estimated 200,000 inmates, who often receive torture and are forced to watch the executions of fellow prisoners (Mark McDonald, “Report Says North Korea Widens Gulag, The New York Times, May 5, 2011).

China’s growing navy, along with continued technical development of its air force and army are creating concern among its neighbors and catalyzing alliance making deal making from New Delhi to Tokyo, while allowing the United States to be more prominent where it was being eclipsed, especially as offshore oil exploration is taking place in disputed off shore areas of the Pacific (Edward Wong, China Navy Reaches Far, Unsettling The Region,” The New York Times, June 15, 2011; and Mark Landler, Jim Yardley and Michael Wines, “As China Rises, Wary Neighbors From Alliances, The New York Times, October 3, 2011).

In China, while repression of Tibetans is ongoing, violence again has broken out in Xinjiang Provence between Indigenous Uighurs and Han Chinese, most of whom have been encouraged by the Chinese government to move into the region. At the end of July, 14 people were reported to have died in the second major outbreak of fighting in several weeks in the city of Kashgar. Ethnic tensions continue to remain high in the province, where Han Chinese continue to move in, dominate economic life and government positions, and have placed curbs on traditional Uighur Muslim religious practice (Michael Wines, “14 Killed in Western Chinese City on Edge Over Ethnic Tensions,” The New York Times, August 1, 2011). In Mongolia, there were a series of demonstrations around the province by ethnic Mongolians, after two Mongolians, one in a group of 20 protesting a coal mine, were killed by a pair of Han Chinese drivers. There has also been anger over Chinese destruction of Mongolian Grasslands (Andrew Jacobs, “Anger Over Protester’s Deaths Leads to Intensified Demonstrations by Mongolians, The New York Times, May 31, 2011).


While in May, the slow, uncertain efforts to normalize relations between India and Pakistan made little progress, after defense secretaries from both countries failed to deliver a breakthrough on demilitarizing a Himalayan glacier considered the world’s highest battlefield, in late July, agreements were reached to ease tensions along the border of Kashmir, and to develop closer ties between the two militaries (Jim Yardley, “India and Pakistan Fail to Resolve Glacier Dispute at Talks,” The New York Times, May 31, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/01/world/asia/01india.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper; and Lydia Polgreen, “India and Pakistan Report Progress in Easing Strains, The New York Times, July 28, 2011).


Hari Kumar, “Muslim Seminary Chief in India Is Fired for Pro-Hindu Interview,” The New York Times, July 24, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/25/world/asia/25india.html?ref=world, reports, Darul Uloom, India’s best-known Islamic seminary in the city of Deoband in Uttar Pradesh State, ousted its reformist leader, Mullah Ghulam Mohammed Vastanvi, in late July, because he was quoted as speaking favorably of a Hindu nationalist suspected of fomenting deadly anti-Muslim riots. Ghulam become popular in part because of the success of his madrasas, or Islamic schools, in the western Indian state of Maharashtra that bridged traditional Islamic education with the needs of the modern world by teaching students secular subjects like science and computer programming. He had hoped to bring those innovations to Darul Uloom. But the effort was almost immediately derailed when he was quoted in an Urdu newspaper as saying that Muslims in Gujarat State needed to move beyond the 2002 sectarian riots there, one of the worst eruptions of religious violence since colonial India was partitioned in 1947. Mullah Vastanvi denied that he had been praising Mr. Modi, the Hindu nationalist. Even so, he was swiftly suspended from his seminary post.
Following a hunger strike by Anna Hazare, leader of a large and popular anti corruption movement in India that has staged major peaceful protests, the Indian Parliament, passed anticorruption legislation creating an anti corruption agency and a powerful ombudsman to investigate corruption. Wide spread corruption has been a major issue in India (Jim Yardley, “Deal Would End Standoff With Protest Leader in India,” The New York Times, August 18, 2011).

The process of completing the peace process in Nepal, most particularly integrating the Maoist forces into the army or society, and completing a new constitution continue to be difficult, amidst some slow progress. Nepal’s political parties averted a crisis, in late May, reaching a last-minute agreement that extended the deadline for a new constitution for three months, with Prime Minister Jhalanath Khanal stepping down as part of the deal. The special legislative body charged with drafting a constitution, the Constituent Assembly, had been scheduled to adjourn if an agreement had not been reached. Analysts warned of a political crisis if Nepal had been left without a constitution. In late August, following weeks of negotiations in which efforts to form a national unity government failed, the deeply divided Parliament of Nepal elected a Maoist as the country’s new prime minister, Baburam Bhattarai, the number two leader and an intellectual force in the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which gave up armed rebellion in a 2006 peace accord and unexpectedly won the most seats, though not an outright majority, in the 2008 legislative elections. Mr. Bhattarai is strongly motivated to finding a solution to the remaining issues, but faces the same thorny difficulties that have made previous governments of Nepal of short duration. The other two major parties — the non-Communist Nepali Congress Party and a rival Communist group, known as the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) or C.P.N.-U.M.L. — remain in opposition, and to win Mr. Bhattarai needed support from smaller parties that could withdraw it at any time. Moreover, Mr. Bhattarai is not universally supported in his own party. What is hopeful, is that despite the difficulties in reaching consensus on the key issues, there continues to be a strong concern on all sides not to fail, which would throw the country into a deep crisis (Kiran Chapagain, “Nepal Averts Crisis Over Constitution Deadline,” The New York Times, May 29, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/30/world/asia/30nepal.html?ref=world; and Kiran Chagain, “Nepal Elects a Maoist as Prime Minister,” The New York Times, August 28, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/29/world/asia/29nepal.html?ref=todayspaper).

On the most critical issue for finding peace and stability in Nepal, ICG, “Nepal: From Two Armies to One,” Asia Report N’211, August 18, 2011, recommends, “Central to Nepal’s peace process is the integration of some of the Maoist People’s Liberation Army (PLA) into the state security forces and the “rehabilitation” or retirement of the rest. These steps are part of a complex set of negotiations about the future of the peace process and the Constituent Assembly (CA) that is drafting a new constitution. A settlement is urgently needed to give combatants a dignified exit, years after the initial ceasefire. It is also essential to protect the constitution-drafting and to reduce two standing armies to one. All involved will have to make compromises to settle an issue that lies at the heart of a sustainable peace. Despite only sporadic negotiations after the CA’s term was extended in May 2011, agreement is possible. Negotiations have focused on integration into the Nepal Army (NA), and basic issues to be decided include: the number of combatants to be integrated, standards for integration, determination of rank and prospects for promotion, and the role of the former Maoist troops in the NA. For those who will choose rehabilitation or “voluntary retirement”, the issues include how many will want skills training, how many cash and how many a combination of the two. Also of concern are how these payments will be handled, how ex-combatants will be accommodated in Maoist party structures and how discontent will be handled. It is tempting to see integration and rehabilitation (I/R) as a largely technical issue, but it is deeply political. The peace process viewed both armies as equals; neither was presented as having been defeated. All parties signed up to bring the PLA into the security forces, including the national army, which in turn was to undergo a process of reform to make it smaller, more inclusive and more accountable. For the Nepali Congress (NC) and other traditional actors, the process is an opportunity to push the Maoists to become like the other parties and get rid of their army before the new constitution comes into force. For more conservative forces, generous terms for the fighters would give the sense that violence is being rewarded. That line will be integrated into a new directorate under NA control, although its mandate and size are unclear, and leadership will probably not at first be given to an ex-Maoist commander. There is a tacit understanding that combatants will have to meet some, though not all, existing recruitments standards and that wholesale integration of entire units will be difficult. This will in no sense be a merger of the two armies, as the Maoists used to demand. The party is also not going back to war, and the PLA has been systematically separated from political life since 2007. But all this is difficult to sell to some factions of the party and the PLA, as the Maoists are also making deep compromises on constitutional issues and many leaders are seen as increasingly caught up in politics. For the party’s own transformation to succeed, its army must be seen to have been treated respectfully. The Maoists need concessions, even if only symbolic, as much as the other actors might resent this. All parties must guard against reducing the issue to a political bargaining chip. For the 19,000 combatants, their post-PLA options are a matter of more than just symbolism. As the parties determine how to reduce the perceived risks of the process, including those of ex-
combatants joining criminal groups, turning their anger against their own party or engaging in subversion within the NA, they must remember that this is a diverse group. Different responses are needed for different ranks, and even within these groups, multiple options must be available. Integration is also a test of the NA’s willingness to be a constructive player. Its leadership says the army will accept political decisions. The proposal the NA unofficially presented to the government has framed the negotiations, and some parts present a broadly acceptable way forward. That the army has set the agenda, though discreetly, runs counter to principles of civilian control of the military. But realistically, it means the army’s interests are well represented, a key point to keep it in the process. I/R is a matter of urgency if the parties are to reach agreement on constitutional issues, including by extending the CA’s term, as needed. It is of limited public interest, but the overall slowdown is contributing to some frustration with mainstream political parties and further delegitimization of democratic processes. This is opening up space for fringe actors who wish to roll back the political changes since 2006. The cantonments also cost the Nepali state a lot of money and have been in place for over four years. Finally, conditions in the Nepal Army are relatively favorable at this time, with a chief who is willing to meet the parties part of the way. Formal closure on the war can, and should, begin now.” ICG Recommends, “Integration and rehabilitation should serve a number of purposes: mark the end of ten years of war and progress in the five year-long transition; acknowledge recent history and political changes; and reduce the risk of localized conflict or political violence. Specifically: Combatants integrated into the NA should have a chance of a reasonably successful career within the constraints of age and years of service and so should be given opportunities to catch up with NA colleagues. Bridge courses have already been discussed. Perhaps some combatants will need a little more time to gain further qualifications, while others would benefit from seats at the staff college. While there is certain to be some wariness of ex-Maoist combatants, leaving integrated personnel uncompetitive could fuel discontent. If integration takes place primarily into the proposed new directorate under the NA, its mandate needs clear thinking. Being considered “non-combat” or unarmed is problematic for the PLA personnel, but the Maoist suggestion to deploy it for border security is unacceptable; Nepal’s borders do not need to be militarized. The parties should discuss whether the new directorate can participate in the NA’s more prestigious activities, such as peacekeeping operations and protection of national parks, for example. Although the debate has so far focused on the NA, the police and armed police could still be options, and the parties need to quickly do homework on this. The Maoists must clearly rank their priorities in negotiations: where integration happens, the mandate guiding integrated combatants, or the ranks at which they want integration. Preparations must immediately begin in the NA to accommodate the newly-integrated personnel. Independent assessments are that markedly more combatants will opt for rehabilitation and political work or “voluntary retirement” than integration, if offered attractive cash or cash and vocational training packages. This is appealing and broadly acceptable, but without safeguards, the payouts could mean a large infusion of cash into Maoist coffers and become a source of political tension. Payments should be made in instalments over a period of time. Some portion could be linked to completion of training, take the form of low- or no-interest loans, be paid to employment agencies for those seeking to work overseas, or consist of government bonds. Discussions on some options have already taken place; these should be formalized. The fraught 2010 exercise in discharging disqualified combatants holds some lessons. Vocational training options should consider the combatants’ interests and qualifications and not be presented patronizingly. Given the sensitivity around language, the vocabulary of “rehabilitation” could be replaced with the less judgmental-sounding “training”. Donors who fund or oversee these programs must ensure they are getting value for money, as combatants will know the official cash worth of their training programs. Integration and rehabilitation both should be monitored closely to address discontent early. The monitoring could be carried out by what is currently the secretariat of the special committee, which will have gathered experience and personnel during the cantonment monitoring and I/R process. Monitoring could also support a dispute or grievance resolution mechanism. Career counseling and psycho-social support for those who opt for training programs or political work still need to be discussed. Donor support for these activities could be helpful and allow low key international observation of the I/R process. As the cantonments empty, the parties must begin two exercises. A review of working conditions for soldiers in the NA can help mitigate the potential for resentment posed by the addition of new personnel who are seen to get special treatment. Secondly, the government and political actors, possibly through a strengthened and empowered national defense council, and civil society must begin policy-oriented research and discussion on key aspects of security sector reform so as to guide the thinking of successive governments, including: Nepal’s security concerns; making the NA more accountable and affordable; simultaneously downsizing the security forces and making them more effective and representative; and strengthening the defense ministry.

The extent of the division remaining in Sri Lanka after the civil war was shown in elections, in July, with voters in northern and eastern Sri Lanka giving the Tamil National Alliance, an alliance of parties closely linked to the defeated Tamil Tiger insurgency, majorities in 18 of 26 local council elections, as the elections allowed residents in many areas the first chance in years to vote after bearing the brunt of two decades of ethnic conflict, and the results underscored just how deeply divided the country remains two years after the fighting ended. The party led by Sri Lanka’s president, Mahinda Rajapaksa,
The government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa has refused to acknowledge, let alone address, the Tamil minority’s legitimate grievances against the state. The regime destroyed the Tigers by rejecting the more conciliatory approach of prior governments and adopting the insurgents’ brutality and intolerance of dissent. Now, contrary to the image it projects, the government has increasingly cut minorities and opponents out of decisions on their economic and political futures rather than work toward reconciliation. As power and wealth is concentrated in the Rajapaksa family, the risks of renewed conflict are growing again. Partners, especially India, Japan, the U.S., UK, European Union (EU) and UN, should send a strong message against increasing authoritarianism, condition aid on transparency and restored civilian administration in north and east and support accountability, including an international inquiry into alleged atrocities by both sides in the war’s final stages. Much has improved with the end of the war in May 2009. The paralyzing threat of suicide attacks on civilians in the south has ended with the destruction of the LTTE, while Tamil families no longer fear the Tigers’ forced recruitment of their children and other abuses. Economic and political security is better for some segments of society. But decades of political violence and civil war have polarized Sri Lanka’s ethnic communities and undermined institutions, particularly those involved in law and order. Each of the major ethnic groups – Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims – has suffered immensely. Conflicts have not just left hundreds of thousands dead, injured or displaced but have also entrenched fears and misunderstandings in each community. Progress toward reconciliation in this environment was always going to be difficult. It has been made much more so by the post-war policies of President Rajapaksa and his powerful brothers. With emergency and anti-terrorism laws still in place, they continue to violently repress the media and political opponents, while manipulating elections and silencing civil society. Constitutional reforms strong-armed through parliament have removed presidential term limits and solidified the president’s power over the attorney general, judiciary and various “independent” commissions. Northern areas once ruled by the LTTE are now dominated by the military, which has taken over civil administration and controls all aspects of daily life – undermining what little remains of local capacity. Democratic political activities in the north and east have been suppressed through the use of violent and corrupt ethnic Tamil proxies and other Rajapaksa loyalists. Development of those areas has been conducted without local consultation; indeed many Tamil residents feel that it is more like the extraction of the spoils of war than a real effort to improve livelihoods and build trust. To deflect criticism of its unlawful conduct in the final stages of the war the government established a Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC). Promoted as a mechanism for both accountability and reconciliation, it will produce neither. In April 2011, a UN panel of experts found that the LLRC lacks the independence, mandate and witness protection capacity to serve as an accountability process for the many credible allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by both sides and recommended an international investigation. Correcting the LLRC’s flaws would require not only a new commission or other mechanism but also a reversal of the Rajapaksa’s core post-war policies. While the LLRC has served as a platform for airing some grievances, it has failed to win confidence domestically and can do little to aid reconciliation. Sri Lankans know better than anyone that such a commission is ultimately powerless. Despite Sri Lanka’s long history of failed and ignored ad hoc inquiries, the international community seems willing to gamble on another. While India, the U.S. and UK have recently signaled greater skepticism of the government’s efforts, so far they and other supporters are repeating the mistake they made during the war. There was little real effort to prevent the atrocities at the end of the fighting, in part because the LTTE was so reviled but also because it was convenient to believe President Rajapaksa’s assurances that there would be political reform and conciliatory policies after a military victory. Now they risk falling again for the government’s delaying tactics and promises of accountability through the LLRC and political compromise through talks with Tamil political parties. So long as there continues to be no progress on either issue, large portions of the Tamil diaspora will remain convinced their community needs the protection that only a separate state can offer and will continue to ignore the LTTE’s share of responsibility for the atrocities at the end of the war and for the destruction of Tamil political society. While the government tries to sell its “reconciliation” plans, the realities on the ground in the north and east are ominous. Many households are now headed by women, who are extremely vulnerable under military rule. Much of the aid promised has not arrived, and all is strictly controlled by the military. Over two thirds of the nearly 300,000 displaced civilians interned in the north at the end of the war have been sent home, but mostly to areas devoid of the most basic amenities. Another 180,000 of those and others displaced in prior stages of the war are still in camps or other temporary settings. Of the 12,000 or more alleged LTTE cadres detained at the end of the war, 3,000 are still undergoing “rehabilitation”. Hundreds more LTTE suspects, many detained for years without charge, are held separately. There is little transparency about the numbers or identities of post-war detainees, and upon release, many are closely monitored and harassed or pressured to act as informants. Families throughout the north and east are still searching for missing relatives. Tamils are not the only community to...
find themselves marginalized. There have been no official efforts to address the conflicts that flared within Sinhalese communities in the south. Many disappearances have not been investigated; few families have been adequately compensated. No one has been held accountable. Similarly, Muslims expelled from the north or relatives of those murdered in the east by the LTTE have seen little in the way of resettlement, compensation or justice. Land disputes exacerbated by the conflicts affect all communities, but little has been done to design sustainable solutions. Concerns about corruption and increasing cost of living only add to the wounds of the past. Reconciliation will slip further out of reach if the government maintains its policies. As part of broader efforts to counter false narratives put forth by it and by Tiger apologists alike and to restore the badly damaged rule of law, Sri Lanka’s partners should take immediate steps. Aid money should not be delivered without firm knowledge of how it will be spent, which requires extensive monitoring. Assertions that the government is moving towards reconciliation must be tested against realities on the ground, which means insisting on access. The Rajapakasas’ authoritarianism must be challenged directly and publicly, with strong messages against retrograde constitutional changes and centralization of power. An international inquiry into alleged atrocities by both the government and LTTE is needed; UN member states should actively work to establish one, unless the government shows by the end of 2011 that it is willing and able to ensure accountability on its own. Sri Lanka eventually should also have an independent, inclusive truth commission to examine injustices suffered by all communities. It requires a fair accounting of its violent history to avoid repeating it.” ICG recommends: “To the Government of Sri Lanka: 1. Immediately revisit policies that are exacerbating minority grievances: a) end the state of emergency and revise anti-terrorism legislation to comply with international law; b) make available to family members the names and locations of all individuals detained for suspected involvement in the LTTE; c) issue accurate death certificates or declarations of absence for those who were killed or went missing in the conflict, without compromising the rights of family members to seek further information or remedies; d) allow public and open mourning of the deceased, including the establishment of memorials, and assist in the recovery of human remains; e) permit all displaced persons and returnees full freedom of movement and assembly, expedite the opening of remaining restricted areas in the north and empower local officials and civil society actors to mediate land disputes in a transparent, credible process; f) reduce restrictions on and improve access for humanitarian and civil society actors, allowing them to increase levels of assistance, including in areas such as psycho-social support and gender-based violence, and determine priorities with input from local communities; g) return land, houses, vehicles and other property seized by the military and implement a single scheme for compensating victims of all ethnic groups with equal payments and a transparent process; and h) remove the military from civilian activities, reduce its security role and take immediate action to end all harassment of and attacks on Tamil women by military personnel. 2. Deliver on promises to provider greater autonomy for the north and east: a) expedite elections for the Northern Provincial Council; b) decentralize decision-making on economic development, giving local government leaders control over resources and projects; and c) commit publicly to the goal of reaching a political settlement on devolution in talks with the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), which should be followed by a process that includes independent representatives of Muslims in the north and east to finalize a settlement acceptable to all communities in those regions. 3. Create the conditions needed to pursue meaningful reconciliation among all ethnic communities: a) acknowledge that the war with the LTTE was not only a war against a ruthless terrorist organization but also part of a larger ethnic conflict driven by grievances and prejudices of all communities; b) recognize that a broad, inclusive national reconciliation process, including a truth commission to examine the injustices suffered by all communities, will be needed to sustain peace; c) end all attacks on and threats against journalists and civil society actors, and stop using state media resources to perpetuate false narratives of the past and present; d) reverse the consolidation of power in the presidency and military, including by proposing legislation to repeal the Eighteenth Amendment to the constitution and restore constitutional limits on the president’s term in office and power over the attorney general and judiciary, as well as commissions on human rights, police, elections, corruption, finance and public service; and by removing from military control all oversight of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and decision-making on economic development; e) break with Sri Lanka’s long history of impunity, including by making public the reports of all presidential commissions of inquiry into human rights abuses, especially those established by President Rajapaksa, and by implementing credible accountability processes for past and present abuses; and f) request that the LLRC complete its report as soon as possible and release it to the public. To Sri Lanka’s International Partners, including India, Japan, the U.S., UK, EU and UN: 4. Encourage the conditions needed for longer-term reconciliation and to reduce the risk of a return to violence: a) endorse and urge swift implementation of the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General’s Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka (see Appendix B), including the establishment of a complementary international inquiry into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity (see Recommendations Sa and b); b) evaluate all aid and engagement in light of the risks of a return to conflict and insist on the highest levels of transparency, external monitoring and non-discriminatory community participation in setting priorities; c) highlight consistently the issues that affect all communities, including growing authoritarianism, militarization, emergency laws, weak rule of law, impunity, corruption and repression of dissent; d) review military-military ties and suspend assistance until there is a credible investigation of the alleged violations of international humanitarian and human rights law identified by the UN panel of experts; and e) convene a high-level meeting of donors and other development partners, including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, before the end of 2011 to agree upon and ratify with the government a strong set of principles.
for the delivery and monitoring of assistance; those principles should incorporate a) to d) above and emphasize the need for the government to commit its own funds to benefit its war-affected populations; in advance of the meeting, the government should be required to propose an assistance strategy and timeline for demilitarization and return to civilian administration in the north and east. **To the UN and Member States:** 5. Support processes to establish accurate accountings of past and present violations of international law: a) work to establish an international inquiry – pursuant to any lawful authority including the Secretary-General’s or the UN Human Rights Council’s – into the credible allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity by both the LTTE and government forces, unless the government demonstrates convincingly by the end of 2011 that it is willing and able to hold accountable those responsible for alleged crimes; b) ensure that the international inquiry is complementary to any credible domestic accountability mechanism that may emerge by, for example: focusing sequentially on certain incidents or categories of crimes and shifting to the next set of incidents or crimes only when the inquiry is complete or parallel domestic processes with respect to those incidents or crimes are proven to meet international standards; the international inquiry could start with alleged attacks on hospitals and humanitarian operations by government forces and child recruitment and suicide attacks by the LTTE; c) use all available mechanisms – including the involvement of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Human Rights Council, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and UN special rapporteurs or representatives on extrajudicial executions, torture, violence against women, the protection of human rights while countering terrorism, the human rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and children and armed conflict – to press the government to end impunity, improve the situation for current and former IDPs and detainees and open up access for humanitarian and development actors; d) follow through on commitments to review UN conduct during the war, as recommended by the panel of experts; but separately from any review immediately revisit the UN’s failed policy in Sri Lanka of holding back on public criticism to maintain humanitarian access; and e) review Sri Lanka’s contributions to UN peacekeeping operations and refrain from accepting the participation of its troops until there is a credible investigation of the allegations against the military in the UN panel of experts report. **To Tamil Diaspora Groups:** 6. Help create the conditions needed to pursue meaningful reconciliation among all ethnic communities: a) renounce the LTTE’s brutality against Sinhalese, Muslims and Tamils and repression of dissent within the Tamil community; b) acknowledge that the LTTE shares responsibility for the suffering and massive loss of Tamil life in the north in the final stages of the conflict; and c) support and cooperate with the investigation and prosecution of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity by the LTTE throughout the conflict. ICG, “India and Sri Lanka after the LTTE,” Asia Report N°206, June 23, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/206-india-and-sri-lanka-after-the-ltte.aspx, comments, “India has long been the country with the greatest influence over Sri Lanka but its policies to encourage the government there towards a sustainable peace are not working. Despite India’s active engagement and unprecedented financial assistance, the Sri Lankan government has failed to make progress on pressing post-war challenges. Government actions and the growing political power of the military are instead generating new grievances that increase the risk of an eventual return to violence. To support a sustainable and equitable post-war settlement in Sri Lanka and limit the chances of another authoritarian and military-dominated government on its borders, India needs to work more closely with the United States, the European Union and Japan, encouraging them to send the message that Sri Lanka’s current direction is not acceptable. It should press for the demilitarization of the north, a return to civil administration there and in the east and the end of emergency rule throughout the country. New Delhi’s relations with Sri Lanka in the two years since the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have had four main priorities: providing humanitarian assistance to displaced Tamils in the north and east; supporting major development projects, primarily in the north, with concessionary loans; pressing the Sri Lankan government and the main Sri Lankan Tamil political alliance, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), to work towards a negotiated settlement of ethnic conflict through the devolution of power to Tamil-majority areas in the north and east; and encouraging greater economic integration between the two economies. India’s approach has so far paid only limited dividends. Deepening militarization and Signalization in the northern province have increased the insecurity and political marginalization of Tamils and are undermining prospects for inter-ethnic reconciliation. The government continues to resist any investigation or accounting for mass atrocities in the final months of the war. Democratic governance is under sustained assault throughout the country, as power is concentrated in the president’s family and the military; attacks on independent media and political opponents continue with impunity. Even on Indian-sponsored development projects and economic integration, the Sri Lankan government has dragged its feet; for example, construction has begun on only a handful of the 50,000 houses India has offered to build in the northern province. While officials in New Delhi admit they are frustrated, India remains hesitant to press President Rajapaksa’s regime very hard. This is due in part to its history of counter-productive interventions in Sri Lanka. India’s misguided policy of arming Tamil militants in 1980s significantly expanded the conflict, and its decision to send peacekeepers to enforce the 1987 Indo-Lanka accord ended in disaster as the LTTE fought them to a standstill and later took revenge by assassinating former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. India’s interventions have made Sri Lankans of all communities suspicious, limiting India’s room for maneuver. Many Sinhalese see India as favoring Tamils and as wanting to weaken or divide the country, despite its crucial role in destroying the Tamil Tigers. For many Tamils, on the other hand, India is seen as having repeatedly broken its pledges to defend their rights and protect their lives, especially during the final phase of the war in 2009. India’s reluctance to put serious pressure on the Sri Lankan government is
also due to strategic considerations, in particular its desire to counter the growing influence of China, whose financial and political support the Rajapaksa government has been cultivating. India’s own growing economic interests in Sri Lanka have also tempered its political activism. New Delhi’s traditional reluctance to work through multilateral bodies or in close coordination with other governments – due in part to its fear of international scrutiny of its own conflicts, particularly in Kashmir – has also significantly weakened its ability to influence Sri Lanka. India, nonetheless, has strong reasons to work for fundamental changes in Sri Lanka’s post-war policies. It has a clear interest in preventing either a return to violent militancy or the consolidation on its borders of another authoritarian government with an overly powerful military. India’s own democratic values and successes in accommodating ethnic diversity should also encourage an activist approach, especially as it seeks recognition as a rising global power with hopes of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. India’s own restive domestic Tamil constituency, to which the central government needs to respond for electoral considerations, is pressing for stronger action. After decades of actively supporting minority rights and devolution of power in Sri Lanka, India has its reputation on the line. With the much-hated LTTE defeated with Indian assistance, New Delhi should, in principle, have more leeway to push for reforms. If it is serious about promoting a stable and democratic Sri Lanka, India will have to rebalance its priorities and press more consistently and in concert with other powers for major political reforms in Sri Lanka. Parties in Tamil Nadu, in turn, will need to use their leverage with New Delhi in consistent and principled ways, even at the risk of sacrificing potentially profitable political deals. India’s support for negotiations between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil National Alliance, which belatedly began in January 2011, has been useful and should be maintained. But the immediate focus of the talks and of Indian influence should shift from pressing for effective devolution of power to demilitarizing the north and east and rebuilding meaningful democratic institutions and freedoms. This would require: re-establishing the authority of the local civil administration in the north and east to oversee development and humanitarian assistance without interference by the military or central government; holding the long-delayed election for the Northern Provincial Council; publicizing the names and locations of all those detained on suspected involvement with the LTTE (including those in “rehabilitation” centers); expediting the release of land currently designated as (or operating as de facto) high-security zones; and removing arbitrary restrictions on political activities and on the humanitarian activities of local and international NGOs. India should monitor its projects in the north more closely and insist, along with other donors, that they effectively empower local people. India should insist on working through the newly elected local governments and, eventually, with the Northern Provincial Council. To make this possible, India will need to coordinate more closely with Japan, Western donors and international development banks. Together they have the political and financial leverage to influence the Rajapaksa administration should they choose to use it. India should revive its idea of a donors conference to review post-war progress and to push the government to demilitarize the north, lift the state of emergency and relax anti-terrorism laws. In New York, Geneva and Colombo, India should publicly acknowledge the importance and credibility of the report by the UN Secretary-General’s panel of experts on accountability and should support an independent international investigation into allegations of war crimes at the close of the civil war in 2009. At the same time, it should send strong, public messages to the Sri Lankan government on the need for domestic action on accountability. It should also work towards the establishment of a truth commission that would examine the injustices and crimes suffered by all communities, including those committed by all parties during the Indian army’s presence in northern Sri Lanka in the late 1980s. Acknowledging the suffering of all communities will be necessary for lasting peace. India should broaden its political agenda from focusing solely on devolution and ensuring the rights of Tamils. Without a reversal of the Sri Lankan government’s growing authoritarianism, centralization of power and continued repression of dissent, any devolution will be meaningless and the risks of renewed conflict will increase. India’s longstanding interest in a peaceful and politically stable Sri Lanka is best served by strong messages to Colombo to end impunity and reverse the democratic decay that undermines the rights of all Sri Lankans. By raising political concerns that affect all of Sri Lanka’s communities, India can also counter suspicions among Sinhalese and eventually strengthen its hand with the government. This will take some time, but the work should start now.

For the first time, the government of Myanmar (Burma) allowed democracy activists to hold a public prayer vigil in Yangon, with riot police observing, but at the same time marchers were harassed or stopped by police elsewhere in the city protesting against the building of a major dam, and for release of political prisoners (“Myanmar: Activists Rally Without Arrests,” The New York Times, September 26, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/27/world/asia/myanmar-activists-rally-without-arrests.html?ref=todayspaper). This small, but perhaps important change, fits with the observations of ICG, “Myanmar: Major Reform Underway,” Asia Briefing N°127, September 22, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/B127-myanmar-major-reform-underway.aspx. “Six months after the transition to a new, semi-civilian government, major changes are taking place in Myanmar. In the last two months, President Thein Sein has moved rapidly to begin implementing an ambitious reform agenda first set out in his March 2011 inaugural address. He is reaching out to long-time critics of the former regime, proposing that differences be put aside in order to work together for the good of the country. Aung San Suu Kyi has seized the opportunity, meeting the new leader
in Naypyitaw and emerging with the conviction that he wants to achieve positive change. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) seems convinced that Myanmar is heading in the right direction and may soon confer upon it the leadership of the organization for 2014. This would energies reformers inside the country with real deadlines to work toward as they push for economic and political restructuring. Western policymakers should react to the improved situation and be ready to respond to major steps forward, such as a significant release of political prisoners. In a speech on 19 August, the president made clear that his goal is to build a modern and developed democratic nation. His initial views on what steps are needed were set out in his wide-ranging and refreshingly honest inaugural speech less than six months ago. Some observers have dismissed such talk as “just words”, but in a context of long-term political and economic stagnation they are much more than that. After 50 years of autocratic rule, they show strong signs of heralding a new kind of political leadership in Myanmar – setting a completely different tone for governance in the country and allowing discussions and initiatives that were unthinkable only a few months ago.* In recent weeks a series of concrete steps have been taken to begin implementing the president’s reform agenda, aimed at reinvigorating the economy, reforming national politics and improving human rights. The political will appears to exist to bring fundamental change, but success will require much more than a determined leader. Resistance can be expected from hardliners in the power structure and spoilers with a vested interest in the status quo. Weak technical and institutional capacities also impose serious constraints on a country emerging from decades of isolation and authoritarianism. It is urgent that those best placed to provide the necessary advice and assistance – the West and multilateral institutions – are allowed to step forward to provide it. Some observers are still urging caution, putting the focus not on how much is changing but on how much has yet to change. To be sure, a successful reform process is far from guaranteed. There are many fundamental steps that still must be taken, including healing deep ethnic divisions and overcoming the legacy of decades of armed conflict – something the government has yet to fully grapple with – together with addressing adequately ongoing allegations of brutality by the armed forces; the release of political prisoners; restoration of basic civil liberties; and the further lifting of media censorship. Western countries have indicated that they stand ready to respond to positive developments. At a very minimum, this should include a less cautious political stance and the encouragement of multilateral agencies – including the International Financial Institutions and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – to do as much as possible under their existing mandate restrictions. Similarly, member states should support the broadest interpretation of the EU Council decision on Myanmar rather than the most cautious. As Naypyitaw sets its new course, these small political steps would help to facilitate the provision of ideas that could add momentum to the reforms now underway. There are already indications that key benchmarks many in the West have insisted on may soon be reached. Military legislators have, for example, supported an opposition motion in the lower house calling on the president to grant a general amnesty for political prisoners. If such a dramatic policy shift occurs, it would need to be reciprocated by those who earlier authorized sanctions. Failure to do so, or to shift the goalposts by replacing old demands with new ones, would undermine the credibility of these policies and diminish what little leverage the West holds. Internal progress on human rights and economic reforms that benefit the country’s citizens should be acknowledged and supported by the international community. Crisis Group has long held the view that sanctions on Myanmar – targeted and non-targeted – are counterproductive, encouraging a siege mentality among its leadership and harming its mostly poor population. The greater the pace of change, the weaker the rationale becomes for continuing them – or adding more. Many problems remain. There is ample evidence that the army continues to employ brutal counter-insurgency strategies, and in the absence of domestic accountability, calls for an international commission will remain. But it is far from clear that such a body, even if one could be established, would be the most effective way to address abuses at this time or whether its impact would rather be to cause retrenchment in Naypyitaw.*

Fighting was continuing in the north of Myanmar between government forces and the militia of the Kachin minority, in June, where more than 10,000 Kachin have fled to temporary camps outside of government controlled territory (*Myanmar: Thousands Flee fighting in the North,* The New York Times, June 17, 2011).

Thailand’s populist movement won a landslide victory in July, rejecting the elite establishment and the 1906 coup, as the Party of fugitive former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was swept into power with his sister, Yingluck Shinawatra becoming the new Prime Minister (Seth Mydans and Thomas Fuller, “In a Landslide Victory Thais Pick Party of Exiled Leader,” The New York Times, July 4, 2011; and James T. Aressym “Thai Poll Winner Steps Closer to Leadership,” Wall Street Journal, July 20, 2011).

The conflict in Indonesian Papua continues to defy solution, but some new ideas are on the table. A spike in violence in July and August 2011 underscores the urgency of exploring them. The government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono should move quickly to set up a long-delayed new Papua unit with a mandate that includes political issues. That unit should look at a set of political, social, economic, legal and security indicators produced in July by a Papua Peace Conference that could become a framework for more enlightened policies. Taken together, they represent a vision of what a peaceful Papua would look like. The conference participants who drafted them, however, were almost all from Papuan civil society. For any real change to take place, there needs to be buy-in not just from Jakarta but from the increasingly large constituency of Papuan elected officials who have influence and resources at a local level. The aspirations voiced during the conference contrast sharply with the reality of escalating conflict in the highland district of Puncak Jaya, a remote region wracked by insurgency, corruption and some of the worst poverty in Indonesia. It is home to one of the most active units of the pro-independence National Liberation Army (Tentara Pembebasan Nasional, TPN) of the Free Papua Organization (Organisasi Papua Merdeka, OPM). A complex set of factors feeds the insurgency, including a sense of historical injustice, harsh actions by security forces, and competition and factionalism, sometimes clan-based, among the fighters themselves. Violence there helps fuel local political activism and an international solidarity movement, which in turn fuels antipathy in Jakarta to any steps toward conflict resolution that involve discussion of political grievances. It also leads to restrictions on access by foreign humanitarian and development organizations.

The election for Aceh governor in November 2011 – has deepened an old rivalry within the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) between incumbent Governor Irwandi Yusuf, its former propaganda chief, and those around its ex-“prime minister”, Malik Mahmud. The two factions ran against each other in 2006, with Irwandi defeating the ticket backed by Partai Aceh without undermining the political gains won in the 2005 Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that brought an end to three decades of conflict. In 2006 Irwandi ran as an independent and the Malik-backed slate ran under the banner of the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP), a national party. In 2008, however, GAM created Partai Aceh, a local party that turned into a juggernaut at the 2009 polls, delivering as much as 76 per cent of the vote in one Aceh district and making it the dominant faction in the provincial parliament. The party was controlled by Malik’s men, and while Irwandi backed it, he kept his distance from the leadership. As electoral maneuvering began in 2010, the question was whether the two factions would find some sort of accommodation through which Partai Aceh would support Irwandi’s bid for re-election, creating another unstoppable political machine. Instead, in February 2011, Partai Aceh selected the former Sweden-based GAM “foreign minister”, Dr Zaini Abdullah, and the former head of the GAM armed wing, Muzakkir Manaf, as its candidates for governor and vice governor. Irwandi’s only options were to run as an independent or as the candidate of one of the national parties, but either way, polls showed him beating Zaini. Partai Aceh thus decided to try to obstruct his candidacy. The most obvious way was to ban independent candidates. The 2006 Law On the Governing of
Aceh (LOGA), which gives a legal base to the Helsinki peace agreement, provided that independent candidates could contest Aceh’s first local election, but thereafter candidates would have to belong to either local parties – allowed in Aceh and nowhere else – or national ones. In December 2010, Indonesia’s Constitutional Court overturned this provision. Partai Aceh maintained that the ruling violated Acehnese autonomy and undermined the principle of self-governance in the Helsinki agreement, setting up the issue as one of central versus provincial authority. But its control of the provincial parliament gave it another card to play. Local elections require the local parliament to issue a regulation, in Aceh known as a qanun, setting out electoral procedures. Initially Partai Aceh vowed to enact a qanun that banned independent candidates, despite the Constitutional Court ruling. But knowing, perhaps, that any such regulation would be overturned in Jakarta, it resorted to procrastination instead; its lawmakers always found something more important to do than finishing the electoral qanun. The strategy seemed to be to delay enacting the regulation until it would become impossible to hold the elections before the current term of the governor expires. Jakarta would then have to appoint a caretaker administrator until elections could be held, and since incumbents cannot serve as caretakers, this would prevent Irwandi from using the resources of the governorship to promote his candidacy. The central government, however, would have to pay for any caretakers, and since the failure to enact a qanun seemed to be the result of deliberate dilatoriness on Partai Aceh’s part, officials in Jakarta said that if a new one was not produced on time, the elections would go forward under the regulation used in 2006. In addition to governor and vice governor, seventeen district-level posts are at stake, many of them controlled by GAM-supported men who ran as independents in 2006 and will now have to choose between Irwandi and Partai Aceh. In the meantime, sporadic incidents of violence have taken place linked to the internal GAM tensions. Partai Aceh is increasingly showing itself to be an autocratic, almost feudal party that brooks no dissent.

ICG, “Indonesia: Debate over a New Intelligence Bill,” Asia Briefing N°124, July 12, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B124-indonesia-debate-over-a-new-intelligence-bill.aspx, proposes, “A controversial bill defining the role and functions of Indonesian intelligence agencies has top priority in the Indonesian parliament. It was originally scheduled for enactment in July 2011 but will now be delayed until September or October. It would be better to put the bill on hold even longer until there is a more comprehensive assessment of security needs and how to address them. The controversy centers around three issues: whether the State Intelligence Agency (Badan Intelijen Negara, BIN) should have arrest and detention powers; whether wiretapping and other intercepts should require a court order; and how to ensure oversight and accountability mechanisms consistent with democratic governance. The administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is taking the hardest line, arguing for more powers and less oversight than even BIN itself sees as desirable. Human rights advocates and civil society organizations, including hard line Muslim groups, are at the other end of the spectrum, fearing a return to authoritarian practices of the past. In the middle are the parliamentarians who initiated the law with good intentions, most of whom are determined to resist government pressure but feel the NGOs are going too far. The debate is taking place in a context where the main threats to the Indonesian state are defined as internal: separatism, terrorism and sectarianism. As such, the targets of arrest, detention or wiretapping would be overwhelmingly Indonesian nationals, and many fear that the combination of enhanced powers and weak oversight raises the specter of a politicized intelligence agency being used in the future as it was in the past to crack down on domestic enemies. BIN rejects these arguments, saying times have changed and there will be no return to abusive practices. The current bill follows an unsuccessful effort in 2002 to pass a law strengthening Indonesia’s intelligence apparatus. That bill, drafted in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S. and a changed perception of the security threat, encountered stiff resistance. The human rights community was worried about backsliding on civil liberties; hard line Muslim groups saw the bill aimed at themselves; and rival agencies, such as the police, saw BIN encroaching on its turf. It was eventually shelved. Subsequent efforts by the government to revive the bill in 2004 and 2006 encountered similar opposition. The law now under discussion, drafted in late 2010, had a more constructive genesis, as it was the initiative of a few newly elected legislators with intelligence backgrounds who were concerned that BIN was the only major security agency in the post-Soeharto era to lack a supporting legal framework. They wanted better coordination among security agencies, more information-sharing and more safeguards against rogue activities. Civil society groups were concerned about the historic lack of accountability in BIN, as in other security agencies, and wanted more judicial and parliamentary oversight. They also wanted major structural changes and staffing restricted to civilians, except in the military intelligence body. In March 2011, the government submitted a list of objections to the draft. It wanted no changes in structure or supervision and argued for giving BIN powers of preventive detention and “intensive” interrogation. A process of bargaining between the government and parliamentarians is underway. Debate over the bill is taking place, however, as other security legislation is in the works, including a national security bill and amendments that would strengthen the anti-terrorism law. The lack of a coherent blueprint for Indonesia’s security apparatus and the piecemeal approach to legislation may result in worsening the problem of unclear divisions of labor and overlapping responsibilities – quite apart from the problems of the intelligence law itself. Under such circumstances, there is no good reason for ramming through the intelligence bill. Taking a step back and thinking more about how to balance Indonesia’s security needs with its commitment to democratic values should be in the interests of all concerned.
The Philippine government is experimenting with a creative but risky strategy to bring peace to Mindanao. It has three goals: demonstrate that good governance in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is possible through a two-year reform program; bring separate discussions with two insurgencies, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the much larger, better-armed Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) together; and hammer out the territory and powers of a future Moro “sub-state” in peace talks with the MILF. Until now, the government has not made clear how the three components fit together, but it may reveal its hand – at least in part – in mid-August 2011, when it is widely expected to present a new proposal to the MILF. After President Benigno S. “Noynoy” Aquino III took office in June 2010, he said that resolving the conflict in Mindanao was a priority, and the current occupants of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) are determined to find the formula for peace that eluded their predecessors. The idea of “convergence” is the result. While many aspects are unclear, the thinking may run something like this: A 2008 agreement with the MILF broke down just before the final signing because of concerns in Manila about Philippine sovereignty and among non-MILF groups – both Christian and Muslim – in Mindanao about protecting their political and economic interests. The Aquino government knows the same could happen again unless the skeptics are on board. It has postponed scheduled elections in the ARMM and seems to believe that if it handpicks who will run the region for the next two years, it could be possible to clean it up in a way that proves autonomy need not be synonymous with corruption, poverty and private armies. At the same time, positions within the ARMM could be used as sweeteners to entice members of the MNLF, who are unhappy that their own 1996 peace agreement was never fully implemented, to cooperate. The government also hopes that Muslim civil society organizations can help push the MILF and MNLF onto one negotiating track. The question is where reaching a deal with the MILF fits in. Two scenarios seem most likely. In one, the MILF remains on the sidelines while the two-year caretaker regional administration tries to clean up the ARMM. By including the MNLF among its appointees, the Aquino government would make good on its promise to implement the 1996 agreement and permit it to claim some responsibility for progress made. A final settlement with the MILF would be worked out afterwards. In the second, the government might try to involve the MILF in the ARMM government sooner. In the negotiations, the insurgent organization has long proposed that it run an interim administration until a new, larger and more autonomous sub-state is created. No part of this strategy is without risk. There is no guarantee that the government can clean up the ARMM in two years or, even if it did, that this would be enough to bring some of the spoilers on board. A better-functioning ARMM could diminish the enthusiasm of some stakeholders for reaching an agreement with the MILF. Any positions given to MNLF leaders could enhance their sense of entitlement to the whole autonomous government apparatus that they once controlled. Delays as Aquino’s team tries to juggle these components could deepen MILF uncertainty about the government’s intentions. At least there are some interesting ideas swirling around, and a strategy without risk is guaranteed to fail. At the same time, for all the creativity of his peace process advisers, President Aquino himself appears to be a man of extreme caution, who reportedly does not want to agree to anything that cannot be implemented. The emerging strategy appears to be an attempt to ensure that any future agreement on the territory and powers of an expanded autonomous region would be both legitimate and enforceable."

At the end of August, The Moro Islamic Liberation Front rejected a Philippine government offer of “genuine autonomy” saying it fell short of a substate which would have considerably control over area security and resources. The government had previously said that a substate would be unconstitutional (Carlos H. Conde, “Rebels Reject Autonomy Plan for Filipino Muslims,” The New York Times, August 24, 2011).

The Philippine Information Agency, http://www.pia.gov.ph/?m=1&t=1&id=34206, reported, that the Mindanao Peace Education Forum (MinPEF), May 19-20 in Davao City, presented findings that as a result of peace education school children had become less quarrelsome, while Muslim and Christian teachers became more friendly. "They have learned to make friends, greet each other with a smile. There is lesser conflict now as they have come to value peace."

vision of an Islamist caliphate that is fighting in Afghanistan alongside the Taliban. That conflict is moving closer to the 1,400 km Afghan-Tajik border. Many anti-government guerrillas operating in northern Afghanistan are of Central Asian origin and are largely affiliated with the IMU, which seems to be focusing on its fight against the government in Kabul but may at some stage turn its attention northwards. Tajikistan has almost no capacity to tackle a dedicated insurgent force; its efforts to quell problems in Rasht have left its only well-trained counter-insurgency unit with just over 30 fighters. A decade of increased international attention and aid has failed to make Tajikistan more secure or prosperous. A kleptocracy centered on the presidential family has taken much of the money from assistance and aluminum. Popular discontent over poverty and failing services has been kept in check by repression and an example of the dissatisfied as migrant workers. All institutions have been hollowed out, leaving a state with no resilience to cope with natural disasters, economic crises or political shocks. A new generation of guerrillas is emerging, both within Tajikistan and in the IMU. They are mostly men in their twenties with little memory of the Tajik civil war of 1992-1997. This development has punctured two comfortable assumptions: that the IMU was a forlorn rump of ageing jihadists and that Tajiks were too scarred by the memory of the brutal civil war to turn on the regime. The latter has long been central to the analyses of both the Tajik leadership and many foreign governments. The secular, Soviet-trained leadership that emerged from the civil war now finds itself dealing with a society increasingly drawn to observant Islam. The regime’s response to this is as inept as its efforts to bring Rasht to heel. Tajiks studying in foreign Islamic institutions have been called home; the government is trying to control the content of Friday sermons and prevent young people from visiting mosques; it has also dismissed some clerics. Officials allege that the main opposition party, the Islamic Renaissance Party, is becoming increasingly radicalized. Clumsy policies may make this a self-fulfilling prophesy. Jihadist groups, too, are paying more attention to Tajikistan. Limited infiltration of armed guerrillas from Afghanistan has been taking place for several years. The numbers seem relatively small and their intent unknown. Many pass through to other countries – notably Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Some, however, are probably probing for government vulnerabilities. A small number of fighters from the North Caucasus have also been active in Tajikistan in recent years. Radicalisation by osmosis is growing: Tajikistan is gradually becoming part of the virtual jihad. Islamist websites are paying increasing attention to events in the country. Islamic militants in Tajikistan are adopting tactics already well known in other jihadist struggles, notably in the North Caucasus. In September 2010 the country witnessed what was described as its first suicide bombing. And while most military attention is focused on Rasht, the northern border area of Isfara, not far from Khujand, is developing the reputation of a safe haven for armed militants. Billions of dollars of drugs pass through Tajikistan en route to Russia and China every year. There is a strong suspicion within the international community that senior members of the ruling elite are protecting the transit of narcotics from Afghanistan. High-level protection is almost certainly undermining international organizations’ attempts to control the border with Afghanistan – efforts that officials involved admit have had very little effect. At a time of growing menace from Afghanistan, the first line of defense is being kept artificially weak. With the IMU engaged, for now, in Afghanistan, it would be advisable to use whatever breathing space is available to re-evaluate security and aid policies. China, a silent but crucial player in the region with vital security interests, could usefully be drawn into joint consultations, along with the U.S., Russia and others, on measures to assess the security problems and possible responses. Bilateral and multilateral donors should examine the utility of providing assistance to a regime that cannot prevent a very significant proportion being lost to corruption. Conditionality should be adopted as the norm. The Tajik government should be put on notice that a failure to address support for the narcotics trade within its own elite will seriously damage its credibility and outside support. President Rakhmon denies that the North African scenario of popular unrest and revolt could happen in Tajikistan; despite the different circumstances, such confidence is questionable. Tajikistan is so vulnerable that a small, localized problem could quickly spiral into a threat to the regime’s existence. The speed with which the popular mood can move from passivity to anger was demonstrated not just in the Middle East, but much closer to home, in Kyrgyzstan, in April 2010. Tajikistan is not immune.” ICG proposes, “To the Governments of Russia, China and the U.S.: 1. Institute joint consultations with a view to assessing the risks to the Afghan-Tajikistan border, and Afghan-istan, from Afghanistan-based insurgent groups of Central Asian origin or interest. Share information and intelligence on the strength, strategic intentions and capabilities of Islamist insurgent groups like IMU. Discuss joint measures to reinforce border security and inhibit the trans-shipment of narcotics. To the U.S., Other Members of the International Coalition in Afghanistan and Major Donors: 2. Raise explicitly and regularly with the president of Tajikistan and other senior leaders the concerns of the international community that senior members of the leadership are benefiting from narcotics smuggling. Urge the government to take energetic measures to investigate and punish any senior officials found to be active in the trade and warn it of the potential repercussions of failing to take such steps – notably reduction or termination of aid. To the International Community and Donors in Tajikistan: 3. Reconfigure the strategy and philosophy of aid. Make conditionality the norm to reward reform and new approaches and penalize corruption or incompetence. Maintain a flexible aid fund, to be disbursed according to performance. In developing this policy, pay particular attention to developing well-coordinated positions to avoid duplication; investing in long-term institution and capacity-building; and avoiding short-term superficial responses (e.g., investing in new anti-corruption courts, rather than the existing judiciary) or focusing overly on security measures. Investing now in developing aid staff expertise in Tajikistan and Central Asia would pay significant dividends. To the Government of Tajikistan: 4. Engage in open and public dialogue with all Islamist groups
The attempt to negotiate an end to the of Nagorno-Karabakh Between Azerbaijan and Armenia in Moscow, in June failed, as the two sides failed to agree on a framework for the discussion, at a time when the Azeris who were forced to leave the Armenian dominated autonomous region during fighting that ended in 1994 are impatient to return, with many of their young people having taken military training (Ellen Barry, “‘Frozen Conflict’ Between Azerbaijan and Armenia Begins to Boil,” The New York Times, May 31, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/01/world/asia/01azerbaijan.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper; Ellen Barry, “Azerbaijan And Armenia Fail to End Enclave Dispute, The New York Times, June 25, 2011).

Deadly violence between Kurdish Separatists, primarily in Northern Iraq, and Turkey has escalated since June. ICG, “Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency,” Europe Report No.213, September 20, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/213-turkey-ending-the-pkk-insurgency.aspx, is concerned that, “A surge in violence has dashed plans for a negotiated end to the 27-year-old Kurdistan Workers’ Party (Partiya Kar-ke-rên Kurdistan, PKK) insurgency. Since Turkey’s elections in mid-June, clashes have killed more than 110 people, country-wide ethnic friction has hardened opinion, and the government has started bombing PKK bases and talking about an imminent ground offensive in northern Iraq. The PKK must immediately end its new wave of terrorist and insurgent attacks, and the Turkish authorities must control the escalation with the aim to halt all violence. A hot war and militaristic tactics did not solve the Kurdish problem in the 1990s and will not now. A solution can only lie in advancing the constitutional, language and legal reforms of the past decade that have gone part way to giving Tur-kish Kurds equal rights. Given the recent violence, returning to a positive dynamic requires a substantial strategic leap of imagination from both sides. Neither should allow itself to be swept away by armed conflict that has already killed more than 30,000 since 1984. The Turkish Kurd nationalist movement must firmly commit to a legal, non-violent struggle within Turkey, and its elected representatives must take up their seats in parliament, the only place to shape the country-wide reforms that can give Turkish Kurds long-denied universal rights. The Turkish authorities must implement radical judicial, social and political measures that persuade all Turkish Kurds they are fully respected citizens. They should reach out to non-violent nationalists and not abandon long-standing negotiations on disarmament with the PKK, including its jailed leader, Abdullah Öcalan. Although justified in acting resolutely to block the PKK’s recent attacks, the authorities must avoid falling into the trap of tit-for-tat escalation. Many big Turkish strikes against PKK bases in northern Iraq solved nothing in the past. As the more powerful party, the authorities should instead take the lead in creating opportunities to end the fighting. For all its gaps, flaws, and unraveling since late 2009, the promises of the Democratic Opening developed by the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkına Partisi, AKP) remain the best way forward. That initiative counts as Turkey’s most credible attempt to heal the open wounds of conflict between the state and its estimated 15–20 per cent Kurdish-speaking population.” The version of this report details more than a dozen concrete steps the government has taken so far, “including broadening access to Kurdish-language television, legislating the right to make political speeches in Kurdish and overseeing an end to almost all torture in Turkish jails. Others have led to a new sense of freedom in Kurdish cities, high-level talks with Öcalan and a greater readiness by mainstream commentators to discuss previously forbidden ideas, like a change in Öcalan’s jail conditions after a full peace deal or a federal disposition for the Kurdish-majority south east. The outline of a deal to end the insurgency that was also under negotiation – an end to the fighting, major legal reforms, an amnesty and Turkish Kurd acceptance to work within the legal Turkish system – remains the best long-term outcome for both sides. But while making these reforms, the authorities have arrested hundreds of Turkish Kurd nationalists, including many elected municipal officials and other nationalist party members. More than 3,000 nationalist activists are behind bars, many punished as “terrorists” for the non-violent expression of opinions under laws for which the AKP is responsible. On the other hand, what should have been the centerpiece of the Democratic Opening – a ground-breaking PKK amnesty in October 2009 – foun-dered when Turkish Kurd nationalists exploited it for propaganda purposes. AKP’s relatively open-minded approach has won it half the Turkish Kurds’ votes, but the government has to go further and fully engage the other half and its representatives, who are the decision-makers in the Kurdish nationalist movement. It should offer educational options that respect Kur-dish languages and culture and rewrite laws that unfairly jail nationalists as terrorists. It must also ensure its policies are fully implemented by all military, judicial and state bodies. Otherwise, as developments since the June 2011 elections show, the nationalists will feel unconvinced and threatened and be unready to reach a compromise deal. AKP leaders must also speak out to convince mainstream Turkish public opinion that reform is essential to resolve the Kurdish problem: granting universal rights is not a concession; Turkish is not being undermined as the country’s official language; and almost all Turkish Kurds wish to continue living in a united Turkey. The government must order the
security forces to try whenever possible to capture rather than kill PKK insurgents, and should engage the legal Kurdish nationalist party to the maximum extent. For its part, the PKK must immediately end its attacks. The broader Turkish Kurd nationalist movement has to make unambiguously clear that targeting civilians, civil servants, police or military on routine patrols are unlikely to win them the greater rights that Kurds crave and deserve. Instead the deputies elected mainly from the Peace and Democracy Party (Barı ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP) should take their seats in parliament and concentrate on winning change through the government’s promised constitutional reforms. Turkish Kurd nationalists should be specific in their demands and stick to any agreements made, for instance on amnesties for insurgents. They must convince western Turkish opinion that they sincerely have switched from seeking an independent Kurdistan carved out of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran to seeking a democratic future in Turkey. The focus should be on building up a legal national political party, committed to ending the fighting and achieving universal rights through peaceful means. Members of the international community now play only indirect roles in this conflict. Since 2007, the U.S. has supported its NATO ally, Turkey, with real-time intelligence from aerial reconnaissance of the mountainous border with Iraq, where most PKK fighters are based. EU states have woken up in recent years to the danger of allowing the PKK to raise funds and recruit in Europe. But Turkey will be unable to present itself credibly as the regional democratic standard bearer if it chooses military means alone to try to solve its Kurdish problem. Alongside legitimate security measures, it must fully satisfy the universal human rights of its Turkish Kurd citizens. As the security situation deteriorates in Syria and U.S. troops pull out of Iraq – both countries that have in the past been sources of external Kurdish instability for Turkey – Ankara faces an imperative to take courageous steps to resolve the principal domestic roots of its most urgent and dangerous problem.” ICG recommends: “To the Turkish authorities: 1. Relaunch Turkey’s reform program with a clear statement of the long-term aim of granting universal human rights to all ethnic groups and meeting mainstream Kurdish needs through: a) removal of any hint of ethnic discrimination from Turkey’s constitution, the Political Parties Law and other regulations; b) changing the Anti-Terror Law, Penal Code and other regulations to ensure nobody is charged or jailed with disproportionate sentences as terrorists only for demonstrating, speaking or writing in support of Kurdish nationalist ideas; c) legalizing the use of Kurdish or other local languages in all schools where there is sufficient demand while maintaining Turkish as the official first language of education; and d) offering documentation and services in Kurdish and other languages in municipalities and provinces where a majority of the local assembly votes to introduce them. 2. Avoid aerial bombing in northern Iraq against suspected PKK camps and resist popular pressure for ground offensives, or in the case of such action, ensure they are coordinated with Iraqi and other international allies and assiduously avoid hitting civilians and civilian areas. 3. Move from a military to a law-enforcement approach to armed opponents, aiming to capture insurgents alive whenever possible; prepare a full amnesty program; create programs for the rehabilitation of ex-combatants; train police in non-violent methods to deal with protests in the south east; and fully investigate all murders and atrocities in the conflict. 4. Commit to dialogue and compromise with the Turkish Kurd nationalist movement, especially its legitimate representatives in parliament; and lower the 10 per cent national threshold for entering parliament. 5. Work to curb ethnically-tainted media sensationalism about the dispute and ensure equal treatment for all media. 6. Ensure equal treatment of and financial disbursements to all municipalities. To the Turkish Kurd nationalist movement: 7. Insist that the PKK end attacks, recommit to its ceasefire, prepare for disarmament and eventual reintegration of insurgents into society and, in the meantime, keep its bases and deployments in northern Iraq far from civilian areas. 8. The Turkish Kurd nationalist parties should commit publicly to working through legal channels and: a) end the practice of political boycotts and allow the nationalist independent deputies to enter parliament; b) work wholeheartedly on constitutional and legal reform towards the goal of universal rights and the removal of any trace of discrimination in favor of any one ethnicity; c) avoid statements and actions that are bound to inflame western Turkish opinion; and d) engage with AKP on relaunching the Democratic Opening and end the use of violence in demonstrations, including throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails. 9. Stress that the problem for Kurds is not immediate universal education in Kurdish but official recognition of their Kurmanci and Zazaki languages and the ability of teachers to use such mother tongues in schools. 10. Dispel any impression that the Turkish Kurd nationalist movement has a partitionist agenda by committing to strengthen legal Kurdish nationalist parties and working within existing government structures. 11. Draw up specific proposals for improved laws, decentralization, strengthened local government and educational and economic plans that would improve governance country-wide and could win approval from a majority of Turkish citizens.

The settlement of issues between Greece and Turkey, including ending the division of the Island of Cyprus continues to elude the two counties and their communities on the island. ICG, “Turkey and Greece: Time to Settle the Aegean Dispute,” Europe Briefing N°64, July 19, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/B64-turkey-and-greece-time-to-settle-the-aegan-dispute.aspx, comments, “Normalization between Greece and Turkey has come far since tensions in the Aegean Sea threatened war three times between the NATO allies. Trade, investments and mutual cooperation and tourism have taken off, sidelining issues like the Cyprus problem, which first stirred up the Aegean dispute in the early 1970s. Frequent bilateral talks and Turkey’s unofficial 2011 suspension of military over-flights of Greek islands suggest that the time may be ripe for a solution to that dispute. Turkey’s strong new government elected in June is interested in further asserting itself as a responsible regional power, solving problems in its neighbourhood and clearing obstacles to its European
Union (EU) accession. With Athens in the midst of a financial crisis and needing any economic lift and increased security it can find, this unnecessary and still potentially dangerous conflict should be resolved. A good strategy would be a synchronized set of steps to prepare public opinion on both sides, leading to a bilateral agreement and including, if needed, eventual recourse to international adjudication. Even if the relative calm of the last years has pushed the Aegean dispute off the international community's radar, risks of a flare-up remain. Greeks worry about the safety of hundreds of islands much closer to Turkey than to their mainland. Turks fear being cut off from most of the Aegean and farther seas should Greece unilaterally extend the breadth of its territorial sea and establish new maritime jurisdiction zones. The Cyprus reunification negotiations and Turkey’s EU accession process are reaching stalemate. But if Ankara and Athens settle their Aegean dispute, that step could help both to persuade Greek Cypriots of Turkey’s goodwill and to polish Turkey’s EU credentials. Much of the disagreement over the Aegean flared up after Athens engineered a 1974 coup in Nicosia intended to unite Cyprus with Greece, and Turkey invaded, resulting in its occupation of the north of the island. The dispute has now grown beyond maritime zones (territorial seas and continental shelf) to cover airspace, over-flights, militarization of Aegean islands and flight information regions. The Aegean Sea’s geography is complex, with more than 2,400 islands, mostly Greek, but also high seas shipping routes that are Turkey’s economic and security lifeline. Greece argues that international law, as detailed in the widely-ratified 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), gives it an inalienable right to extend its territorial seas to twelve nautical miles from the present six. It describes the delimitation of the continental shelf as the main problem and says it must be settled by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), not bilateral negotiations. For years, Turkey was reluctant to go to the ICJ on Aegean issues and insisted on bilateral talks, although since 1997 it does not rule out judicial means based on mutual consent. Turkey fears that a Greek territorial seas extension could cut off its access to high seas shipping routes and to the Aegean continental shelf. Its parliament has threatened war if Greece unilaterally extends its territorial seas, and Ankara makes symbolic displays of strength that until recently included military flights over inhabited Greek islands. All, including Black Sea states that navigate through the Aegean for access to the Mediterranean and beyond, want to ensure safe, open access and passage. Today, both sides take a more constructive approach. Their foreign ministries have met more than 50 times for “exploratory talks” since 2002, with a view to taking the continental shelf dispute and possibly other unresolved matters to the ICJ. In private, they agree that circumstances have changed enough to settle the dispute, which is far more about domestic politics and psychology than real security concerns. But lack of political will to let go of maximalist positions and confront popular opinion with compromises has kept negotiations in the starting blocks. This is short-sighted. Greece and Turkey would both benefit from solving the long and costly dispute. The economic advantages of ending mock military sparring are especially clear for Greece. But Turkey would also benefit economically, and, as importantly, a settlement could reinvigorate its EU relationship and increase the credibility of its “zero problems” foreign policy with neighbours. A process to achieve this could include the following joint steps: First stage: Turkey formally ends over-flights of inhabited Greek islands. Greece pledges to demilitarize Aegean islands in accordance with commitments it has made in a series of earlier treaties, once a comprehensive Aegean agreement with Turkey is reached and ratified. Turkey pledges to disband its Fourth Army simultaneously or relocate it away from the Aegean. Second stage: both announce readiness to negotiate special Aegean arrangements in line with general UNCLOS principles on equity and special circumstances. Greece publicly recognizes Turkey, as a littoral state, has rights that must be taken into account in delimiting Aegean maritime zones and notes such matters have been arbitrated or adjudicated by other states with coastlines on a shared sea. Turkey publicly commits to ratify UNCLOS and recognizes Greece’s international law right in principle to extend its territorial seas to twelve nautical miles. The sides jointly declare that negotiations will include maintaining high seas corridors to major Turkish ports and the Turkish straits to the Black Sea that can be used for international navigation. Third stage: Greece and Turkey negotiate on delimitation of their territorial seas based in principle on a twelve nautical mile limit. They agree on median lines where these limits overlap and on a reduction of Greek territorial seas where necessary to ensure reasonable high seas corridors for international shipping through the Aegean. They agree in advance that they will authorize the ICJ to adjudicate, pursuant to the principles listed in stages two and three, any dispute about where territorial sea boundaries should be drawn. Fourth stage: Turkey and Greece address any remaining issues, particularly on the continental shelf, and thereafter refer any remaining differences to the ICJ.

Turkey took a positive step, in late September, toward settling its disputes with Greece, by proposing that the UN create a commission to mediate an agreement on revenue sharing between Greek and Turkish Cypriots before any gas exploration is undertaken off that divided Mediterranean Island. Lebanon’s Prime Minister has stated that he had agreed to refrain from proceeding with any accord where the claims of Cyprus, Lebanon and Israel overlap until the mediation is completed. Turkey has threatened to use its navy to prevent any drilling in the area until the two Cypriot communities have come to an agreement on proceeds (“Turkey Seeks Mediation on Drilling,” September 29, 2011).
Thousands of people in more than 30 cities across Turkey took to the streets, in mid-May, to protest a new system of filtering the Internet that opponents consider censorship, as any of the four filtering choices offered consumers by the Information and Communications Technologies Authority (B.T.K.), would limit access to many web sites, beginning in August. However, the B.T.K., asserts that Internet users will still be able to access all content if they choose the “standard” option for filtering. The other filtering options are labeled as “children,” “family” and “domestic” (Sebnem Arsu, “Internet Filters Set Off Protests Around Turkey,” The New York Times, May 15, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/16/world/europe/16turkey.html?ref=todayspaper).

Turkey announced, at the beginning of September, that it would install a radar system designed by the United States as part of a new NATO shield against a missile attack in Europe, with the main threat considered to be Iran. The decision by Turkey, a NATO member, was taken against a backdrop of new Turkish frictions with Iran, and may indicate that Turkey is shifting closer to the American view that Iran’s military assertiveness, most notably its frequent boasts about its growing missile abilities, is a cause for concern. Russia, which has expressed concern about the missile shield despite American assurances that Russia is not the perceived threat, appeared to have no objections to Turkey’s participation, as the Russian representative to NATO, Dmitri O. Rogozin, stated, “The deployment of a radar in Turkey is not a direct threat to Russia’s strategic nuclear forces” (Rick Gladstone, “Turkey to Install U.S.-Designed Radar, in a Move Seen as Blunting Iran’s Missiles,” The New York Times, September 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/03/world/europe/03missile.html?ref=todayspaper).

ICG, “Georgia: The Javakheti Region’s Integration Challenges,” Europe Briefing N°63, May 23, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/ Caucasus/Georgiap/B063-georgia-the-javakheti-regions-integration-challenges.aspx, notes, "The mostly Armenian-populated Javakheti region, along the southern border with Armenia and Turkey, has been a potential flashpoint since Georgia’s 1991 independence, when a paramilitary group practically ran it, and physical links with the rest of the country were weak. After the 2008 Georgia-Russia war, many outside observers, recalling that there had been violent demonstrations in Javakheti in 2005 and 2006, predicted it would be the next to seek autonomy – or more. But the situation has stabilized. Tbilisi has successfully implemented programs to increase the region’s ties to the rest of the country, stopped projects that were seen as discriminatory and reduced the influence of the few remaining radical groups. It should maintain this momentum and take additional steps to guarantee that Javakheti and its 95,000 mainly Armenian speakers feel fully integrated in Georgia and provide an example of respect for minority rights in a region where minorities who feel discriminated against have all too often been attracted to secession, such as in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Lack of knowledge of the state language (Georgian) and poverty encourages migration from the region to Armenia and Russia. A paucity of media reporting on the isolated area helps reinforce feelings of marginalization. Many Javakheti residents do not feel like full-fledged citizens, so prefer to become involved in the political and cultural life of neighboring Armenia, whose nationalist groups are quick to argue that they are the victims of ethnic discrimination due to Georgian government policies and to amplify their grievances over poverty, unemployment, education and the lack of formal laws recognizing Armenian as a “regional language” in Javakheti. However, the current Yerevan authorities are playing a stabilizing role in decreasing tensions and have arrested alleged Javakheti radicals in Armenia. Georgia was concerned about Moscow’s intentions in the region, especially as a major Russian military base – a left-over from the Soviet era – was located there. Some Russian commentators speculated that the Kremlin could use its influence in Javakheti to cause Georgia to renounce its NATO membership aspirations. But the base was closed in 2007, and Moscow lost more of its ability to manipulate local grievances the next year, when it committed to Abkhaz and South Ossetian independence. Nevertheless, in Tbilisi fear that Russia could use the region to destabilize Georgia has increased since the war, even though this presently seems highly unlikely. Although Javakheti poses no immediate threat to Georgia’s territorial integrity, Tbilisi needs to continue to increase its focus on the region, so as to build confidence with local leaders and engender a sense of loyalty towards the state. This would help to avoid interpretations that the local aspects of nationwide problems, such as the economy, reflect ethnic discrimination. To ensure the political stability and sustainable development of Javakheti and improve regional integration, thereby reducing the region’s vulnerability to destabilization, the Georgian government, with the support of international partners, should: provide the public with comprehensive information in Armenian on its policies and facilitate public discussions on issues, such as integration, language and human rights; build the capacities of educated and motivated local officials, further training them in public administration while creating an open and restriction-free environment for local business; provide long-term budgetary resources to make educational projects such as multilingual schools, teacher training, translation of Georgian textbooks into Armenian and Georgian-as-a-second-language courses more systematized and sustainable; do more to attract Georgian language teachers to Javakheti; and give scholarships for higher education to Javakheti Armenians on condition that they return to teach; codify current language and education practices for the minority population in national legislation; honour the spirit of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML) while working toward its ratification; encourage more private investment, with a view to bringing

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the Javakheti economic ultimately to the national level; and offer to fund local television stations’ translations of nationwide programs, including talk shows, and encourage the public broadcaster (TV Channels 1 and 2) and other national television stations to improve coverage of Javakheti. Nationalist groups and media in Armenia should fully acknowledge that Javakheti’s residents are Georgian citizens and refrain from over-politicizing sensitive issues by labeling them cases of ethnic discrimination. Many of Javakheti’s problems are shared by other isolated regions in Georgia. The donor community and international organizations should continue to work with Tbilisi to further develop democratic institutions, judicial independence, rule of law and free media, with a view to improving stability in Javakheti as in the rest of Georgia.

ICG, “Georgia-Russia: Learn to Live like Neighbours,” Europe Briefing N°65, August 8, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/ Caucasus/ Georgia/ 2065-georgia-russia-learn-to-live-like-neighbours.aspx, warns, “Three years after their August 2008 war over the South Ossetia region, tension is growing again between Russia and Georgia, and talks are needed to restore stability and create positive momentum in a situation that is fragile and potentially explosive. Diplomatic relations are suspended, and the two have only started limited negotiations, with Swiss mediation, on Russia’s World Trade Organization (WTO) membership. Yet, they share interests in improving regional security, trade and transport and should start discussions on these rather than continuing to exchange hostile rhetoric that only makes renewed dialogue more difficult. Lack of contact has increased distrust since the fighting ended. For Georgia, Russia is an occupier who is undermining its sovereignty and security. While almost the entire international community regards South Ossetia and Abkhazia as parts of sovereign Georgia, Russia recognized both as independent shortly after the war. Moscow maintains an estimated 7,000 to 9,000 combat, security, and border forces in those two territories and is building and refurbishing permanent military bases there, in violation of the ceasefire brokered by the EU presidency in 2008. Some 20,000 persons displaced that year have been prevented from returning home, and casualties still occur along the administrative border lines (ABLs). The Geneva negotiations set up under the ceasefire to create a more productive security environment and address humanitarian issues, have made only modest headway, including the setting up of an Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) between Georgia, Russia, the de facto authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) for information exchange on security incidents. The sides have been unable to agree, however, on the larger issues that the Geneva negotiations were intended to address, such as the return of displaced persons, and could easily collapse in the present toxic atmosphere. Georgia says it has proof of Russian security services involvement in a series of bombings on its territory. Moscow denies this, while some politicians and officials accuse Georgia, with little evidence, of re-building its military to threaten Abkhazia and South Ossetia and aiding radical Islamist insurgents in Russia. The Georgian government has embarked on an effort to engage with people from Russia’s North Caucasus, but to avoid provocation, it should do this in cooperation with, rather than in spite of, Moscow. The bilateral dispute is highly personalized, with Russia’s leadership saying it will not engage with President Saakashvili. The effects are also felt in what should be unrelated spheres. Georgia is blocking Russia’s bid to join the WTO. Espionage arrests in Georgia are fostering a domestic atmosphere of suspicion less than a year before 2012 parliamentary elections. The two sides communicate mainly through Swiss diplomats. Bern already mediates talks on the WTO dispute and is prepared to facilitate discussions on other issues, like trade, transport or security. Georgia and Russia have signed agreements on transport and energy since the war, so there is a basis for cooperation on which to build even if political willingness is limited. To take advantage of any opportunities and begin the long process to normalize ties, Moscow and Tbilisi should: engage in direct talks, without preconditions, on a range of subjects, with mediation, if needed, by a mutually acceptable third party. This should complement, not substitute for, the existing Geneva process; and de-escalate rhetoric about bombings and support for terrorism and agree to joint investigations or ones carried out by third parties. Meanwhile, to improve security in and around Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the international community should: continue to press Moscow to withdraw to positions held before the 2008 conflict, facilitate the return home of displaced persons and allow the EUMM full access to South Ossetia and Abkhazia; and encourage the parties to exchange information on their security forces and their movements in areas near the ABLs.

European Developments

Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, met, in late May, in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad with his counterparts from Germany, Guido Westerwelle, and Poland, Radek Sikorski as part of an effort to build cooperation, particularly on political, security, energy and visa issues, including advancing on concrete projects. Foreign Minister Lavrov stated Russia wanted “some kind of written guarantees from NATO that the missiles will not threaten Russia.” In the past, Russia has threatened to place missiles in Kaliningrad — a small area with a population of nearly one million that is sandwiched between two European Union countries, Poland and Lithuania — in response
Soon after, nationalists encountered obstruction from the international community; as an emergency measure, the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed, creating a loose union in which the two entities retained most governing competencies, but the war itself never really ended; it was only interrupted by the Dayton peace process.

Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs have had three conflicting views on what kind of a state they can share. According to former President Slobodan Milosevic, one side or party. Local leaders demand support from OHR and state institutions alike and ignore rulings that go against them.

Serb officials, not least because the attempts would likely be defied and make a referendum even more detrimental if the harm were compounded by an attempt to annul RS’s referendum decision on the Federation constitution by blocking formation of the Federation authorities. That suspension was controversial – a main state institution said illegally – and the rule of law. It would be further detrimental if the harm were compounded by an attempt to annul RS’s referendum decision or to impose sanctions on Serb officials, not least because the attempts would likely be defied and make a referendum even more destabilizing.

The international community needs to step back from over-involvement in local politics to calibrate goals to a realistic appraisal of diminished powers and best guarantee stability. Then work needs to begin to create a context for renewing Dayton and achieving EU membership. All involved share blame for the crisis. Two rival Croat Democratic Union parties (HDZ, HDZ 1990) that represent most of the Croat population, violated the Federation constitution by blocking formation of governments and refusing to send delegates to the entity’s House of Peoples from the four cantons they control. The two HDZs and the biggest winners of the October 2010 elections, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), all rejected reasonable internationally-brokered coalition proposals. The SDP then formed a Federation government in violation of the entity constitution and against the advice of the state-level Central Election Commission (CEC). They also chose a dangerous moment to create a Croat Assembly. The RS, in particular President Dodik, provocatively called a referendum on laws imposed by the High Representative, Bosnia’s international governor, especially regarding the state court and prosecutor, issues outside RS jurisdiction. Dodik’s divisive, nationalist speech at the RS National Assembly called into question his commitment to reconciliation and a multi-ethnic Bosnia. On 27 March, the High Representative suspended the CEC ruling annulling formation of the Federation authorities. That suspension, which had the consequence of disrupting the normal appeal process, has undermined state bodies – most directly the CEC – and the rule of law. It would be further detrimental if the harm were compounded by an attempt to annul RS’s referendum decision or to impose sanctions on Serb officials, not least because the attempts would likely be defied and make a referendum even more destabilizing.

The EU has lost credibility due to its inability for the past nine months to strengthen its delegation in Bosnia and give a new head – who is yet to be appointed – adequate authority and powers to vigorously direct international policy. Virtually all international institutions in Bosnia have lost authority; many, including the Office of the High Representative (OHR), are seen as favoring one side or party. Local leaders demand support from OHR and state institutions alike and ignore rulings that go against them. There is no broadly respected authority in the country, only regional or partisan champions. Since Yugoslavia broke up, Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs have had three conflicting views on what kind of a state they can share. According to former Slovenian president Milan Kučan, a close observer, “these three concepts never really met, let alone reconciled ... then these three concepts were turned into war aims, but the war itself never really ended; it was only interrupted by the Dayton peace agreement”. Dayton created a loose union in which the two entities retained most governing competencies, and important state decisions required consensus of the three major ethnic groups; many posts were assigned by ethnic quotas. This system soon encountered obstruction from nationalists; as an emergency measure, the international community endowed the High

At least 8 people were killed and 16 wounded in a pair of suicide bomb blasts near a parliament building in a densely populated district of Grozny, Chechnya. August 23, in the now decade long low level guerrilla warfare in Chechnya that has spread to other heavily Muslim populated areas of Russia (“Bomb Blasts Rock Capital of Chechnya; 8 Are Killed,” The New York Times, August 30, 2011). Following the latest round of economic sanctions on the authoritarian regime in Belarus because of its crackdown on the opposition, the government of Belarus suspended, at least temporarily, its agreement to give up its supply of enriched Uranium, seen as a measure to limit nuclear proliferation and terrorism (Michael Schwirtz, “Belarus Suspends Pact to Give Up Enriched Uranium, The New York Times, August 20. 2011). In early October, the Belarus parliament declared illegal the so-called silent protests that have swept across the former Soviet republic in the last few months as it struggles to overcome a financial crisis (“Belarus: ‘Silent Protests’ Outlawed,” The New York Times, October 5, 2011).
Representative with broad powers to keep the state running. Since then, it has supported further centralization and less consensual decisions, hoping to make the state more functional. This in effect promoted the Bosniak vision at the expense of the Serbs and Croats. It also made Bosnia reliant on regular interventions by High Representatives. The Federation government crisis and the RS referendum expose two sides of a general, Bosnian problem. In the Federation, community rights and majority rule collide. In RS, the contest is over the international community's role in governing Bosnia and the balance between state and entity prerogatives. Both represent assaults on the vision of Bosnia's future offered by OHR and accepted by most Bosniak parties. That vision would guarantee that the state could not be sabotaged or paralyzed by ethnic conflict. Yet, most Croats and Serbs reject it. To resolve half of the immediate crisis and form non-contested Federation authorities: the High Representative should lift his suspension and allow the CEC decision to take effect; and the Federation House of Peoples should meet in full composition, elect the president and, with the House of Representatives, name a government that complies with the entity constitution; the president and government should only transact urgent business until they have been officially inaugurated; To resolve the other half of the immediate crisis: the RS National Assembly should retract its decision to hold a referendum; if the referendum goes ahead, President Dodik should publicly rule out any unilateral acts challenging the Bosnian state court (the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina), such as withdrawing Serb representatives or rejecting its jurisdiction. Even though the situation is deeply troubling, the international community should avoid hasty decisions that could deepen the crisis and push the parties to maximalist positions. This is not the time to try to micro-manage the crisis with technical measures or sanctions. Instead, the 9 May UN Security Council discussion on Bosnia and the 13 May European Foreign Affairs Council should be used to launch a strategic rethink of international policy. This should culminate before the planned mid-June RS referendum. Specifically: the international community should convene a high-level conference to set its goals in Bosnia, reconfirm its commitment to the Dayton Peace Agreement, remove the High Representative from local politics, develop plans to relocate his office outside Bosnia and give the EU the capacities to become a leading actor.


Matthew Brunwasser, “Nationalism Fading From Serbia’s Political Stage,” The New York Times, June 6, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/06/world/europe/06serbia.html?ref=world, finds that nationalism is no longer a major force in Serbia, for although the same small strongly nationalist minority continues to exist, changes in political parties have set the stage for the leadership of the country not to engage it.

On the potentially violently conflictual day Kosovo promised that it would take full control of its borders for the first time since its declaration of independence in 2008, by taking over two boarders posts between Kosovo and Serbia in the Serbian enclave in the north of Kosovo, a multi lateral NATO led (KFOR) force instead took over the two border posts, September 16, seeking to prevent violence and calm the highly tense atmosphere in the Serb-dominated north of Kosovo (Mathew Brunwasser, “Peacekeepers Take Serbia-Kosovo Border Posts,” September 16, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/17/world/europe/17iht-kosovo17.html?ref=world). On September 27, Kosovo Serbs protesting the NATO take over of he border posts clashed with NATO peace keepers near the posts, leaving 11 people wounded. A NATO spokesman said that the fighting was initiated by Serbian protesters throwing pipe bombs at the peacekeepers, wounding four of them ("Kosovo: A NATO Clash with Serbs," The New York Times, September 29, 2011).

Macedonia has made substantial progress toward completing its internal peace process, but needs to do more, according to ICG, “Macedonia: Ten Years after the Conflict, Europe Report N°212, August 11, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/balkans/macedonia/212-macedonia-ten-years-after-the-conflict.aspx, which proposes, “Ten years after signature of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) that ended fighting between the country’s ethnic Albanians and Macedonians, much of the agreement has been implemented, and a resumption of armed conflict is unlikely. Macedonia is justified in celebrating its success in integrating
minorities into political life, but inter-party and inter-ethnic tensions have been growing for five years. While this part of the Balkans looks to eventual EU membership to secure stability, it remains fragile, and worrying trends – rising ethnic Macedonian nationalism, state capture by the prime minister and his party, decline in media and judicial independence, increased segregation in schools and slow decentralization – risk undermining the multi-ethnic civil state Macedonia can become. Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, who has just formed a new government, should work closely with his Albanian coalition partners and opposition parties to pass and implement the measures needed for more democratization, inter-ethnic reconciliation and a solution to the name dispute with Greece. On 5 June Macedonia held elections that international observers assessed as generally positive and whose results political parties accepted quickly. The opposition Alliance of Social Democrats in Macedonia (SDSM) coalition increased its presence in parliament from 27 to 42 seats. Re-elected to lead the government, but with ten less seats, Gruevski and his Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) will now have to cooperate more closely with their Albanian coalition partner, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI). Albanian parties should strengthen their loyalty to the state and engage more substantially in policy and decision-making. The new more pluralistic and balanced 123-seat parliament should foster greater cooperation among political elites and help overcome the highly polarized environment that was exacerbated during the SDSM’s four-month parliamentary boycott. A more balanced legislature should also temper the prime minister’s state-sponsored nationalism, most evident in the hugely expensive and divisive urban renewal program in Skopje, built around a nationalist vision of ancient Macedonia that is offensive to the country’s minorities and Greece alike. The failures to secure NATO membership in April 2008 and to begin negotiations over membership with the EU in 2009, four years after obtaining candidate status, helped Gruevski secure support for his “national renaissance” policy line. The resulting increased emphasis on nationalism, however, is dividing Macedonians unhealthfully between “patriots” and “traitors”, irritating Albanians and discouraging Macedonia’s friends in the EU. The previous government coalition captured many state institutions, especially the parliament that it dominated. Political dialogue broke down, and Gruevski and the SDSM leader attacked each other in highly personal terms. Legislative boycotts and laws passed under emergency procedures undermined democratic debate. VMRO-DPMNE and DUI party members were favored for public jobs, without regard for merit. The government reduced criticism in parts of the highly politicized media by buying favors through advertising. Selective fiscal investigation into and subsequent forced bankruptcy of the opposition-leaning television station A1 and detention of its owner were viewed at home and abroad as silencing criticism. As under past administrations, the judiciary lacked independence. Relations between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians also suffered. The government was criticized for not doing enough to ensure equitable representation, implement the law on languages and oppose cultural exclusion. At the same time, segregation in the education system was becoming more entrenched. Although a good institutional framework exists to promote and encourage inter-ethnic dialogue, relations suffered from weak central government support. The prevalent view among much of the Albanian political elite is that the DUI must be more forceful in articulating the needs of ethnic Albanians than it was in the previous coalition. Albanians are especially frustrated at successive governments’ inability to resolve the name issue. As Crisis Group has repeatedly argued, the dispute risks derailing the strategies of the EU and NATO to stabilize Macedonia and the wider region through integration and enlargement. Years of UN-mediated negotiations have made little progress, and further talks have not been scheduled. Macedonia in particular appears to be waiting for an International Court of Justice (ICJ) verdict in the case it brought for alleged violations of the 1995 Interim Agreement that regulates bilateral relations in the absence of a name agreement. The financial crisis in Greece and popular resentment of austerity measures there do not make it easy for the Greek leadership to focus on resolving the dispute. Nevertheless, Macedonia should seek decisive progress so as not to miss the opportunity to get the go-ahead for membership negotiations when the EU makes new enlargement decisions in December. Citizens of all ethnic backgrounds and political persuasion have reason to celebrate Ohrid’s tenth anniversary. The OFA has done much to reduce discrimination and inequality and maintain unity. It is still needed to forge a common understanding of the civic state. During his immediately preceding term as prime minister, however, Gruevski sought to build a strong state identity based on Macedonia’s ancient history, from which ethnic Albanians feel excluded. They are more focused on advocating a highly decentralized federal and bilingual state that ethnic Macedonians see as threatening to the country’s survival. The two concepts have little in common; managing and shaping them so that they can provide mutual support or at least coexist constructively is difficult. But bringing Macedonia’s political and ethnic elites and ordinary citizens closer together around a shared vision of a unified multi-national state is a challenge that the new government cannot avoid.” ICG Recommends: “To Strengthen Democracy and the Rule of Law: 1. The new government and opposition should improve dialogue in parliament. Party leaders should meet regularly to discuss major domestic and international issues. Cooperation at the committee level should be strengthened. Boycotts should be avoided. 2. The government should bolster implementation of laws to ensure the judiciary is free of political influence. It should stop exerting pressure on the media, public institutions and civil society. A parliamentary oversight committee on the media should be established. 3. The new government should invest in capacity building for members of non-majority communities and ensure that all ethnic communities are represented in public institutions equitably. Hiring based on political party affiliation should stop. 4. The EU, U.S., and other international partners should prioritize support for strengthening independent institutions and encourage media and civil society to monitor those institutions’ work. 5. The government should make EU reforms a priority,
and the EU should work with Macedonia and start screening its legislation to quicken harmonization with the EU body of law (acquis communitaire). To Further Improve Inter-ethnic Relations: 6. All political parties should celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, acknowledging that many of its provisions have been implemented, but continuous dialogue and additional financial resources are needed to implement the law on languages and to achieve the decentralization, equal treatment and equitable representation necessary to ensure that Macedonia is a multi-ethnic civic state where no group feels discriminated against. 7. Through more consensual work on curriculum and textbook development and joint activities in schools, ethnic Macedonian and Albanian elites should develop and implement the integrated education project intended to unite the country’s youth, and donors should give them support. Only new history books that have been developed consistent with this strategy should be printed and distributed. 8. The language law must be fully implemented, with use of Albanian further extended to state institutions; Skopje should be made a bilingual capital. 9. The parliamentary committee on inter-ethnic relations and the municipal-level inter-ethnic committees should meet more regularly, monitor inter-ethnic issues and contribute to policy-making more effectively. To Resolve the Name Dispute and Advance Macedonia’s Euro-Atlantic Integration: 10. Skopje should accept the UN mediator’s proposal for using “Republic of North Macedonia” or a similar formula with a geographic qualifier as the name of the country for all international purposes; promptly after it does so, NATO should admit Macedonia, and the EU should begin membership negotiations. 11. Athens should acknowledge the national identity and language of its northern neighbor as “Macedonian”; Skopje should reverse its decision to rename its airport after Alexander the Great and desist from similar moves certain to provoke Athens, especially within the context of its Skopje 2014 project.

Norway suffered its worst massacre since World War, in late July, when Anders Behring Breivik, an anti-Muslim Christian extremist, killed at least 93 people in attacks at government offices in Oslo and the youth camp of Norway’s leading political party. In court testimony, Breivik had said he “believes that he needed to carry out these acts to save Norway” and western Europe from “cultural Marxism and Muslim domination,” and he accused the Labor Party of failing to prevent a “mass importing of Muslims” into Norway. Breivik’s web site showed that he was deeply influenced by a small group of American bloggers and writers who have warned for years about the threat from Islam, lanç his 1,500-page manifesto with quotations from them, as well as copying multiple passages from the tract of the Unabomber (Steven Erlanger and Alan Cowell, “Norway Suspect Hints That He Did Not Act Alone,” The New York Times, July 25, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/26/world/europe/26oslo.html?_r=1&hp; and Scott Shane, “Killings in Norway Spotlight Anti-Muslim,” The New York Times, July 24, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/25/us/25debate.html?ref=world).

Judy Dempsey, “German Politics Faces Grass-Roots Threat,” The New York Times, May 1, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/europe/02germany.html?ref=todayspaper, reports, “They are called ‘Wutbürger.’ And they have become the bane of every political party in Germany. Loosely translated as ‘enraged citizen,’ the Wutbürger has stepped outside the classical political and parliamentary system by organizing demonstrations and town-hall meetings, protest marches and sit-ins.” All over Germany spontaneous demonstrations have arisen, largely by people in the political center who feel political decisions are made over their heads, over a variety of issues. Some of the issues are national, as with many demonstrations against nuclear power. Some of the issues and actions are local, such as the protest in Stuttgart, the regional capital of Baden-Württemberg, at which tens of thousands of citizens have protested the construction of a new railroad station, Stuttgart 21, that would serve as a hub for fast connections between German cities and Paris. Similarly, in Kleinmachnow, near Berlin, thousands of residents have been holding demonstrations against the capital’s new international airport, scheduled to open next year at Schönefeld. In the eastern state of Brandenburg, local citizens marched successfully against plans by the army to continue using a huge military base for practice shooting. Partly as a result of the Stuttgart protests, Baden-Württemberg voters, in March, ended the leading party’s 58-year rule by electing the Greens, who for the first time in Germany will head a state government. The new premier, Winfried Kretschmann, has promised to hold a referendum on the future of Stuttgart 21.

Similarly, grass roots politics with many demonstrations in Spain, energized by a high percentage of young people claiming no political party connections, and moved by the economic crisis which includes 21% unemployment, have been demanding greater democratic participation, an end to political corruption, economic improvement, a cut in military spending, the closing of nuclear power plants and repeal of some laws, such as recent legislation aimed at punishing digital piracy, and played a major role in the defeat in regional elections of Spain’s leading Socialist Party, in late May (Raphael Minder, “Spain’s Governing Party Suffers Heavy Losses,” The New York Times, May 22, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/23/world/europe/23spain.html?ref=world).

In England, Thousands of Public Sector workers went on strike against the conservative government’s austerity plans, at the end of June, (Sarah Lyall, “British Plan For Austerity Sets Off Strikes,” The New York Times, July 1,
In Libya, in late August, the collection of rebel forces, with NATO assistance, after a number of slowly achieved victories, captured Qaddafi’s stronghold in the center of Tripoli – already effectively liberated by uprisings in many of its neighborhoods as Qaddafi’s forces collapsed – sending Qaddafi into hiding as some of his family fled the country. As of August 31, some scattered fighting continued with pro-Qaddafi groups around the North of the country, as the work of attempting to blend the divided insurgent factions into a collaborative functioning government and nation become the major concern of the day. This will not be an easy accomplishment. Libya has always been divided into tribal and other factions that Qaddafi manipulated to hold power, but which accelerated his downfall once his position was weakened. The division is obvious, at the end of August, in just insurgent occupied Tripoli, where the disparate brigades of different factions occupy separate parts of the city, each marked by that faction’s graffiti attesting to its key role in the victory. At least in two cases, interfacational violence has occurred. In the first instance, reported in May, there were a series of unsolved killings of people who formerly worked for the Qaddafi regime in the rebel stronghold of Benghazi, that appeared to be rooted in revenge and which raised the specter of a death squad, indicating that there still be a role for NATO to play in protecting civilians. In the second, more recent instance, a leading general in the insurgent command was assassinated by a member of a rival faction, threatening wider interfacational violence, which the collective leadership was able to facilitate preventing. On September 11, 2011, two rival groups of anti Qaddafi militias, from different towns fought deadly pitched battle with each other. The task of building fractured groups into a peaceful, well working nation is a difficult one, but as can only be successfully achieved by dispersing power among the factions, giving all major roles in the new government and society, and going forward on the basis of mutual dialog (none of which has yet been attained in Iraq), success would most likely bring a well working society, though it would still take considerable time to build a participatory culture. In early September, the interim government was making a beginning of national integration by attempting to disarm and disband all militias, integrating many of their members into the national army and police. Meanwhile, largely unfounded roamers that Black African Mercenaries supported Qaddafi in the civil war have lead to an indiscriminate imprisoning of sub-Saharan immigrants in the country, without evidence as to whether they were mercenaries (David Kirkpatrick and Rod Nordland, “Tripoli Divided as Rebels Jostle to Fill Power Vacuum,” August 30, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/31/world/africa/31tripoli.html?_r=1; Kareem Fahim, “Killings and Rumors Unsettle a Libyan City,” The New York Times, May 10, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/11/world/africa/11benghazi.html?_r=1; Rod Nordland, “Libya’s Interim Leaders Aim to Harness Rebel Fighters,” he New York Times, September 3, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/04/world/middleeast/04libya.html?_r=1; David D. Kirkpatrick, “Libyans Turn Wrath on Dark-Skinned Migrants,” The New York Times, September 4, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/05/world/africa/05migrants.html?_r=1; and “12 die” in fight between rival anti-Gadhafi groups,” Ma’an New agency, September 11, 2011, http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?id=419314).


In a major effort to try to respond to calls for more democracy and accountability expressed in numerous demonstrations, King Mohammed VI of Morocco, in June, announced proposed constitutional changes that would reduce his own nearly absolute powers and name a prime minister from the largest party elected to Parliament as head of the executive branch. The prime minister, who would be formally called “president of the government,” would be able to appoint government officials and ministers and would have the power to dissolve Parliament. The judiciary would be an independent branch; the king has headed the council that approves
all judges. The king would remain head of the Islamic faith in Morocco and be called “commander of the faithful.” But a reference to the king in the current Constitution as “sacred” would be replaced by the expression: “The integrity of the person of the king should not be violated.” Islam would remain the state religion, but there would be a new guarantee of religious freedom. The proposals was to be put to a national referendum on July 1 instead of in September as originally planned. The plan makes considerable change, but falls considerably short of the constitutional monarchy that many protesters have demanded and leave the king with absolute control over the military and religious matters. In another response to demands from protesters, Mr. Bashir may instead be playing out a carefully devised strategy meant to ensure just one thing: that when Southern Sudan declares independence next month, his northern government controls as much oil as possible, or at least is richly compensated.

Tunisia, in June, postponed the first election since the change of regimes, the elections for a constituent assembly, from July 24 to October 24, partly for technical reasons, but also in response to political pressures. The delay is likely to help the newer parties (David D. Kirkpatrick, “Tunisia Postpones Elections, Possibly Aiding New Parties,” The New York Times, June 9, 2011).

Algeria continues to be embroiled in eruptions of struggle, as exemplified by the August 26 attack on a military academy in Cherchel, 112 miles west of the capital, Algiers, that killed at least 18 officers in training, and wounded some 20 others. There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the regional arm of Al Qaeda, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, has been blamed for many similar attacks (“Algeria: Attack on Military School Kills at Least 18 Trainee Officers,” The New York Times, August 26, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/27/world/africa/27briefs-Algeria.html?ref=todayspaper).

There are signs of a major war developing over disputed oil rich territory as — Northern Sudanese troops seized the contested town of Abyei, May 21, as the south prepares to become the world’s newest country (“North Sudan Is Said to Have Taken Contested Town on South Border,” The New York Times, May 21, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/22/world/africa/22sudan.html?ref=todayspaper). A few days later, Sudan was threatening to take two additional areas in the south: Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan States, two disputed areas with long histories of conflict that remain well armed. The North’s actions are in violation of the peace process and threaten to renew major fighting (Jeffrey Gettleman and Josh Kron, “Sudan Threatens to Occupy 2 More Disputed Regions,” The New York Times, May 29, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/30/world/africa/30sudan.html?ref=world). At the beginning of September, northern Sudan began a major offensive in Blue Nile, which lies along the disputed border of Southern Sudan, with whom Sudan has yet to reach agreement on how to share oil profits (Jeffrey Gettleman, “Sudan Attacks Disputed Border State,” The New York Times, September 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/03/world/africa/03sudan.html?ref=todayspaper). In May, Northern and southern Sudanese officials agreed to a preliminary arrangement on demilitarizing the border between them, though some officials from both sides immediately expressed skepticism of the deal, particularly its ability to resolve the dispute over the contested Abyei area, and in light of late events it is unclear if the agreement has much meaning (Jeffrey Gettleman and Josh Kron, “North and South Sudan Tentatively Agree to Demilitarize Disputed Border,” The New York Times, May 31, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/01/world/africa/01sudan.html?ref=todayspaper). In June, the UN authorized the deployment of 4200 Ethiopian troops to Abyei as peacekeepers (“Sudan: UN Authorizes Deployment,” The New York Times, June 28, 2011).

Jeffrey Gettleman, “Brinkmanship in Sudan as a Deadline Nears,” The New York Times, June 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/06/world/africa/06sudan.html?ref=world, reported, “In the past few weeks, President Omar Hassan al-Bashir of Sudan, who has been accused of orchestrating a genocide in Darfur, seems to be steering his country back toward war. His troops and tanks violently annexed Abyei, a flashpoint town on the contested border dividing northern and southern Sudan. Then he sent thousands of soldiers into two other volatile areas, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan, while continuing a crippling blockade of the south, strangling it of food and fuel. At the same time, renegade southern militias, widely believed to be armed by Mr. Bashir’s intelligence services, have stepped up their attacks, hitting army bases, snatching weapons and stretching southern troops thin as they scramble to meet all these threats, often hijacking United Nations vehicles to get to the battlefield. But diplomats and analysts believe that, rather than trying to start a major conflict, Mr. Bashir may instead be playing out a carefully devised strategy meant to ensure just one thing: that when southern Sudan declares independence next month, his northern government controls as much oil as possible, or at least is richly compensated.”

Sudan and South Sudan agreed, September 8, 2011, to pull back forces before the end of September from the disputed Abyei region, claimed by both sides, with representatives of the two countries meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to try to reduce tensions along their border (Sudan and South Sudan to Withdraw From
With the session of Southern Sudan approaching in July, the Sudanese Army and its allied militias have undertaken a major offensive to crush rebel fighters in the Nuba Mountains of central Sudan, bombing thatch-roofed villages, executing elders, burning churches and pitching another region of the country into crisis, as tens of thousands of rebel fighters have refused to disarm, digging in the hills. The Sudanese Army has sealed off the area, threatened to shoot down United Nations helicopters, detained several United Nations peacekeepers, subjected them to “a mock firing squad.” Sudan is making it nearly impossible for aid agencies and monitors to work in the region. There are reports of the Sudanese army undertaking indiscriminate bombing and shelling, and executing civilians, indicating a possible ethnic cleansing. The Nubian rebels are demanding political reform and autonomy, a familiar demand around Sudan’s marginalized edges that has set off insurgencies in Darfur in the west, as well as eastern and southern Sudan. There are numerous divisions in northern Sudan. Non-Arab people in the Nuba Mountains, Darfur, Blue Nile State, Kasala and along the length of the Nile to Egypt have long been resisting an increasingly isolated government dominated by a small group of Arabs and led by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who has been indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court (Jeffrey Gettleman, As Secession Nears, Sudan Steps Up Drive to Stop Rebels, “The New York Times,” June 20, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/21/world/africa/21sudan.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper; and Josh Kron, “Ethnic Killings by Army Reported in Sudanese Mountains,” The New York Times, July 20, 2011).

Earlier, before the independence of South Sudan, ICG, “Divisions in Sudan’s Ruling Party and the Threat to the Country’s Stability,” Africa Report N°174, May 4, 2011, commented, “When the South officially secedes, on 9 July 2011, the North’s problems will change little. The National Congress Party (NCP) has not addressed the root causes of Sudan’s chronic conflicts and has exacerbated ethnic and regional divisions. Facing multiple security, political, social and economic challenges, it is deeply divided over the way forward. Its security hardliners see these as minor issues, not imminent threats to their survival, and remain committed to a military solution to chronic instability. Others call for internal party reform – a “second republic” – to address the NCP’s problems but are giving little thought to resolving those of the country. The party has mobilized its security apparatus to suppress any revolts, has decided to end the debate about Sudan’s diversity and identity, remains committed to an Arab-Islamic identity for all Sudanese and keeping Sharia and is ready to sub-divide key states to accommodate political barons. These are ad-hoc decisions that set the stage for continued violence that may not be containable and could lead to further fragmentation of the country. Power is now increasingly centralized in a small clique around President Bashir. However, this centralization is not reflected in the armed forces. Concerned about a possible coup, he and close associates have fragmented the security services and have come to rely increasingly on personal loyalty and tribal allegiances to remain in power. Meanwhile, their party has been allowed to flounder, having long ago lost its strategic vision and policy coherence. Deeply divided and more concerned with staying in power, the leadership more often reacts to events rather than implements a well-thought-out national program. This is best illustrated by the protracted, very public dispute between Nafie Ali Nafie (NCP deputy chairman for organizational affairs and presidential adviser) and Ali Osman Taha (second vice president of Sudan) and the wildly diverging statements made by party leaders in the run-up to the South’s self-determination referendum. The recent dismissal from his posts of the formerly powerful Salah Gosh reflects divisions within the NCP that have the potential to lead to the party’s collapse or a coup. Bashir, Nafie and the security hardliners have concluded that the opposition parties are very weak and reject their call for a more inclusive constitutional conference to draft a permanent constitution after the South secedes in July. They think they have the situation in Darfur under control and discount the possibility of conflict in the transitional areas of Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile, believing that those regions are divided, and their military forces are not an imminent threat to Khartoum now that the South is focused on other issues. They continue to pursue divide and rule tactics to prevent the emergence of a unified counterweight to NCP dominance of the centre. Taha and more pragmatic allies are willing to negotiate with other political forces but are undermined by the security hardliners. They also seemingly remain committed to the party’s goal of imposing an Arab-Islamic identity on all of what remains of Sudan – an extremely divisive issue in a country that still includes hundreds of ethnic and linguistic groups. In the absence of accountability, the leadership enjoys absolute freedom and has institutionalized corruption to its benefit, in the process rewarding political barons who can deliver their constituencies by giving them lucrative government positions to maintain their loyalty. The governors of each state run their own patronage network within their respective regions. Despite the seemingly successful conclusion of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the accord has failed to resolve the issues that drive chronic conflict in Sudan. It was intended to lead to the “democratic transformation” of the country. However, during its six year interim period (to end formally in July), the NCP resisted meaningful implementation of many provisions, because they would seriously threaten its grip on power. The opportunity to maintain Sudan’s unity and to establish a stable, democratic state was lost. Not surprisingly, Southerners chose separation when they voted in January 2011. The remainder of the country thus remains saddled with the “Sudan Problem”, where power, resources
and development continue to be overly concentrated in the centre, at the expense of and to the exasperation of the peripheries. A “new south” is emerging in the hitherto transitional areas of Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile that – along with Darfur, the East and other marginal areas – continues to chafe under the domination of the NCP. Unless their grievances are addressed by a more inclusive government, Sudan risks more violence and disintegration. The call by the opposition parties for a wider constitutional review conference suggests a way forward. Such a conference should be seen as a more extensive national consultative process, to accommodate the popular consultations in the transitional areas and the Darfur people-to-people dialogue. Those latter two processes, if run separately, will not lead to political stability and lasting peace in the whole country. The cardinal issue of governance must be addressed nationally. To encourage this, a united international community, particularly the African Union (AU), Arab League and the UN, should put pressure on the NCP to accept a free and unhindered national dialogue to create a national stabilization program that includes defined principles for establishing an inclusive constitutional arrangement accepted by all.

Southern Sudan, one of the world’s poorest and least developed nations, which became independent in July, has suffered from fighting between numerous armed factions — both before and after formal independence — and its security forces are widely known to be undisciplined and violent. Aid groups have recently complained about government security personnel hijacking humanitarian convoys. This situation was illuminated, August 20, when South Sudanese police officers beat up the head of the United Nations human rights division in South Sudan, Benedikt Sannoh, when he refused to allow police to search his luggage in a hotel in the capital, leaving him in the hospital and drawing a sharp rebuke from the United Nations. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated, “The High Commissioner considers this incident to be totally unacceptable. Unless those responsible are held to account, this will send a chilling message to all those working in the defense of human rights in South Sudan.” This is not the first time police officers have been accused of serious abuses. United Nations officials and witnesses said that police commanders and soldiers beat and raped police recruits at a training center outside Juba last year. The recruits were also subjected to harsh training exercises, leading to the deaths of as many as 100 people (Jeffrey Gettleman and Josh Kron, “South Sudan Police Assault U.N. Human Rights Official,” the New York Times, August 26, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/27/world/africa/27sudan.html?ref=todayspaper).

The combination of serious drought, war, restrictions on aid groups and other actions, including the breaking up of aid camps by the Al Shabab militia, are contributing to a widening famine across much of Somalia. At the end of summer and in early fall 2011, Al Shabab was being pushed out of many areas by other forces, some affiliated with the provisional government, making it somewhat easier to deliver aid to some areas. But particularly along the Kenyan Boarder, Al Shabab has been counter attacking, attempting to regain territory, often forcing refugees away from aid stations. With the drought, agricultural production is just a quarter of what it’s normally level causing food prices to continue to soar. Some 4 million Somalis, more than half the population are facing famine. Another rising concern is disease. Measles, cholera, malaria and typhoid have already begun to sweep through displaced persons’ camps, where sick and starving people have congregated in the hopes of getting aid. Aid officials predict that the drought, which has hit Kenya and Ethiopia as well, will end in October, but the ensuing rains could raise the risk of waterborne and infectious diseases. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network and the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit, financed by the American government and the United Nations, stated in early September, “A massive, multisectoral response is critical to prevent additional deaths and total livelihood/social collapse. Assuming current levels of response continue, famine is expected to spread further over the coming four months” (“U.N. Officials Say Famine Is Widening in Somalia,” The New York Times, September 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/world/africa/06somalial.html?ref=todayspaper; Jeffery Gettleman, “Fighting Erupts On Somalia’s Border With Kenya,” The New York Times, September 30, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/world/africa/shabab-militants-attack-near-kenya-somalia-border.html?ref=todayspaper).

Jeffrey Gettleman, “As an Enemy Retreats, Clans Carve Up Somalia,” The New York Times, September 9, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/10/world/africa/10somalial.html?ref=todayspaper, states, “For the first time in years, the Shabab Islamist group that has long tormented Somalis is receding from several areas at once,... handing the Transitional Federal Government an enormous opportunity to finally step outside the capital and begin uniting this fractious country after two decades of war. Instead, a messy, violent, clannish scramble is emerging over who will take control. This is exactly what the United States and other donors had hoped to avoid by investing millions of dollars in the transitional government, viewing it as the best antidote to Somalia’s chronic instability and a bulwark against Islamic extremism. But the government is too weak, corrupt, divided and disorganized to mount a claim beyond
Mogadishu, the capital, leaving clan warlords, Islamist militias and proxy forces armed by foreign governments to battle it out for the regions the Shabab are losing. Already, clashes have erupted between the anti-Shabab forces fighting for the spoils, and roadblocks operated by clan militias have resurfaced on the streets of Mogadishu, even though the government says it is in control. Many analysts say both the Shabab and the government are splintering and predict that the warfare will only increase, complicating the response to Somalia’s widening famine.”

Horace Campbell, “Somalia: Global war on terror and the humanitarian crisis,” KimpavitaPress, August 23, 2011, http://kimpavitapress.org/2011/08/somalia-global-war-on-terror-and-the-humanitarian-crisis-by-horace-campbell/, comments. “In Somalia, half of the population is at risk of famine. This famine endangers the lives of over 11 million people in the Horn of Africa. The scale of this crisis makes one raise questions. What is famine today? How is it possible to have famine today in the midst of plenty? How is it possible that nearly 20 years since Operation Restore Hope, the ‘development secretary’ of the United Kingdom Andrew Mitchell is warning that ‘humanity is in a race against time’ in Somalia? The famine is one wake-up call for us to realize that some of our priorities are wrong.” "The African Union has appointed another Ghanaian, former president Jerry Rawlings, as its representative for Somalia. Only four countries in Africa have made donations, and up to this point, the response inside of Africa has not matched the scale of this human tragedy. Two days ago the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) pledged US$350m to help famine victims in Somalia. Yet in the midst of this crisis we must look beyond the hype of fundraising and go deeper. Famine and drought makes good business for NGOs and international organizations that have ulterior motives for their ‘humanitarianism’. I must reassert the view that only a confederation of democratic societies in the Horn can protect the people from the devastation of further disasters such as this famine. It is also in the context of African unity with democratic leadership where it will be possible to lay the foundations for the conditions to prevent future famines and the militarism that has spread behind droughts and dislocation of citizens.” "Somalia is the most homogenous country in Africa. But this homogeneity has been shattered by the imperialist partition of Africa that divided the Somali people in five different places – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and the different parts of Somalia (one dominated by British colonialism and the other by Italian colonialism). These forms of colonial divisions and partitioning were compounded by the internal colonialism of the Somali Bantu by other Somalis. Somali independence became compromised during the Cold War. After independence in 1960, the military coup of Siad Barre in 1969 brought a populist regime that proclaimed itself socialist and aligned with the Soviet Union. This same leader became an avowed supporter of the West after the Ethiopian revolution in 1974. Siad Barre invaded the Ogaden region of Ethiopia in 1977 and the US and the Soviet Union immediately switched sides. The US, which had been the main supporter of Ethiopia, supported Siad Barre. Before the Ethiopian revolution, the Soviet Union had supported Siad Barre. The only principled leader and society that did not join this opportunism was Fidel Castro of Cuba. This was the time when the decomposition of the politics of Somalia set in as the link to Saudi Arabia brought in resources for political leaders who were supported by the United States and Saudi Arabia. Islamic influence increased through Saudi financial and ideological support for the political leadership in Mogadishu. The decomposition of the political class in Somalia accelerated after it was affected by the intrigues of US militarism of the Horn and the Indian Ocean. From that period to today, the influence of the USA and Saudi Arabia in this region has been to support anti-democratic forces – whether in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya or Yemen. Siad Barre, the last dictator, bequeathed a legacy of regional and ethnic manipulation. This manipulation of clan loyalties was also compounded by intellectual opportunism by sections of the Somali intelligentsia and this opportunism continued even after his overthrow in 1991. From that time, the militarization of the society ensured that the country’s resources were directed to factional leaders who were campaigning to oust him. When he was ousted, none of these leaders could consolidate their leadership over the entire society. Militarism and drought then led to a massive famine in 1991–92. This factionalism persists up to the present and is most manifest in the composition of US-backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG)...” "Many of the competing political factions in Somalia tried to curry favor with the US, while the US used the United Nations cover to dominate the political space. The resulting chaos of clan leaders with guns led to the creation of armed political factions who were called ‘warlords....’ "

Jeremy Scahill, “Blowback in Somalia,” The Nation, September 7, 2011, http://www.thenation.com/article/163210/blowback-somalia, exposes the covert role of the CIA and the Joint Special Operations Command in Somalia over a decade, ranging from supporting warlord-run death squads to the 2006 US-sponsored Ethiopian invasion of Somalia to scores of targeted killing operations, revealing how US policy played a major role in creating and strengthening al Shabab and al Qaeda, the very forces it claimed to be fighting. Even before that, U.S. and Russian cold war policy that included arming the military and enhancing its power, was the major reason for the military coup ended civilian government, and set the stage for the central government’s collapse. The chaos and violence of the past ten years in Somalia is predictable blowback. This is not a unique situation. The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan was largely a creation of U.S. policy. Hamas was made into a major force by Israel, in an attempt to counter the PLO, and Israel’s unnecessarily harsh actions since have done far more to strengthen Hamas, then to waken it, and they have certainly failed to isolate it
- which might have been achieved by dealing with acts of terror as crimes, whose perpetrators only would be punished, while helping build up the Palestinian economy and developing collaborative political, social and economic relations with law abiding Palestinians.

As there have been reports of Al Qaeda in Yemen expanding its operations into Somalia, it was reported in June, that even as the U.S. increased drone attacks in Yemen, it has also undertaken remotely controlled air attacks in Somalia (Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Expanses It Drone War Into Somalia,” The New York Times, June 3, 2011).

Alassane Ouattara was formally inaugurated as President of the Ivory Coast, May 21, nearly six weeks after his predecessor was forcibly removed from office with the help of French and United Nations military strikes. The new President called for national unity, that still may be difficult to build in a deeply divided nation suffering the aftermath of civil struggle (Adam Nossiter, “In Belated Inauguration, Ivory Coast’s President Urges Unity,” The New York Times, May 21, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/22/world/africa/22ivory.html?_r=1&ref=world).

A new study in The American Journal of Public Health, published online in mid-May, estimates much higher rates of rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo over the last 15 years of war, finding that nearly two million women have been raped, with women victimized at a rate of nearly one every minute. The study, taking one of the first comprehensive looks at the prevalence of rape in Congo, indicates that the not only are women being raped in the war torn East of the country, but women have reported very high levels of sexual abuse in the capital and in provinces far from the conflict zone in the East, where rape has regularly been a military tactic. “Not only is sexual violence more generalized,” the study said, “but our findings suggest that future policies and programs should focus on abuse within families” (Jeffrey Gettleman, “Congo Study Sets Estimate for Rapes Much Higher,” The New York Times, May 11, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/12/world/africa/12congo.html?_r=1&ref=world).

At the beginning of May, ICG, “Congo: The Electoral Dilemma,” Africa Report N°175, May 5, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/central-africa/dr-congo/175-congo-the-electoral-dilemma.aspx, warned, “After four years of electoral inertia and in a stalled democratic process, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is preparing its second set of democratic elections in a hurry and on a rolling calendar. Opposition parties are trying to unite, thus far without success, and the international community is not in charge, as in effect it was the first time, in 2006. The Congolese authorities face a dilemma: respect the constitutional deadline and organize botched elections, or ignore that deadline and slide into a situation of unconstitutional power. In both cases, the government’s legitimacy would be seriously questioned. The only way out of this Catch-22 situation is to both speed up preparations and negotiate a contingency electoral calendar and political agreement to manage an almost certainly necessary transition period. More attention must also be paid to putting in place essential measures for transparency and inclusiveness, as well as a security system that will ultimately require important UN help. If these steps are not taken, foreign partners should disengage lest they lend undeserved credibility to a fundamentally flawed process. Instead of signaling consolidation of democracy, the coming elections present at best a logistical problem and at worst a new cause of destabilization for a country that has still not recovered from the long wars that marked the end of the Mobutu era and its denoument. President Joseph Kabila’s ruling party has already launched its campaign, even before the official start of the electoral season, while the opposition is trying to find its “champion” for the presidential contest. More than logistical difficulties give reason for concern. At the start of the year, a constitutional review removed the presidential election’s run-off round, making it a single winner-takes-all round to the incumbent’s benefit, other electoral law changes favoring the ruling party may happen soon, as the draft bill is still being discussed. Within what is a general climate of insecurity, intimidation of Kabila’s opponents has already become apparent. Despite last-minute integration of some armed groups into the Congolese army, insecurity is still rife in the Kivus, while unexplained security incidents, including an attempted coup, have occurred in the west. Technical preparations are lagging. Neither the new electoral law, the voters list, nor the budget are ready. Set up a year late, the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) is in a race against time. Registration is already controversial, funding of the electoral cycle is incomplete, and the electoral calendar published on 30 March, though it partially respects constitutional deadlines, is problematic. The international community’s role is far more limited than in 2006, when it organized, financed and secured all aspects of the elections. However, it still provides 40 per cent of the funding, gives technical assistance and maintains about 17,000 UN troops in country. Given the risks of electoral illegitimacy, bias and violence, it should not stay in the background but instead make clear to the Congolese politicians that a postponed election would be better than a botched one. The international community, including through the UN Security Council and an inclusive donors forum, should make clear the need for the Congolese authorities to include essential measures in the electoral system and apply the same standards as in 2006. In this respect, stepped-up political engagement is required, and new Special Envoys for the U.S., France and EU should be
appointed; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (SRSG) has an equally significant role to play. In order not to become trapped in a biased process that could all too easily become as violent as that which Côte d’Ivoire recently experienced, technical and financial assistance should be contingent on constant and precise monitoring of the freedom to campaign, respect for political pluralism, political violence, access to state media, dialogue with the Congolese authorities and state funding for the NIEC, as well as the opportunity for civil society groups to do their own monitoring of the process. Congolese politicians and the international community should anticipate now the very real possibility that the 5 December constitutional deadline cannot be met. Negotiating a transition agreement with the opposition, setting a new deadline for organizing the elections and limiting the business of government to routine matters during the transition would not yet guarantee a free and fair election, but it would avoid having a likely unconstitutional postponement of the elections become a crisis of legitimacy.

ICG, “Congo: The Electoral Process Seen from the East,” Africa Briefing N°80, September 5, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/central-africa/dr-congo/B80-congo-the-electoral-process-seen-from-the-east.aspx, comments, “Voter registration that began across the Congo in April 2011 concluded on 17 July, on time even in troubled regions such as the Kivu provinces and the Ituri district, and produced a nearly 6.3 million increase in the electorate, 24.5 per cent over the 2006 exercise. If it went relatively well, it was mainly because the voter’s card also serves as an identity card, so is as useful to militiamen as to ordinary citizens. Neither civil society nor political parties fundamentally challenged the operation at the local level, but this is not synonymous with satisfaction. The surprising results the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced and lack of dialogue and verification by the voters themselves feed latent but widespread suspicions in the opposition and civil society. To ensure credible elections, it is necessary to improve transparency, respect the electoral law and establish a forum for dialogue between INEC, the parties and civil society. Ituri and North and South Kivu form a key region for two reasons: they are the sole part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) still harboring armed groups, and they provided an important reservoir of votes for the ruling party in the 2006 elections. With Katanga and Maniema, it was the East – Orientale (including Ituri) and the Kivus – that elected Joseph Kabila and his People’s Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD), giving it more than 90 per cent support. However, the political landscape has changed in this region: an opposition party has emerged – the Congolese Union for the Nation (UNC) led by Vital Kamerhe, the former chair of the National Assembly – and the popularity of the government is falling due to persistent insecurity. In an area that is electorally and militarily strategic, the campaign has just begun, in an atmosphere of relative political freedom that does not exclude, however, some restrictions and intimidation. Access to the media remains unbalanced, and there is pressure on the opposition, especially the UNC, because it is very active in this region. Nevertheless, due to the asymmetry of political forces, local politicians regard the presidential election as already decided in the East and the main stakes to be the legislative and provincial elections. The electoral process in the East has generated suspicion on a national scale that risks developing into a crisis of confidence in the whole electoral process. Based on Crisis Group’s regional observations, the following measures should be taken across the country: the international community should observe the entire electoral process in detail, particularly in rural areas; political parties and civil society should prepare now for observing the voting, and the former should be allowed to campaign freely; INEC should scrupulously respect the electoral code, especially regarding accreditation of observers, and should establish a formal platform for dialogue with political parties and civil society at both national and provincial level; INEC should establish transparent and widely publicized procedures for receiving grievances from civil society and the political parties regarding the approaching elections; INEC should publish the voters list and the breakdown of registration by district and territory in 2006 and 2011 and publicly explain its methodology for finalizing the voters roll; INEC should establish a standardized procedure for challenging the results and publish those results by each voting station; the High Council for Media should quickly become operational; all stakeholders in the electoral process should accept the code of conduct introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN; and the UN mission in the Congo (MONUSCO) should encourage a more sustained respect for political freedom and dialogue between INEC, the political parties and civil society at national and provincial level, since dialogue is the key element in building trust; MONUSCO should continue to deploy its troops in the areas where the armed groups are active; MONUSCO and the international community should increase their crowd management training program for the Congolese police; MONUSCO should increase its logistical support for the timely distribution of electoral material; and the presidential majority and the opposition should, for the contingency that postponement of the elections cannot be avoided, negotiate an agreement that sets a new deadline for the elections and provides that government would limit itself to routine business until they are held.*

The U.N. Security Council voted, in late June, to extend the mandate of its 19,000 member

ICG, “Lessons from Nigeria’s 2011 Elections,” Africa Briefing N°81, September 15, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/nigeria/BB1%20Lessons%20from%20Nigerias%202011%20Elections.aspx, proposes, “With the April 2011 general elections, Nigeria may have taken steps towards reversing the degeneration of its previous elections, but the work is not finished. Despite some progress, early and intensive preparations for the 2015 elections need to start now. Voter registration need not be as chaotic and expensive as it was this year if done on a continual basis. Far-reaching technical and administrative reforms of, and by, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), notably internal restructuring and constituency delineation, should be undertaken and accompanied by broad political and economic reforms that make the state more relevant to citizens and help guarantee an electoral and democratic future. The deadly post-presidential election violence in the North and bomb blasts by the Islamic fundamentalist Boko Haram sect since President Jonathan’s 29 May inauguration indicate the enormous challenges facing the new government. It must show more determination to contain violence in society. Addressing chronic poverty and the North’s underdevelopment – major grievances – would strengthen its hand. The resounding, if controversial, victory of Goodluck Jonathan over veteran opposition leader General (ret.) Muhammadu Buhari was not the only significant change brought about by the elections. (He was the first southern minority leader to win the presidency, having become the incumbent by his predecessor's death in office.) 72 of 109 senators lost their seats. In the House of Representatives, 260 of the 360 members are newly elected. President Jonathan’s People’s Democratic Party (PDP) lost its two-thirds majority in the Senate and now holds the governorship in only 23 of the 36 states, compared to 27 after the 2007 elections. A major winner was the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), whose success in the South-West has returned this region to its tradition of being in opposition to the ruling party at the centre. Another winner was the All-Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), which wrested control of Imo state from the PDP; along with Anambra state, which it won in 2007, it now holds two core South-East states. In short, despite the presidency result, the polls shattered the PDP’s one-time near invincibility. After three flawed elections – 1999, that heralded the Fourth Republic, 2003 and 2007, the last being the most discredited – the 2011 polls were critical for Nigeria’s fledgling democracy and overall political health. The eve of the elections was marked by a blend of cautious optimism and foreboding. Attahiru Jega, INEC chair, and his team won plaudits for instituting important reforms, including to the voting procedure; the introduction of the idea of community mandate protection to prevent malpractice; and the prosecution and sentencing of officials, including the electoral body’s own staff, for electoral offences. There were also grounds for pessimism: the upsurge of violence in several states, encouraged by politicians and their supporters who feared defeat; an ambiguous and confusing legal framework for the elections; and a flawed voter registration exercise, with poorly functioning biometric scans, that resulted in an inflated voters roll. Few, however, predicted the violence that erupted in some Northern states following the announcement of the presidential results. With over 1,000 people killed, the protests made the elections one of the bloodiest ever. The polls were also riddled with malpractices, logistical deficiencies and procedural inconsistencies. Reported voter turnout of about 78 per cent in the South-South and the South-East during the presidential elections exceeded the national average by at least 50 per cent, suggesting electoral fraud. Yet, the polls were, on balance, the most credible to date. Across the country, the strength of the electoral process appeared mostly to have trumped its weaknesses. Domestic and international observers commended INEC for improved logistics and a
smooth voting process. A combination of electoral, constitutional and economic reforms is needed to make the 2015 polls truly free and fair and to ensure they are not tainted by blood. The proposals from the 2009 Uwais Electoral Reform Committee report should be widely published and reform efforts enhanced to make the system more inclusive; economic reforms should be introduced to reduce poverty and create jobs for restive young school-leavers and graduates. The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, which was signed into law in late May and guarantees the right of access of individuals and groups to information held by public institutions, and the new Sovereign Wealth Fund scheme are important steps forward. Constitutional reform should be done with a more holistic, less piecemeal approach, with the full involvement of the Nigerian people, who have long been demanding it. President Jonathan pledged to transform the country during his campaign. Yet, his cabinet, a hodgepodge of recycled, failed and controversial ministers, party stalwarts indicted in the past, a few probable reformers and some technocrats, inspires little confidence among Nigerians. The new government’s priorities should include: releasing funds to INEC so it can begin early preparations for the 2015 elections; directing INEC to compile, maintain and update the National Register of Voters on a continual basis, in accordance with Section 9 (1) of the 2010 Nigerian Electoral Act; using the Uwais Committee’s extensive recommendations as the basis for a broad debate on constitutional reform, including a review of the simple-plurality electoral system for legislative elections; responding to the genuine grievances of those living in parts of the North that are considerably poorer than some wealthier Southern states and prioritizing their dire living conditions, while not overlooking states with similar problems in the South; local councils, traditional and religious leaders, relevant non-state actors and key local figures to prevent recurrence in 2015; prosecuting those responsible for electoral malpractices or post-electoral violence, regardless of their status; and putting more effective procedures in place for challenging possible massive rigging, as opposed to individual instances of abuse at polling stations.

ICG, “Guinea: Putting the Transition Back on Track,” Africa Report N°178, September 23, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/guinea/178-guinea-putting-the-transition-back-on-track.aspx (The full report is available in French), comments, “After the election of Alpha Condé to the presidency in November 2010, legislative elections are set to complete a new phase in Guinea's political transition. However, recent violent ethnic politics and the political actors' mistrust in the electoral arrangements are cause for concern. Condé's unilateral move to overhaul the electoral system has gained little praise, and with his party's gloomy prospects for the legislative elections, suspicion is increasing. He has done too little too late to promote reconciliation or dialogue with the opposition. Guinea can afford neither a makeshift electoral system, nor a new campaign based on ethnic factors. Rising pre-electoral tensions could spark inter-communal violence and offer an opportunity to take action for those in the army unhappy about loss of power. The 19 July military attack launched by some soldiers on the presidential residence confirmed this is a real possibility. A genuine agreement between the main political actors on the organization of the legislative elections is crucial and urgent. Without the international community's significant involvement, chances of success are slim. Condé's accession to power provided an extraordinary opportunity to end 50 years of authoritarianism and economic stagnation. The new government faces immense challenges with limited means, even if donors seem prepared to increase aid. The failure of the 19 July attempt against the president's life indicates that, for the moment at least, it has the military hierarchy's support. Condé has consolidated the normalization process begun by his predecessor, General Sékouba Konaté, and sent the army back to the barracks and away from Conakry. The imposition of heavy security measures since 19 July, however, has set the process back. Security sector reform is still at a preliminary stage. The new authorities show willingness to provide good economic and financial governance, but strict budgetary discipline will depress the economy, at least in the short term, so they are trying to compensate by responding to social demands, importing food and improving electricity supply. There are indications of an ambitious long-term economic restructuring program. On the other hand, it is only recently that dialogue with the opposition has begun and some conciliatory gestures have been made. For example, on 15 August the president met with one of the leading opposition representatives for the first time since the election. He plays both sides though, for example accusing the main opposition party of being responsible for the 19 July attack before the judiciary has even looked into the case and long ignoring, before rejecting it, a memorandum about the organization of the elections handed by the opposition to the government on 17 August. The legacy of his own election is cause for some concern, including for the legislative contests, because it gave new impetus to the idea that Guinea's history is a struggle between its four major ethno-regional blocs. In the first round, most politicians started by organizing their own communities. The second round – during which ethnic rhetoric built steadily on all sides – was a scarcely disguised debate on supposed Peul domination, with Condé, a Malinké, attributing hegemonic ambitions to that community from which his opponent and the main opposition party leader, Cellou Dalein Diallo, comes. Although the security forces were responsible for the worst violence, political mobilization along ethnic lines sparked clashes and claimed victims. Organizational weaknesses of the electoral process fed these tensions by allowing mutual accusations of fraud at every stage. The new government has done little to cope with this grim legacy and been
To Guinea’s international partners, especially the Group of Friends of Guinea:
19. Reaffirm their availability and vigilance regarding completion of the transition, especially monitoring of the legislative elections, notably by: a) convening

slow to organize the legislative elections, which are indispensable for completing the institutional arrangements required by the constitution. It kept quiet for months about the elections procedure, until, on 15 September, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) suggested they be held on 29 December 2011. However, the authorities had already begun to overhaul the electoral register, made changes to the INEC and redefined the division of labor between it and the territorial administration ministry. The National Transition Council (an interim legislative body) and civil society tried to mediate, and under domestic and international pressure, the authorities finally called for consultations and abandoned the creation of a new electoral register. The initiation of a dialogue has not so far enabled any agreement on the bones of contention: the composition and functioning of the INEC, the electoral register and the elections date. The suspicions generated by the electoral system risk accentuating tensions in certain areas and leading to inter-communal violence. This could in turn spark reprisals elsewhere in the country or provoke a brutal reaction from an army that 19 July showed is still divided about the return to a civilian government capable of putting an end to crude activities of illicit enrichment. It is also split by factionalism, partly along ethnic lines. Further delaying the elections is not an option: it would only worsen tensions and suspicions, and a national assembly based on a popular mandate is urgently needed in order to restore balance in the political system and take further steps toward democracy. Because another period of electoral instability could endanger the young Guinean democracy, the government and the opposition must discuss electoral arrangements at the highest level, and all political actors must refrain from stirring up inter-ethnic tensions. The international community, which partly withdrew after Condé came to power, must accompany this final stage of the transition, providing guarantees for the legislative elections as it did for the presidential election. The Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU) and the UN must reinvest vigorously in Guinea to preserve the gains acquired since the demise of Lansana Conté’s regime in December 2008 and the removal of the military junta led by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara in January 2010. Unfortunately, the democratic transition in Guinea is not irreversible. ICG proposes, “To President Condé:
1. Engage in direct and periodic political dialogue with the leaders of the most important parties (those that received more than a certain percentage of the votes in the first round of the presidential election, 5 per cent, for example), at least until the legislative assembly is in place. 2. Refrain from ambiguous and dangerous rhetoric accusing unidentified citizens of “sabotaging” government actions; avoid misusing his prestige as an opponent of authoritarian regimes as justification to avoid the political debate that is indispensable for a democratic system; and take a clear public stand against the ethnically-laden provocative speeches by some of his allies and supporters. 3. Avoid any political statement which may be understood as interfering with the judicial process for investigating the 19 July attack. To the Guinean Government:
4. Work with opposition parties, especially the Union of Guinean Democratic Forces (Union des forces démocratiques de Guinée, UFDG) and the Union of Republican Forces (Union des forces républicaines, UFR), to seek a genuine consensus about the electoral process, including the calendar, the voters register and the Electoral Commission. 5. Continue to accept the National Transition Council (NTC) as a legitimate legislative partner until the National Assembly starts functioning, as set out in the constitution. 6. Repare draft organic bills on the institutions required by the constitution, especially the Supreme Judicial Council, the Supreme Court and the Economic and Social Council. 7. Guarantee the freedom to demonstrate, a constitutional right. 8. Continue efforts to promote good governance and implement commitments made to this effect, notably publication of mining contracts and asset declarations by the president and ministers. 9. Continue the fight against impunity by both: a) increasing the resources available to the judges investigating the massacre of 28 September 2009 and ensuring independence and fairness of the judicial process, as well as witness protection; and b) continuing efforts to punish abuses of power committed routinely by members of the security forces. 10. Proceed expeditiously with security sector reform, including by transforming strategic plans into concrete actions and by taking into account all the security actors, among which the almost 6,000 young men recruited by Moussa Dadis Camara. To the opposition parties: 11. Accept government proposals for dialogue on the electoral process and other important issues without insisting that strict observance of the constitution is the answer to all the country’s problems. 12. Play a constructive role in the NTC and use this forum to defend their positions. 13. Cease questioning the legitimacy of President Condé’s election. 14. Take a clear, public position against the escalation of ethnic tensions promoted by some of their supporters. To the Independent National Electoral Commission: 15. Prepare, in cooperation with civil society, a code of conduct to be signed by all political parties contesting the elections, committing them to refrain from any comment that risks stirring up inter-communal tensions during the campaign, and ensure it is widely available to citizens. To the National Transition Council: 16. Continue to fulfill the legislative role attributed to it by the constitution, including by adopting organic bills on the institutions required by the constitution, in particular the Supreme Judicial Council, the Supreme Court and the Economic and Social Council, independently of whether the government takes the initiative or not. To Guinean civil society: 17. Watch and contribute to the establishment of a code of conduct that must be prepared by the INEC and create an independent observatory, possibly in association with the Independent National Human Rights Institution, to monitor the respect of the above-mentioned code, the treatment of ethnic issues in the media and political life, document abuses and publish regular reports. 18. Create an independent observatory, possibly in association with the Independent National Human Rights Institution, on impunity, with representatives of civil society, jurists, military and ex-military personnel, to monitor judicial cases involving members of the defense and security forces and publish regular reports. To Guinea’s international partners, especially the Group of Friends of Guinea: 19. Reaffirm their availability and vigilance regarding completion of the transition, especially monitoring of the legislative elections, notably by: a) convening
rapidly a Group of Friends meeting with member states' foreign ministers and member organizations’ high-level representatives in Conakry; b) continuing regular meetings with the ambassadors of the main political actors. To the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for West Africa, the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the President of the African Union Commission: 20. Continue to the establishment of the National Assembly the prominent political role they played before the presidential election, including by: a) resuming the offer to mediate, which they did successfully until the presidential elections, this time with the objective of facilitating dialogue between the president and his opponents; and helping the government and the main political parties to reach an agreement on the Independent National Electoral Commission, the electoral agenda and register, as well as on the role of international guarantors; b) preparing, with other relevant actors in the UN system, a technical assistance mission for the elections; and c) allowing General Sékouba Konaté, whose role in the first stage of the transition was unanimously welcomed and who now has important responsibilities in the African Union, to demonstrate his continuing commitment to the transition, especially through meetings with President Condé. To the UN Secretary-General Special Representative for West Africa: 21. Take on entirely the coordination of international efforts in support of security sector reform, liaising with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), as the Guinean authorities requested to the UN, through the rapid establishment of the permanent coordination mechanism necessary to attract and preserve donors’ trust in pursuance of the reform. To the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS): 22. Mobilize, as of now, the necessary means to send an election monitoring mission, which would be deployed in all regions of Guinea before and after the legislative elections. To the UN Peacebuilding Commission: 23. Work with the government to define a calendar for priority tasks, especially security sector reform and national reconciliation. To all bilateral donors interested in security sector reform, especially the U.S., France and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): 24. Reaffirm support for security sector reform and advance its coherence by strengthening coordination of bilateral initiatives by the UN.

ICG, “A Critical Period for Ensuring Stability in Côte d’Ivoire,” Africa Report N°176, August 1, 2011, cautions, “The coming to power of the elected President Ouattara should not mask reality. Côte d’Ivoire remains fragile and unstable. The atrocities after the second round of the presidential elections on 28 November 2010 and Laurent Gbagbo’s attempt to retain power by all means despite losing the election exacerbated already acute tensions. The next months are crucial. The new government must not underestimate the threats that will long jeopardize peace and must avoid the narcotic of power that has caused so many disastrous decisions over recent decades. The international community must keep careful watch during the transition and stay involved with security, the economy and humanitarian aid. The president must make courageous decisions on security, justice, political dialogue and economic revival, imbuing each with a spirit of national reconciliation. Security is the first challenge. The murderous events between December 2010 and April 2011 shattered the security apparatus. The military hierarchy was split between desperate, violent Gbagbo defenders, his less zealous supporters, discreet Ouattara supporters and opportunists, all in an atmosphere of mistrust. The new Forces républicaines (FRCI) remains an uncertain project. The priority is to integrate several thousand Forces Nouvelles (FN) fighters into the new army. The FN former rebels, who helped Ouattara take power by force in Abidjan, play a disproportionate role in the FRCI. Soldiers from Prime Minister Soro’s movement dominate Abidjan and the west, in addition to the north of the country they controlled for the last eight years. They are badly trained, disorderly and commanded by warlords not in a good position to establish rule of law. If the government cannot prevail over FN area commanders quickly and re-establish order before the legislative elections, the president’s standing will be irreparably damaged. Large numbers of weapons must be surrendered – an arsenal that threatens not only Côte d’Ivoire, but also Liberia, Ghana and all members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which is, however, not taking a very proactive role in this matter. In a country where more than 3,000 were killed in five months, often cruelly and not in combat, reconciliation and justice are imperative. This is the second priority. Promised by Ouattara even before the post-electoral conflict, the Dialogue, Reconciliation and Truth Commission was created with ex-Prime Minister Banny at its head. The civil society consultations he began, his enthusiastic approach and the government’s attempt to clarify the mandate in July have not erased doubts about its independence. Quick changes are needed if it is to have adequate credibility. The government seems to be focusing on punishing the defeated. Several Gbagbo associates have been charged, and the justice system is investigating economic crimes of his clan. There is no doubt about the seriousness of crimes committed by Gbagbo’s military and civilian allies before and during the crisis or the need for investigation. But no charges have yet been brought against supporters of the new president who also committed serious crimes. Statements by President Ouattara at home and abroad, notably in the U.S., clearly indicate a desire for impartial justice. The moment has come to translate intention into action that is politically risky but necessary. The third challenge is to resist the temptation to over-centralize power, leaving no room for political opposition. Strategically, then militarily defeated, Gbagbo’s Front populaire ivoirien (FPI) is in shock. Ouattara must create conditions for normalization of political life by creating space for ex-Gbagbo supporters and others to organize opposition to the government. All political forces, including supporters of FPI ideology, should be able to organize for the legislative elections scheduled to be held by year’s end, if they renounce violence and hate...
rhetoric. The revival of a badly damaged economy is the fourth challenge. On paper, this seems the simplest. Donors are ready to help a country with much potential, that has been the world’s leading cocoa producer for decades, has more recently become an oil producer and has good infrastructure and human resources. Ouattara is reputed to be a careful economist and manager, but his team must abandon corrupt practices that have curbed economic development for decades and fuelled the frustration of those not invited to the table. And he must not rely exclusively on economic and social policy and a new style of governance to promote national reconciliation. The international community must help make a smooth passage through a delicate period. The UN mission (UNOCI), whose mandate was renewed for one year by Security Council Resolution 2000 (27 July), must assist in filling the security vacuum in Abidjan and the west. The continued deployment of UNOCI military and police, including reinforcements authorized for the post-electoral crisis, and the opening of new military camps along the Liberian border are welcome. However, more is needed. UNOCI peacekeepers must increase patrols, work with the civilian authorities and the local population and coordinate deployment of the blue helmets with humanitarian agency personnel. Finally, the UN must work with Côte d’Ivoire’s international partners and the government to quickly re-establish the police and gendarmerie forces. At the political level, the UN must help install a climate favorable to holding legislative elections by promoting dialogue between all Ivorian parties. The Secretary-General’s Special Representative should define new criteria for his mandate to certify those elections. He could also work to prevent and mitigate local conflicts by focusing on his roles as mediator, facilitator and adviser to the government. And in the short term, the UN, African organizations and donors must prioritize economic development projects that also promote reconciliation, with emphasis on the regions and communities most affected by the recent conflict.” ICG recommends: “For Security: To the Defense and Interior Ministers: 1. Begin withdrawing the Forces Nouvelles from Abidjan by the beginning of September, except for personnel selected and trained by the Integrated Command Centre (Centre de Commandement Intégré, CCI) during the peace process, starting with: a) the civilian volunteers recruited during the post-electoral crisis, who should be redeployed into community service or employed in a national program of major infrastructure development, followed by b) area commanders and their units. 2. Repeat the call for military personnel to return from exile and provide guarantees for their security and rights, including the presumption of innocence. 3. Respect the provisions of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (APO) scrupulously, especially with regard to the number of ex-rebels integrated into the new security forces. 4. Establish a procedure to select soldier, police and gendarmerie candidates for the reunified army, excluding those implicated in serious human rights and international humanitarian law abuse. To the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI): 5. Deploy more members in Abidjan so as to fill the security vacuum left by an FN withdrawal and conduct nocturnal land and air patrols along the Liberian border, in cooperation with the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). 6. Establish a collection program in districts of Abidjan and the west most affected by weapons proliferation; create a reward mechanism for communities that help recover the most. 7. Ensure integration of the peacekeeping operation and the entire UN system, in particular coordinated deployment of blue helmets and humanitarian agency personnel engaged in restoring basic social infrastructure. For Reconciliation and Justice: To the President of the Republic: 8. Consider changes to the 13 July 2011 decree on the Dialogue, Reconciliation and Truth Commission (CDVR), after structured consultation and a listening exercise that takes into account criticisms by the main civil society human rights organizations and West African and international NGOs with expertise on transitional justice elsewhere in the world. 9. Request the International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor to extend his investigation to include war crimes and crimes against humanity committed since September 2002. To the Ivorian Government: 10. Involve prefects, sub-prefects and mayors in the initiatives led by local reconciliation committees and, with donor help, provide these committees with appropriate funding. 11. Meet with senior media figures to discuss their inclusion in national reconciliation work. 12. Do not use judicial procedures to dismantle the Front populaire ivoirien (FPI); distinguish between supporters of the ex-president who actively participated in serious crimes and those who were only associated with his illegal exercise of power after the election. 13. Prioritize re-establishment of courts in the centre, north and west and Guiglo and appoint competent judges throughout the country. To the Justice Ministry: 14. Ensure that investigations are opened into members of the Forces républicaines de Côte d’Ivoire (FRCI) suspected of serious crimes, especially those named in the report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Côte d’Ivoire. To the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC): 15. Determine whether crimes within ICC jurisdiction were committed after 19 September 2002 and, if so, request the judges to expand the investigatory scope to 2002-2011. On Politics and the Legislative Elections: To the Ivorian government: 16. Resist the temptation to further weaken the party of Gbagbo and his followers; and create the atmosphere of peace that is indispensable to allow them to prepare for the legislative elections. 17. Organize legislative elections by the end of 2011 on the basis of an agreement with all political parties about their conduct, especially concerning the composition of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), the electoral list and the UN role. To the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General: 18. Facilitate dialogue between Ivorian parties so as to promote peaceful, inclusive elections. On the Economy: To the Ivorian government: 19. Undertake labor-intensive infrastructure work, including repair of main roads and projects in smaller towns/villages most affected by the post-electoral crisis, especially in the far west. 20. Give displaced persons urgent support, especially in the west; set up a fund to help them return home, thus avoiding indefinite residence in camps. 21. Make economic choices whenever possible that also promote political reconciliation. To the civilian and military leaders of the Forces Nouvelles: 22. Dismantle the economic control mechanisms in the centre, north and west, including by: a) ending tax collection imposed on markets and all other
forms of parallel taxation; b) closing any remaining check-points; c) returning all service stations to their legitimate owners; d) re-establishing Ivorian customs posts on the northern borders; and e) vacating all administrative premises occupied since the rebellion of September 2002.

ICG, “Liberia: How Sustainable Is the Recovery?” Africa Report N°177, August 19, 2011, points out that, “Liberia’s October 2011 general and presidential elections, the second since civil war ended in 2003, are an opportunity to consolidate its fragile peace and nascent democracy. Peaceful, free and fair elections depend on how well the National Elections Commission (NEC) handles the challenges of the 23 August referendum on constitutional amendments and opposition perceptions of bias toward the president’s Unity Party (UP). The NEC, the government, political parties, presidential candidates, civil society, media and international partners each have roles to play to strengthen trust in the electoral process. They should fight the temptation to treat the elections as not crucial for sustaining the progress made since the civil war. But even after good elections five factors will be critical to lasting peace: a more convincing fight against corruption; deeper commitment to transforming Liberia with a new breed of reform-minded political players; sustained international engagement in supporting this more ambitious transformation; economic development; and regional stability, particularly in Côte d’Ivoire. The elections are being contested by many of the same political actors from the troubled past. Incumbent President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (72) seems to have an edge in the face of a divided opposition that features lawyer Charles Brumskine (60), former UN diplomat and legal expert Winston Tubman (70), businessman and diplomat Dew Mayson (62) and former warlord-turned-senator Prince Johnson (52). The former international football great, George Weah (44), who led the first round in the October 2005 presidential elections but lost the run-off, is Tubman’s vice presidential running mate. The political scene has been refuged by hastily concluded mergers and alliances between the numerous parties vying for a portion of power. They will have to campaign first for or against constitutional amendments at stake in the referendum. The most contentious of these would reanimate a residency requirement for public office candidates while reducing it from ten years to five. If adopted, the courts would probably have to interpret its possible effect on the fast approaching election. During her 23-24 June 2011 official visit to the U.S., President Johnson Sirleaf’s message was that her country has made great progress, but that there is still much work to do before international support can be reduced. She confidently said that if high levels of support are maintained and good economic management pursued, Liberia would no longer require foreign aid in ten years. She acknowledged, however, that the situation in Côte d’Ivoire and the related refugee influx, as well as the challenge of a large pool of Liberian ex-combatants and other youths ready for recruitment as mercenaries posed a security threat. There is no doubt the country has made significant progress during her presidency, especially in security sector reform, social development, infrastructure rehabilitation and growth-stimulating foreign direct investment in the tiny economy. But the president’s popularity in the West contrasts markedly with many Liberians’ frustration – fed by failed or weak anti-corruption, decentralization and national reconciliation campaigns – that democracy has benefited some more than others. Since the end of the civil war, the focus has been on security, through the creation from the ground up of a new army and police force under the supervision of, respectively, the U.S. and UN. The international military and police presence embodied by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has been the main guarantor of peace. The national security sector is now able to cope with some threats, but continued international presence is imperative in view of the failings of the police and their very limited reach outside the capital, Monrovia. Better coordination between the police and judiciary and greater presence of both in rural communities are priorities. The government’s planned justice and security regional hubs – backed by the UN Peacebuilding Commission – should be supported by donors and established and adequately equipped in the next twelve months. The most serious threats to security, however, are the persistence of mercenary activities and arms proliferation. The post-election crisis in Côte d’Ivoire from December 2010 to April 2011 has tragically revealed the extent of the problem for the entire region. Hundreds of young Liberian fighters were easily recruited for a minimum of $500. UNMIL and the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI), in collaboration with the Liberian and Côte d’Ivoire governments, should use all available military, intelligence and financial means to conclusively eliminate the threat Liberian mercenaries pose. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which has prematurely closed its diplomatic representation in Monrovia, should recognize that there are still dangers and contribute to initiatives to ensure security in eastern Liberia and western Côte d’Ivoire. Any investment that seeks to protect the gains made over the last six years should have as its objective, beyond the current round of elections, a political transformation leading to the emergence of a new generation of leaders at local and national levels, removed from the culture of violence and corruption. This would involve providing incentives for the best-qualified youths to engage in political activity and training and educational opportunities for them to acquire the necessary governance skills. Western donors, ECOWAS, China and the UN should stay engaged after this year’s elections until Liberia is more firmly on its feet. However, their support to continuous, sustainable recovery will be meaningful only if they work simultaneously at stabilizing still fragile Côte d’Ivoire.” ICG recommends: “For successful conduct of the referendum and elections: To the National Elections Commission (NEC): 1. Provide citizens with all relevant information so that they can participate constructively in all stages of the electoral process, including by: a) being more vocal about infringements of electoral law and
process to avoid feeding perceptions of bias and responding collectively to all criticism through open communication and continuous dialogue; b) making the mechanisms for expressing grievances clear and accessible in order to avoid misunderstandings and possibly violence; and c) working with civil society and community-based organizations to ensure that information on the new demarcation of electoral districts reaches all Liberians and updating the NEC website. 2. Address allegations that people with Muslim names were not allowed to register on specious grounds that they are not Liberians and ensure all citizens’ rights to registration. To Political Parties and Candidates: 3. Abide by the 2010 revised code of conduct for political parties and refrain from aggressive statements, particularly those exploiting the memory of the civil war and ethnic and religious differences. To the Government of Liberia: 4. Enhance collaboration between the network of civil society organizations involved in early warning, police and other security agencies, through the Liberia Peacebuilding Office (LPO), to identify the areas most exposed to electoral and post-electoral disruptions and violence; and ensure that quick response mechanisms are in place. To the United Nations Security Council: 5. Extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) at its current military and police strength for a further twelve months from 1 October 2011, and review UNMIL drawdown plans only after a post-election assessment of the readiness of Liberia’s security and rule of law institutions to provide security on their own. To the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL): 6. Ensure strengthened response from UN agencies in addressing the needs of Ivorian refugees and preventing the humanitarian situation from disturbing the peaceful conduct of the elections. For sustainable peace, security and national reconciliation post-elections: To the current and next government: 7. Address security issues, including by: a) deploying more police outside of Monrovia and tackling the critical gaps in the provision of uniforms, communications equipment and mobility; and b) installing the regional security and justice hubs and, with the assistance of external partners, ensure that financial provisions are made to sustain them. 8. Give the Land Reform Commission adequate resources so it can continue its work, which is crucial for the peaceful resolution of local conflicts. 9. Ensure that the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) has the necessary resources to do its work, especially to implement its plan to lead an open and inclusive national dialogue on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. 10. Support development of independent media with nationwide coverage so there is no information vacuum when UNMIL Radio leaves. To the UN Peacebuilding Commission and partners of Liberia, including the U.S., the EU and China: 11. Link the peacebuilding strategy with wider objectives of long-term political, economic and social transformation by giving special attention post-2011 to improved political party regulation, public sector reform and training and secondary and tertiary education. 12. Prioritize support to the government for establishing and equipping the regional security and justice hubs within the next twelve months. To the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): 13. Contribute to initiatives to ensure security, particularly in eastern Liberia and western Côte d’Ivoire, with a focus on strengthening security cooperation, especially with regard to the movement of mercenaries across the borders, and consider re-opening an office in Monrovia for better monitoring. For long-term peacebuilding and conflict prevention strategies: To the post-elections political authorities of Liberia: 14. Fight firmly against corruption and for governance reform, starting by: a) implementing the reports of the General Auditing Commission; b) desisting from appointing to government persons indicted or under investigation for corruption; and c) setting up fast track courts to handle corruption cases. 15. Commit to decentralization by adopting legislation on and setting a date for municipal and local elections post-2011. 16. Prioritize public sector reform, including the training of ministry and public institution staff. 17. Establish and encourage graduate schools of administration and technical institutes tailored to emerging areas of economic activity, including agriculture, agro-industry and mining. 18. Put improved political party regulation on the agenda, including the introduction of requirements and incentives for transparency in the funding of political activities, civic education of militants and internal democracy. To Liberian civil society: 19. Work with UN Women and the Women and Children’s Protection Unit (WCPU) of the Liberia National Police to continue rigorous sensitization, particularly of traditional leaders and to change attitudes toward sexual and gender-based violence; and expand medical and counseling centers outside Monrovia to facilitate access.

Liberia’s National Elections Commission announced, August 31, that in a recent referendum voters rejected all four proposed changes to the Constitution, one or which would have reduced the number of years a presidential candidate needs to have lived in Liberia, from 10 years to 5, while another proposition would have increased the retirement age of Supreme Court judges. (“Liberia: Voters Reject Proposed Constitution Changes,” The New York Times, August 31, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/01/world/africa/01briefs-Liberia.html?ref=todayspaper). The UN and the Government of Liberia are implementing a large-scale community peace education program as an element of a national reconciliation effort. The program will enroll participants from 125 communities across three of Liberia’s most conflicted counties in community workshops on conflict resolution. IPA (Innovations for Poverty Action) is implementing a randomized evaluation of the Liberian peace education program, alongside an in-depth qualitative study of the process and impacts (“Peace Education in Rural Liberia, http://www.poverty-action.org/project/0139).

In Maurita ona, fighting took place in the eastern part of the country between the army and suspected Islamists, in July, a month after Al Qaeda claimed to have killed 20 Mauritanian soldiers n Mali ("Mauritania: Army Battles Islamists," The New York Times, July 6, 2011).

In Dakar, Senegal, in late July, thousands of people demonstrated against President Abdoulaye Wade’s attempt to extend his term, which critics say is unconstitutional. This was proceeded, in June, after several days of antigovernment rioting, the army moved in to try to prevent further violence. Offices of the state power company were burned in anger over power cuts lasting hours ("Senegal: Soldiers Sent Into Streets Of Capital After Fiery Riots," The New York Times, June 30, 2011).

In late July, 2011, fuel shortages and price increases led to the breaking of a decade of stable calm in Malawi, as two days of riots broke out, and were repressed by the military firing live ammunition, leading to the deaths of 19 people, while 44 others were being treated for gun shot wounds in hospitals in the northern city of Mzuzu. As a result of the harsh crackdown, and complaints that President Bingu Wa Mutharika had become increasingly authoritarian, the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation suspended a $350 million grant. Mutharika – a former World Bank economist – has been credited with reducing hunger in one of the worlds poorest nations by subsidizing small farmers use of fertilizer. The government receives about half its budget from international donors ("At least 10 Are Dead Amid Protests in Malawi," The New York Times, July 22, 2011; and Cellia W. Dugger, “U.S. Freezes Grant to Malawi Over Handling of Protests,” The New York Times, July 27, 2011).

Latin American Developments

Enrique Krauze, “Can This Poet Save Mexico?” The New York Times, October 1, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/02/opinion/sunday/can-this-poet-save-mexico.html?_r=1&ref=opinion, comments, “Something amazing is happening in Mexico. A few weeks ago, a 14-bus caravan, which had been traveling under the leadership of Javier Sicilia, a poet and the founder of the Movement for Peace With Justice and Dignity, arrived here after a 10-day trek around the country. Its every move was followed by the national media, and thousands showed up to greet its return.” The caravan has taken leadership in moving forward a major movement in Mexico against the drug-related violence that has cost my country 40,000 dead and at least 9,000 unsolved “disappearances” since 2006. “It was just one part of a larger awakening of civil society here, which can be seen in the strengthened investigative efforts of the press, a more aggressive application of anticorruption laws, and the formation of voluntary associations, focused on everything from the environment to poverty,” which has received the most attention form the media, as in five months it has put on peaceful marches all over Mexico with tens of thousands of ordinary people who otherwise might not have spoken out. The Movement for Peace With Justice and Dignity has been offering concrete ideas about how the government must change, and to date, they have held two unprecedented meetings with President Felipe Calderón and high-level members of the House of Deputies and the Senate. “The movement is significant both for its symbolic value and because, historically, conflict-stricken societies can make meaningful steps toward peace only when their people — not their politicians, but average people — come together in an active movement against the violence. That is what Mexico is seeing today. In modern Mexico, citizens have traditionally been relatively quiet, and legislators have represented no one, functioning more as the private dispensers of public appointments, jobs and resources. What little protest we saw during most of the 71 years of one-party hegemony under the Institutional Revolutionary Party, known as the PRI, was usually organized and paid for by the party itself." The pattern began to change with the student movement in the summer of 1968 tried to change that pattern that turned out tens of thousands of citizens to support student demands for a “dialogue” with President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, while calling for the removal of the Mexico City chief of police, who had unleashed police truncheons against a group of demonstrating students; freedom for political prisoners; and the repeal of laws used to repress demonstrations. The government, seeing a Communist conspiracy, massacred hundreds of students in the Plaza of Tlatelolco that Oct. 2, a few days before the opening of the Mexico City Olympics. Various civil movements — and political pressures for reform — also arose after The government's extremely inadequate response to the 1985 Mexico City gave birth to a variety of civil movements and political pressures for reform. “Multiparty democracy finally arrived in 2000, but only now, more than four decades after the “Olympic massacre," has true protest returned. The government is not involved, and the people are not afraid of the government. The movement is political, but it exists outside politics. Indeed, one of the reasons for Mr. Sicilia’s popularity is that he is not seeking power or political office for himself, but is asking that those in power be rendered accountable. Acting from within civil society, he is trying to strengthen our still fragile Mexican democracy. And he is making headway.”

An arson attack, believed to be by organized crime, August 25, 2011, on the Casino Royale in Monterrey, in northern Mexico killed 52 people. In one of the most deadly attacks since the Mexican government

One outcome of the President’s use of the army in the drug war in Mexico has been that as the cartels have fractured, a myriad of criminal gangs have formed in many places whose activities include extortion, forcing people in all walks of life, from doctors to school taxi drivers, to pay extortion. Most people pay, but in Acapulco, with a strong union, teachers have been demonstrating and striking against the practice (Elizabeth Malkin, “As Gangs Move In on Mexico’s Schools, Teachers Say ‘Enough’,” The New York Times, September 25, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/26/world/americas/mexican-teachers-push-back-against-gangs-extortion-attempts.html?_r=1&ref=world).

There is evidence that members of the Mexican military, as well as of the police, are involved in the drug trade in Mexico (Randal C. Archibold, “Rights Groups Contend Mexican Military Has Heavy Hand in Drug Cases,” The New York Times, August 3, 2011). In addition, there are numerous reports of troops and police undertaking alleged “drug raids” during which they engage in large scale theft.

The U.S. has expanded its role in Mexico’s drug war, sending new CIA operatives and retired military personnel to Mexican military bases to collaborate with authorities, and the Obama administration is considering employing private security personnel as well (“U.S. Widens Its Role in Battle Against Mexico’s Drug Cartels,” The New York Times, August 7, 2011).


ICG, “Post-quake Haiti: Security Depends on Resettlement and Development,” Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°25, June 28, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/latin-america-caribbean/haiti/b025-postquake-haiti-security-depends-on-resettlement-and-development.aspx, points out, “A year and a half after the Western Hemisphere’s deadliest earthquake devastated Haiti, 650,000 victims still wait for permanent housing in more than 1,000 unstable emergency camps dotting Port-au-Prince. The first storms of the 2011 hurricane season have flooded 30 camps, forcing tent dwellers to flee and killing 28 persons nationally. Michel Martelly, who replaced René Préval as president on 14 May, faces an immediate crisis in the growing frustrations of the victims in the camps and those with near identical unmet basic needs who remain in the urban slums. Forced evictions, some violent, along with the reappearance of criminal gangs in those camps and slums, add to the volatile mix. Adopting, communicating and setting in motion a comprehensive resettlement strategy, with full input from the victims and local communities, is the first critical reconstruction challenge he must meet in order to restore stability. It will also test the capacity for common international action beyond emergency relief after a year of disturbing divisions within the UN country team and among donors over resettlement strategy. Following a grueling election, Haiti must turn to the priority of national reconstruction: resettling quake victims, removing rubble and rebuilding neighborhoods. The 2010 disaster killed over 250,000 and forced an estimated 1.5 million into camps, while the absence of a uniform resettlement policy has stymied promised progress on decentralization, economic renewal and reducing overcrowded urban communities’ vulnerability. Neighborhoods victimized by decades of anarchic construction and weak to non-existent land titles and zoning remain highly vulnerable to natural disaster. Evictions – without due process or tenable housing alternatives – have forced massive unplanned returns, including to Port-au-Prince slums where tents and shacks have been set up on or near old residences and new, spontaneous camps created. Close to half the displaced have remained in the original camps, with no clear understanding of the future and rising unhappiness at increased violence. Responding to those vulnerable tent camps is a core reconstruction challenge, with serious implications for peace, stability and security. All political actors need to make housing alternatives safer and more sustainable in Port-au-Prince and adjoining quake-hit areas. That requires a decentralized national reconstruction program such as is enshrined in the government’s Action Plan for National Recovery and Development (PARDN) and was endorsed at the March 2010 donors conference. Beyond a planned but not yet built industrial park in Cap Haitian, however, there are few signs that Haiti is building
back better since donors pledged to contribute more than $5.7 billion over eighteen months and $10 billion over ten years to finance recovery. To manage this effort, Haiti and donors negotiated an Interim Haitian Recovery Commission (IHRC) as a hybrid body to speed approval of projects and coordinate efforts. It has enabled donors and government officials to exchange plans, but decision-making and donor disbursement have been mostly slow, particularly outside the capital. Many refugees have returned to Port-au-Prince exacerbating problems in the capital’s poor neighborhoods, where the bulk of those living in tent cities ultimately must resettle. If reconstruction is to right the many imbalances that have made Haiti poor and prone to disasters, violence and conflict, it is paramount that the Martelly government set out a resettlement policy rapidly that engages the victims and is less about closing the camps, more about building stable, less violent communities and not only in the capital. The pilot plan for closing six camps and resettling their residents his administration has put forward is an important first step that deserves support, but the most vulnerable camps should be added to it quickly. To move resettlement forward in a more sustainable fashion, the government and international community must then: design, develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that includes a moratorium on evictions and time-bound agreements with camp site owners; addresses livelihoods; promotes housing reconstruction based on improved practices; and integrates rubble removal with return of the displaced, while providing services in both old and new communities, in parallel with clear decisions and policies on land tenure and access; propose legislation to establish a national housing authority and in the interim establish immediately, by decree, a one-stop shop for planning, coordinating and implementing the new policy through a strengthened secretariat of the Inter-ministerial Committee for Territorial Development (CIAT) under the prime minister; enhance security in the neighborhoods to which the displaced return by providing proximity policing through inclusion of the Haitian National Police (HNP) in resettlement programs, supported by the UN police (UNPOL), while working to deploy community policing as soon as that is feasible; decentralize resettlement to give it and reconstruction a more grassroots approach by strengthening the human, financial and material resources of the municipalities; speed up investment plans in the eight major port cities and surrounding agricultural areas, in order to generate employment and stem the flow of rural migrants to Port-au-Prince; begin immediately planning the IHRC transition, if necessary by extending its mandate for six months beyond the October 2011 sunset date, to avoid gaps and delays in funding and project execution; bridge the gap between IHRC work and the government’s by putting key ministers on the IHRC board and modifying its procedures to stimulate more rapid project approval and broader communication of decisions, particularly to the displaced population; provide at once new donor funds or re-program existing funding to support resettlement of the first six camps and add other camps progressively, particularly those most vulnerable to flooding; and create mechanisms urgently to make land tenure more secure and improve land registries.

ICG, “Keeping Haiti Safe: Police Reform,” Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°26, September 8, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/latin-america-caribbean/haiti/b026-keeping-haiti-safe-police-reform.aspx, warns, “Haiti’s porous land and sea borders remain susceptible to drug trafficking, smuggling and other illegal activities that weaken the rule of law and deprive the state of vital revenue. Post-quake insecurity underscores continued vulnerability to violent crime and political instability. Overcrowded urban slums, plagued by deep poverty, limited economic opportunities and the weakness of government institutions, particularly the Haitian National Police (HNP), breed armed groups and remain a source of broader instability. If the Martelly administration is to guarantee citizen safety successfully, it must remove tainted officers and expand the HNP’s institutional and operational capacity across the country by completing a reform that incorporates community policing and violence reduction programs. The recent elections were only a first step toward determining the future of the country’s reconstruction and development. The real work now requires the political leadership – executive and legislative alike – to make meaningful efforts to address fundamental needs. Key to this is identification of common ground with the political opposition, grassroots communities and business elites, in order to reinforce a national consensus for transforming Haiti that prioritizes jobs-based decentralization, equal protection under the law and community security. President Michel Martelly declared Haiti open for business in his 14 May inaugural address, but a functioning, professional HNP is a prerequisite to move the country forward. Police reform has made significant strides but is far from complete after nearly five years. HNP deficiencies, along with the desire of Martelly supporters to restore the army and nationalistic opposition to the continued presence of the UN peacekeepers (MINUSTAH), contribute to proposals for creating a second armed force. Serious questions surround that problematic notion. If it is pursued, there must immediately planning the IHRC transition, if necessary by extending it five years. HNP deficiencies, along with the desire of Martelly supp
building community confidence, such as the training and strengthening of specialized units, crime investigation, border patrol and community policing, while UN police (UNPOL) more actively mentor those efforts; adopting an organic law for the state secretariat for public security that clarifies its role and those of the other executive branch bodies with responsibilities for the HNP; and linking police reform with the reconstruction efforts currently coordinated by the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC), by deploying better trained police to the provinces as economic decentralization proceed.

Guatemala continues to be plagued by corruption and increasing drug trafficking. With elections approaching, ICG, “Guatemala’s Elections: Clean Polls, Dirty Politics.” Latin America Briefing N°24, June 16, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/latin-america-caribbean/guatemala/B024-guatemalas-elections-clean-polls-dirty-politics.aspx, comments, “Guatemalans go to the polls in September 2011 to elect a president, the Congress and local officials. The vote itself is likely to be reasonably free, but violence and unregulated campaign finance imperil the country’s political institutions. Deteriorated security, drug traffickers’ brutality and polarized politics leave candidates especially vulnerable to attacks. An exorbitant campaign, meanwhile, threatens to indebt office-holders to powerful financial interests, including organized crime, deepening corruption and widening the gulf between citizens and their politicians. State security agencies should redouble efforts to prevent bloodshed, especially in the most dangerous municipalities; politicians and parties must fully reveal who funds them, and the Public Prosecutor’s office, electoral authorities and donors should press them to do so. The presidential contest will probably pit Otto Pérez Molina, former head of military intelligence, against Sandra Torres, recently divorced wife of incumbent Alvaro Colom, though legal hurdles could still halt Torres’s bid and leave the ruling party scrambling for a replacement. Pre-election violence has already claimed candidates, their families, party activists and electoral staff, mostly at the hands of unidentified gunmen. As drugs cartels battle over transit routes, competition in those areas for the local government posts whose collusion facilitates trafficking may be particularly fierce. Mudslinging and harsh rhetoric from both major parties have set the tone for an ugly campaign. Polarization between the camps, in both the capital and some municipalities, raises the specter of disputed results. A flawed registration exercise, while unlikely to seriously impact the quality of the elections, could give losers a pretext for challenges. Unregulated political finance poses a threat more subtle than violence but as dangerous to political life. Reforms have required parties to limit campaign spending and reveal their financial backers, but politicians disregard the new rules with impunity. Recent election campaigns have been among the costliest, per capita, on the continent, and spending in 2011 looks set to outstrip even previous records, skewing the playing field and – worse still – leaving politicians beholden to shadowy business and criminal interests, many of which are vested in continued lawlessness and a weak state. Political parties provide no protection. Fragmented, disorderly, unrepresentative and largely ideology-free, they offer little to link state and society beyond populism and patronage. Unrestrained money in politics contributes to a rotten and exclusive system that reasonably free voting every few years does little to hide, let alone reform.”

“Priorities ahead of the September polls are: politicians and the media must tone down inflammatory campaign rhetoric, with candidates instead articulating their policies and how they plan to reverse endemic violence, impunity and inequality; the electoral authority, the Tribunal Supremo Electoral (TSE), and security agencies should identify municipalities exposed to violence and bolster security measures in those areas. Local TSE branches should broker pacts in which mayoral candidates pledge to avoid violence, respect rules and use only legal, peaceful means to challenge results. Local electoral and other officials in municipalities most likely to have contested results should offer additional opportunities for dispute resolution; the TSE should clarify how citizens issued faulty new ID cards can vote and provide breakdowns of the number of voters in each municipality alongside data from 2007 to allay fears that inflated data may facilitate rigging; the TSE must publicize, ideally each week, its estimates of parties’ campaign spending. Other government departments should cooperate with it to help reveal party finances. The Public Prosecutor’s office should exploit new provisions in the penal code to force the main parties to reveal who has paid for their campaigns and prosecute those who fail to comply; international actors, in particular major donor nations, should press political leaders to reveal their spending and financial backers, as well as for more moderate campaign language, public articulation of their policies, acceptance of results and post-election reforms; and the Organization of American States (OAS) should beef up its planned observation mission, especially as the European Union (EU) will not send observers. The U.S. and EU should complement the OAS mission by funding other international observers and supporting the extensive efforts of national monitors. After the elections, the new legislature should reform the Law on Elections and Political Parties, in particular adding safeguards to better check the use of money in politics. The legislative agenda is already packed; indeed fiscal reform and laws governing the Public Prosecutor’s appointment, public
officials' immunity and injunction power (amparo) are priorities. But bolstering political finance rules is crucial. Much of the rot in Guatemalan politics enters through unregulated election campaigns, and the year after polls, before re-election concerns start to consume politicians' agendas, offers the best shot at closing those gaps.

Meanwhile, there is a source of hope against what has been a long term deteriorating situation in Guatemala, ICG, “Learning to Walk without a Crutch: The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala,” Latin America Report N°36, May 31, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/latin-america-caribbean/guatemala/036-learning-to-walk-without-a-crutch-the-international-commission-against-impunity-in-guatemala.aspx, finds, “Since it began operations in September 2007, the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala, CICIG) has brought a degree of hope to a country deeply scarred by post-conflict violence and entrenched impunity. As homicide rates sky-rocketed and criminals fought for territorial control and dominated or corrupted multiple levels of state agencies, the novel independent investigating entity created by agreement between the government and the UN Secretary-General responded to fear that illegal armed groups had become a threat to the state itself. Much remains to be done, however. During the next years the commission should establish the strategic basis for dismantling the illegal security forces and clandestine security organizations (Cuerpos Leales y Aparatos Clandestinos de Seguridad, CIACS) over the long term and building Guatemalan justice capacity, including by supporting national ownership of the commission’s functions and embedding them within the judicial system. CICIG’s formal mandate is to support and assist domestic justice institutions in the investigation and prosecution of crimes committed by CIACS, to identify their structures, operations and financing and ultimately to dismantle them. At the same time, CICIG has sought to strengthen the weak judicial system in order to put an end to impunity, a task made infinitely more difficult by the complex relationship between elements of state institutions, political parties, the private sector and the CIACS. On 13 January 2011, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon confirmed a second two-year extension of CICIG’s original mandate, to 4 September 2013. The commission has achieved notable and unprecedented short-term successes, evidenced by positive outcomes in a series of high-impact legal cases, dismissal and prosecution of several senior officials, removal of a compromised attorney general and the selection of a respected successor. It has encouraged the adoption of norms for election of Supreme Court judges and helped generate public awareness about impunity, CIACS and organized crime. It contributed directly to the creation of a Special Prosecutor’s Office that assists its work (Unidad Especial de la Fiscalía de Apoyo al CICIG, UEFAC) and has supported greater professionalism in the Public Prosecutor’s Office (Ministerio Público, MP), the institution charged with the investigation and prosecution of crimes in Guatemala. It has also pushed through a limited number of important legal reforms. However, the core elements of the mandate – dismantling the CIACS and consolidating sustainable institutional transformation – remain unmet, and it is uncertain whether sufficient progress has been achieved or at least the foundations have been laid to guarantee those goals will be accomplished. Severe structural constraints and the resistance of diverse spoilers, as well as limitations imposed by the commission’s own mandate and strategies, have been restraining factors. Such institutional transformation as there has been will remain isolated exceptions, unless further legislative reforms are adopted to extend them throughout state institutions. Moreover, there is a serious question about the degree to which the Guatemalan state and broader society are prepared to exercise ownership of CICIG and sustain its achievements. Clear measures need to be taken to reduce the possibility that continuation of the mandate will only make the justice system more dependent on external mechanisms. National ownership of the commission’s functions and objectives is crucial to guaranteeing its long-term impact. Assuring a sustainable legacy through the transfer of technical capacities from CICIG to national institutions should be a priority during the next two years. CICIG has provided a crutch. The justice system must now learn to walk on its own and increasingly assume the responsibilities with which CICIG has been charged.” ICG proposes: “For creation of effective, professional and well-resourced national rule of law institutions: To the Government of Guatemala: 1. Support CICIG’s mandate through the strengthening of a well-funded and trained rule of law sector, including by: a) enforcing and supporting, as appropriate, the removal of tainted officials from key rule of law institutions, such as the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the judiciary and the National Civil Police, applying administrative and disciplinary measures where appropriate and prosecuting, where possible, any officials linked to CIACS; b) strengthening financially and technically the units of the Public Prosecutor’s Office (MP) and the National Civil Police mandated with identifying and prosecuting those linked to or participating in the CIACS, including through the establishment of an independent criminal investigation unit within the MP, as well as other institutions, such as the criminal defense system and the judiciary; c) establishing an adequate career system for the public service in general and the police and MP in particular, and ensuring dignified salaries and benefits; and d) obtaining passage of key legislation proposed by CICIG, such as the reform of the Statutory Law of the Public Prosecutor’s Office and an enhanced fiscal regulation. 2. Reviving and implementing the National Agreement for the Advancement of Security and Justice signed in April 2009 as an element of the roadmap for judicial reform processes. To the Congress of Guatemala: 3. Prioritize passage of key legislation proposed by CICIG, including reforms to the Statutory Law of the Public Prosecutor’s Office, ensuring an independent, transparent selection
violence could also set off more conflict. The day before the
day in question, many farmers were evicted from the land of Texta.
the presence of hundreds of troops sent to the valley after the latest round of
families camped on the Marañones plantation since the
year loans to buy more than 11,000 acres. However, the 1,400
people in Guatemala’s northern coast.

Abuse of power and corruption is widespread. In the town of
Amparo, Habeas Corpus and Unconstitutionality; the

Attorney General: 4. Improve the MP’s capacity to detect prosecutors and other staff linked with CIACS by establishing
an effective, independent internal affairs unit, in close coordination with the UEFAC, and improve its human resources policies
by creating an adequate system of benefits and protection. To the International Community: 5. Present common
to the government for future cooperation, including adoption of a national agenda for the justice system and fiscal
reform and retention by the president elected in September 2011 of Attorney General Claudia Paz y Paz, at least through the
critical two-year period of CICIG’s mandate. For strengthening the work of CICIG: To the International Commission
Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG): 6. Consolidate CICIG’s achievements in specific cases, expand its intervention in
institutional reform to combat impunity and build capacity, including by: a) focusing its prosecutorial activity on dismantling
the CIACS as its first strategic priority publicly and clarifying its criteria for case selection and its general plan of investigations
over the next two years; b) mapping out CIACS structures, locations and activities and sharing the information with the
attorney general; and c) expanding its intervention in the interior so as to confront CIACS at local and regional levels.

7. Evaluate CICIG’s activities, impact and strategy together with Guatemalan stakeholders, including civil society organizations
and public institutions, and independent international experts. To the International Community: 8. Maintain and
strengthen coordinated donor support to CICIG by: a) ensuring it has all required financial and technical resources, including a
fully funded two-year budget; and b) backing the evaluation of CICIG, its achievements and limitations, with pertinent
indicators and in constant dialogue with all stakeholders, including Guatemalan public institutions and civil society
organizations. For coherently transferring capacities from CICIG to national institutions: To the Government of Guatemala:
9. Establish a high-level commission, under the president’s authority and with the participation of public institutions, CICIG and
civil society representatives, to establish a transfer strategy, including a budget, institutional mechanisms, benchmarks and
timelines. To the Congress of Guatemala: 10. Pass fiscal reform and complementary legislation to guarantee an adequate
budget for the public sector. To the Attorney General: 11. Use the UEFAC as a seedbed to build and transfer capacities
within the MP, including by enhancing its role and authority and requiring all MP units, such as the Special Unit for Crimes
against Life, to collaborate with it when requested and immediately disciplining those that do not. 12. Establish and follow a
roadmap for transferring CICIG information, resources and techniques, including by: a) building an efficient, transparent
information system that protects sensitive data on CICIG investigations; and b) expanding the prosecutorial activities of all
appropriate MP units, in collaboration with CICIG and UEFAC. To the International Commission Against Impunity in
Guatemala (CICIG): 13. Establish and pursue a proactive strategic plan to transfer knowledge and capacities to Guatemalan
public institutions, including working together on establishing a model for selecting and investigating high-impact cases and
appointing UEFAC personnel. To The International Community: 14. Reinforce donor coordination on the long-term funding
priorities of national justice institutions and in particular monitor the strategic plan to transfer CICIG capacities to them.

The drug violence situation has become so desperate in Guatemala, as gangs and Mexican drug
cartels run amuck, capturing territory and corrupting institutions to keep Guatemala a safe haven for
cocaine, guns, money laundering and new recruits, that many Guatemalans are asking for a strong military
back in their villages, despite very bad memories of the army’s genocidal role in the 36 year civil war.
Josefina Molina, 52, said, “It’s even scarier now than during the war. The danger used to be in the mountains — now it’s
everywhere.” In the country’s Presidential election, the three top contenders all called for a stronger, crime-fighting military,
and corrupting the justice system and pleas in criminal proceedings. To the Attorney General: 4. Improve the MP’s capacity to detect prosecutors and other staff linked with CIACS by establishing
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The violence surrounding the 2008 coup in Honduras has increased the divide and struggle in the
country. Particularly since late this summer, struggles over land have been a major issue, with workers
seizing land and setting up homes and farms on plantations of the ultra wealthy, particularly in the fertile
valley of Bajo Aguán, near Honduras’s northern coast. At least 15 people have been killed in land battles in
recent weeks alone, including two of the workers’ leaders, and people in the valley are fearful that the unrest could spread.
In an exceedingly divided country, the government appeared to move a step forward to negotiating a solution in early
September, when Congress approved a mechanism to guarantee bank loans that would allow the farm workers to buy seized
land. An estimated 4,000 families will be eligible for 15-year loans to buy more than 11,000 acres. However, the 1,400
families camped on the Marañones plantation since last year have been left out of the latest pact. Without a land title, they
fear they could be evicted at any time. The presence of hundreds of troops sent to the valley after the latest round of
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1990s, when wealthy landowners bought up plantations from farmer co-operatives. Farm worker groups argue that these purchases were illegal because members of the co-operatives were tricked by their leaders or signed deals they did not understand (Elizabeth Malkin, “In Honduras, Land Struggles Highlight Post-Coup Polarization,” The New York Times, September 15, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/16/world/americas/honduras-land-conflicts-highlight-polarization.html?_r=1&ref=world).

The International Crisis Group, “Cutting the Links Between Crime and Local Politics: Colombia’s 2011 Elections,” Latin America Report N°37, July 25. 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia/37-cutting-the-links-between-crime-and-local-politics-colombias-2011-elections.aspx, warns, “Deeply entrenched connections between criminal and political actors are a major obstacle to conflict resolution in Colombia. Illegal armed groups seek to consolidate and expand their holds over local governments in the October 2011 governorship, mayoral, departmental assembly and municipal council elections. The national government appears more willing and better prepared than in the past to curb the influence of illegal actors on the elections, but the challenges remain huge. The high number of killed prospective candidates bodes ill for the campaign, suggesting that the decade-old trend of decreasing electoral violence could be reversed. There are substantial risks that a variety of additional means, including intimidation and illegal money, will be used to influence outcomes. The government must rigorously implement additional measures to protect candidates and shield the electoral process against criminal infiltration, corruption and fraud. Failure to mitigate these risks would mean in many places four more years of poor local governance, high levels of corruption and enduring violence. Decentralization in the 1980s and 1990s greatly increased the tasks and the resources of local government, but in many municipalities, capabilities failed to keep pace. This mismatch made local governments increasingly attractive targets for both guerrillas and paramilitaries. Violence against candidates, local office holders and political and social activists soared. With a largely hostile attitude to local governments, guerrillas have mainly concentrated on sabotaging and disturbing the electoral process. By contrast, paramilitary groups, particularly after the formation of a national structure under the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), used their links with economic and political elites to infiltrate local governments and capture public resources. That peaked in the 2003 local elections. Since then, and particularly after the official demobilization of these groups in 2006, the influence politicians linked to paramilitaries enjoyed has weakened but not disappeared. The October elections are the first test of how democratic institutions under the government of President Juan Manuel Santos cope with the growing power of new illegal armed groups and paramilitary successors (NIAGs), now acknowledged as the country’s biggest security threat. These organizations, which the government calls BACRIM (criminal gangs), are unlikely to have a unified stance towards the elections. Some will be content with minimal relations to local politics to guarantee their impunity, access to information and freedom of action. But NIAGs are rapidly evolving into larger, more robust criminal networks, so some could develop a more ambitious political agenda. Several advocates of land restitution for the victims of Colombia’s long-running armed conflict already have been assassinated, suggesting that this major Santos initiative is likely to be met by alliances between criminals and some segments of local economic elites, in defense of the status quo. Meanwhile, frequent attacks against prospective candidates and civilians suggest that the weakened FARC wants to prove it is not a spent force. Colombia is better prepared than in the past to take on these challenges. Impunity is decreasing, as judicial investigations into links between politicians and paramilitaries have resulted in the conviction of some two dozen members of Congress. Investigations and indictments are now moving down to the local government level, albeit slowly and unevenly. In July 2011, the government signed into law a far-ranging political reform, paving the way for the imposition of penalties on parties that endorse candidates with links to illegal armed groups or face investigation for drug trafficking and crimes against humanity. Election financing rules and anti-corruption norms have also been stiffened, although shortcomings in the legal framework remain. Over the long term, these changes should favor more competitive and cleaner local elections, but in the short term, their impact will, for a number of reasons, be limited. The approval of the political reform law less than four months ahead of the elections has heightened uncertainty, and time is running short to apply some of the innovations. More broadly, political parties remain weak, and there are doubts whether they can even effectively determine their own nominees in all cases. Meaningful competition is unlikely to emerge in regions where the political and economic environment is heavily biased towards elites formerly linked to paramilitaries. Clientelism continues to be a drag on local politics, while links between criminals and politicians are frequently difficult to expose because of deep-seated popular mistrust of unresponsive local authorities. Guaranteeing the conditions for free, fair and competitive elections remains the dominant immediate challenge for the government. But more needs to be done to protect local government from the influence of illegal armed groups over the long term. The National Electoral Council (CNE) must be strengthened and become more independent. Congress needs to update and simplify Colombia’s diverse electoral rules. Political parties must establish stronger internal structures and develop a culture of accountability. These changes will ultimately be insufficient, however, if local government continues to lack the institutional capacities to guarantee democratic, clean and efficient management of its affairs.” ICG recommends: “To provide the conditions for safe and secure local elections: To the Government of Colombia: 1. Review methods and criteria currently applied to identify security threats, link its risk
assessments to those provided by civil society organizations and rigorously implement measures to provide security to candidates and political organizations, without discrimination. 2. React in a timely manner to all threats to candidates or social activists, as well as to early warning reports from the ombudsman office, and ensure that officials who fail to act comprehensively on threats or early warning reports face legal consequences. To reduce the influence of politicians linked to illegal armed actors: To Political Parties: 3. Screen prospective candidates rigorously before endorsing them and reject all with a questionable past, including those who are close relatives of politicians linked to paramilitaries or who are put forward by politicians linked to illegal armed actors. To prevent illicit campaign financing and improve transparency: To the National Electoral Council (CNE): 4. Direct Sectional Electoral Guarantee Tribunals to make more active use of their competence to audit campaign accounts during the electoral process. To Political Parties and Candidates: 5. Voluntarily and publicly report campaign contributions and campaign spending well ahead of the elections. To the Government of Colombia: 6. Launch a campaign immediately to increase awareness among political organizations, candidates, contributors, media and civil society of campaign finance rules and the changes introduced in the 2011 political reform. 7. Provide additional resources to the National Civil Registry to ensure that the biometric voter identification system can be used in the 2011 elections, at least in the departments at highest risk of electoral fraud. 8. Improve, through the interior and justice ministry, public access to the records of the Immediate Reaction Unit for Electoral Transparency (URIEL), making it easier for the electorate to hold institutions accountable for follow-up on complaints. To the Government and Congress of Colombia: 9. Provide additional resources to the attorney general’s office to ensure that a dedicated unit for electoral crimes becomes operational and produces concrete results as quickly as possible. To maintain a level playing field for all candidates: To the Offices of the Attorney General, the Public Prosecutor and the Comptroller and to Courts: 10. Prosecute and if applicable impose sanctions expeditiously against unlawful interventions of incumbents in the electoral campaign. 11. Monitor closely the execution of public reconstruction works following the heavy rainstorms and follow-up rigorously on accusations of misuse of those resources by local incumbents for political purposes. To guarantee that political rights of vulnerable populations are protected and promoted: To the Government of Colombia: 12. Communicate clearly ahead of the elections that access to state subsidies and support programs such as Families in Action is a right, not a political favor. To the Government and Congress of Colombia: 13. Introduce instruments and mechanisms that more effectively protect political rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs), including considering the possibility to grant them the opportunity to cast absentee ballots away from their original residence, as well as introduction of seats reserved for them in local governments. To strengthen scrutiny and reporting of the electoral process and confidence in the results: To the Government of Colombia, the Office of the Attorney General and Electoral Institutions: 14. React in a timely way to threats to journalists, not only by providing protection, but also by swiftly investigating the origin of threats and prosecuting those responsible for them. 15. Ensure that journalists and civil society organizations have equal and unhindered access to all official electoral information. 16. The government should invite the Organization of American States (OAS) to send an electoral observer mission, equipped with an extensive mandate, so as to ensure international scrutiny, including during the pre-electoral and the post-electoral stages, focusing on: a) departments and municipalities exposed to high risks of violence and/or electoral fraud; and b) ballot counting, in particular if the procedural changes in the political reform law are implemented for the October elections. To Candidates and Campaign Officials: 17. Pledge publicly to respect the work of journalists during the campaign and contribute to an informed electoral debate.


Warms, “Every half hour, a person is killed in Venezuela. The presence of organized crime combined with an enormous number of firearms in civilian hands and impunity, as well as police corruption and brutality, have entrenched violence in society. While such problems did not begin with President Hugo Chávez, his government has to account for its ambiguity towards various armed groups, its inability or unwillingness to tackle corruption and criminal complicity in parts of the security forces, its policy to arm civilians “in defense of the revolution”, and – last but not least – the president’s own confrontational rhetoric. Positive steps such as constructive engagement with Colombia as well as some limited security reform do not compensate for these failures. While the prospect of presidential elections in 2012 could postpone social explosion, the deterioration of the president’s health has added considerable uncertainty. In any event, the degree of polarization and militarization in society is likely to undermine the chances for either a non-violent continuation of the current regime or a peaceful transition to a post-Chávez era. A significant part of the problem was inherited from previous administrations. In 1999, the incoming President Chávez was faced with a country in which homicide rates had tripled in less than two decades, and many institutions were in the process of collapse, eroded by corruption and impunity. During the “Bolivarian revolution”, however, these problems have become substantially worse. Today, more than ten people are murdered on the streets of Caracas every day – the majority by individual criminals, members of street gangs or the police themselves – while kidnapping and robbery rates are soaring. By attributing the problem to “social perceptions of insecurity”, or structural causes, such as widespread poverty, inherited from past governments, the government is downplaying the magnitude and destructive extent of criminal violence.
The massive, but temporary, deployment of security forces in highly visible operations, and even police reform and disarmament programs, will have little impact if they are not part of an integrated strategy to reduce crime, end impunity and protect citizens. The presence of international organized crime groups is also nothing new, but there is evidence of increased activity during the past decade that in turn has contributed not only to the rise in homicides, kidnappings and extortion rates, but also to a growth in micro drug trafficking, making poor and urban neighborhoods more violent. Venezuela has become a major drug trafficking corridor, and different groups, including Colombian guerrillas, paramilitaries and their successors, have been joined by mafia gangs from Mexico and elsewhere in benefiting from widespread corruption and complicity on the part of security forces, some of it seemingly tolerated by individuals in the highest spheres of government. The government has displayed a particular ambiguity toward non-state armed groups that sympathize with its political project. Urban “colectivos” combining political and criminal activities, including armed actions against opposition targets, operate largely unchallenged and with broad impunity. The Bolivarian Liberation Forces have established control over parts of the border with Colombia, while the FARC and ELN guerrillas from the other side have long found shelter and aid on Venezuelan soil. In the context of the rapprochement between Presidents Chávez and Santos, the cost-benefit ratio behind the unacknowledged alliance between Colombian guerrillas and the Venezuelan government appears to have changed. However, it is still too early to be certain whether the government is willing and able to translate positive commitments and some initial promising steps into effective, sustainable action against such groups. Violence and corruption have been facilitated by a steady process of institutional erosion that has become particularly manifest in the justice system and the security forces. While impunity levels soar, highly dysfunctional and abusive police have endangered citizen security. Heavily politicized, the armed forces are increasingly seen as part of the problem, enmeshed with organized crime and pressed by the president to commit themselves to the partisan defense of his “revolution”. The creation, arming and training of pro-governmental militias further increase the danger that political differences may ultimately be settled outside the constitutional framework, through deadly force. In this highly charged environment, political violence has so far remained more a latent threat than a reality. However, as the country heads into what promises to be a fiercely contested presidential election, with very high stakes for both sides, this fragile equilibrium may not hold. Moreover, uncertainties provoked by the president’s illness have compounded short- and medium-term prospects. The greatest danger is likely to come after the election, regardless of who wins, since the entrenched levels of violence are prone to undermine either peaceful regime continuity, hand-over to a successor or any transitional arrangement. Moreover, whatever the political complexion of a future government, the extensive presence of organized crime networks is likely to seriously threaten medium- and long-term stability. The necessary actions to avoid that scenario must begin with a commitment by all sides to peaceful constitutional means of conflict resolution and with effective government measures to disarm and dismantle criminal structures, restore the rule of law and root out corruption in state institutions."

Documents found in a computer of a FARC commander seized by Columbian authorities indicate that officials in the government, largely in the intelligence service, of President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela asked FARC to train pro-Venezuelan government groups and Guerilla warfare and to assassinate Chavezes political opponents, though there is no evidence that Chavez was aware of this relationship or actions (Simon Romero, “Venezuela Asked Columbian Rebels to Kill Opposition Figures, Analysis Shows,” The New York Times, May 10, 2011).

The government of President Ollanta Humala of Peru announced in August, that it was temporarily suspending coca eradication in valleys around Tingo Maria, a major coca producing area, opening the possibility of a shift in coca policy by the government. Peru has been experiencing an increase in coca prosecution to the point it is approaching the level of production of Columbia (Peru: Some Anti-coca Work Halted,” The New York Times, August 18, 2011).

While the murder rate in Brazil dropped by 47% between 1999 and 2009, in the country’s northeast, a poor region that benefitted most from the wealth-transfer programs of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva during his eight years in office, the murder rate nearly doubled in the same period, making this area the nation’s most violent, as increased affluence of the region has been accompanied by rising drug violence (Alexi Barroionuevo, “As Prosperity Rises in Brazil’s Northeast, So Does Drug Violence,” The New York Times, August 29, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/30/world/americas/30brazil.html?src=me&ref=world).

The Brazilian guard post along the Envira River protecting uncontacted Indians has been over-run by heavily-armed men, suspected to be drug-traffickers. The was post ransacked, and vital equipment destroyed. Fears were raised for the welfare of the Indians after workers found one of the traffickers’ rucksacks with a broken arrow inside. It is feared the Envira River has become an entry point into Brazil for cocaine smugglers from Peru ("Guard post for

Richard Verdur, “Suicide Taking Heavy Toll on Brazil’s Indigenous Youth,” AmericasProgram, May 21, 2011, http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/4598, reports that in the face of extensive Violence against indigenous peoples in Brazil, in the forms of Physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, destruction of natural resources, political domination and institutional violence, the study, Mapa da Violência 2011: Youth of Brazil, released in February 2011, by the Sangari Institute with the support of the Justice Ministry, found unusually high rates of suicide in a group of cities with very high Indigenous suicides rates, especially among native youth. In 2008, of the 17 suicides in Amambai, 15 were indigenous and 9 were youth. In Dourados, also in Mato Grosso do Sulm, 25 suicides were documented, 13 of which were indigenous and 8 of which were youth. In the state of Amazonas, the city of São Gabriel da Cachoeira stands out. Located near the Brazilian border with Colombia and Venezuela, more than 90% of its inhabitants are of native origin. In 2008, nine suicides were reported. Seven of the victims were youth and all of them were indigenous. The problem there seems to be something other than a land conflict, because that issue has largely been resolved there. Preliminary analysis points to a feeling of displacement as a central cause, which itself is caused by family breakdown, the lack of opportunity, poor sanitation and living conditions in the city's periphery, difficulties entering the urban job market, lack of healthy recreation, and other factors. Tabatinga, which is near the Brazilian border with Colombia and Peru, is another Amazonas city with high suicide rates in 2008; of 14 reported suicides, nine were indigenous and five of those were youth. In 2009, indigenous suicides were reported in 12 of Brazil’s 27 states and four states had more than one: Mato Grosso do Sul, with 54; Amazonas, with 27; Roraima, with 9; and São Paulo, with 2. Based on demographic data from the National Indigenous Foundation and mortality data from the Health Ministry, the suicide rate for Brazil’s indigenous people comes to 20 per 100,000 people, roughly four times the national average. With 81% of indigenous suicides, and suicide levels many times the national average, Mato Grosso do Sul and Amazonas have been hit hardest by this tragic phenomenon; when calculated for each state individually, Mato Grosso do Sul and Amazonas have suicide rates of 32.2 and 166 per 100,000 respectively. With regard to indigenous youth suicide specifically, rates are extraordinarily high and without international precedent: in Amazonas, there are 101 youth suicides per 100,000 natives and 446 per 100,000 in Mato Grosso do Sul. “These numbers make clear that action and prompt, urgent revision of public policy are needed, especially in Mato Grosso do Sul, which has received a significant share of resources from the federal and state government, as well as from United Nation agencies. It’s not enough to simply hand out basic foodstuffs and enroll indigenous families in conditional income redistribution programs (e.g. Bolsa Familia). According to Gersam Luciano Baniwa, an indigenous leader of the Baniwa people of the Brazil-Colombia border region, ‘the cultural issues faced by indigenous youth today are the consequence of a clash of world visions that causes anguish, uncertainty, culture shock and even existential emptiness, all of which has led indigenous youth to take extreme measures, including suicide, as was the case recently in São Gabriel Cachoeira, Amazon.’ Moreover, while the right to land is not resolved, especially in the Southern Cone of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, home to cities with Brazil’s highest concentration of indigenous people and alarming levels of violence, the violent situation documented last year is unlikely to change under the new administration of President Dilma Roussef.”

United States and Canadian Developments

The White House has launched a new strategy to fight radical Islam, marginalizing it from Muslims in general, who are sought as allies. Administration officials stress that casting suspicion on Muslim Americans is counterproductive, helping radical Islamists, including Al Qaeda, recruit members and supporters. The administration is accelerating the development of accurate educational materials for law enforcement on Islam to replace the biased and ill-informed literature often used by law enforcement in recent years, including by the FBI. White House officials cautioned that the terror attacks by an anti-Muslim radical Christian in Norway are a reminder that there are a variety of sources of terror to be watched and countered (Scott Shane, “To fight Radical Islam, U.S. Wants Muslim Allies,” The New York Times, August 4, 2011). It is important to note the recent rise in hate groups in the United States that are tracked by the Southern Poverty Law Center ( SPLC) and its publications, www.splc.org.

The Pentagon has been developing a formal strategy to deter cyber attacks on the United States, and plans to issue a new strategy soon declaring that a computer attack from a foreign nation can be considered an act of war that may result in a military response. A number of administration officials have suggested publicly, over the last two years, that any American president could consider a variety of responses — economic sanctions, retaliatory cyberattacks or a military strike — if critical American computer systems were ever attacked (David E. Sanger and Elisabeth Bumiller, “Pentagon to Consider Cyber attacks Acts of War,” The New York Times, May 31, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/01/us/politics/01cyber.html?ref=todayspape).
The Obama administration’s legal team has been split in a debate over how much latitude the United States has to kill Islamist militants in Yemen and Somalia, a question that could define the limits of the war against Al Qaeda and its allies. The debate focuses on whether the United States may take aim at only a handful of high-level leaders of militant groups who are personally linked to plots to attack the United States or whether it may also attack the thousands of low-level foot soldiers focused on parochial concerns: controlling the essentially ungoverned lands near the Gulf of Aden, which separates the countries. The dispute also involves what the limits should be on the use of lethal force in the region — whether from drone strikes, cruise missiles or commando raids (Charlie Savage, “At White House, Weighing Limits of Terror Fight,” September 15, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/16/us/white-house-weighs-limits-of-terror-fight.html?hp). It is now clear from several reports in this issue, that the Obama Administration has moved away from using large scale military invasions to deal with terrorism, to employing drone and missile strikes, possibly air attacks, and commando raids where military action is to be undertaken.

In an effort to help prevent genocide and other atrocities, the U.S. State Department announced, in early August, that it would refuse to give visas to persons who the department finds have been involved in human rights violations (Herene Cooper, “Obama Takes Steps to Help Avert Atrocities,” The New York Times, August 4, 2011).

The Obama administration, in June, was taking leadership in a world wide effort to deploy “shadow” internet and mobile phone systems that dissidents could use to get around censoring and communications blockages by repressive governments (James Glanz and John Markoff, “U.S. Underwrites Internet Detour Around Censors,” The New York Times, June 12, 2011).

The Obama Administration has canceled the $1 billion program to equip U.S. ports with detectors to spot nuclear weapons and material entering the United States because the devices do not work (David E. Sanger, “Nuclear-Detection Effort Is Halted as Ineffective,” The New York Times, July 30, 2011).

There continues to be a drop in major crimes in all regions of the United States, to the lowest point in 40 years, which is baffling experts who expected crime to rise in a recession (an old theory is that unemployed parents are spending more time with kids, keeping them out of trouble to a greater extent). The odds of being a victim of murder or robbery are now half of what they were in the 1990s, at the height of the violent crime epidemic. For the U.S. as a whole, the drop of 5.5% in major crimes in 2010 compared to the previous year, was about the same as for 2009 over 2008. Murders have particularly dropped in small towns, as cities under 10,000 experienced a 25% drop in the murder rate from 2009 to 2010. Robberies fell 9.5% in 2010, following an 8% reduction the previous year. In 2010 national reductions were: murder: 4.4%, forcible rape (excluding statutory rape): 4.2%, aggravated assault: 3.6%, and motor vehicle theft and arson: 2.8% (following a 2009 decrees of 4.6%. New York City did not fit the pattern, as after a long major drop in crime – more than in most locations - in 2010, all four categories showed increases: rape, robbery, assault, and murder – which increased 14% - though the first few month of 2011 seem to show a slow down in major crime in the city. The only other city of over a million people to have an increase was San Antonio, TX, with a violent crime increase of 4.6% (Richard Oppel Jr., “Steady Drop in Major Crime Baffles Experts,” The New York Times, May 24, 2010). In contrast, the murder rate in Puerto Rico has been rising sharply, producing fear. By June 2011 there had been 525 murders, a significantly higher number than the 983 in all of 2009, the second highest number ever, after the 995 in 1994. From 1980 to 2005 the average annual homicide rate per 100,000 in the continental U.S. was 8, but 19 in Puerto Rico. Increases in drug trafficking, gangs and car jackings appear to correlate with the murder increase, as occurred two decades ago. Police attribute half the murders to drug trafficking and turf wars, with Puerto Rico, a major location for importing drugs into the U.S. from Latin America. To combat the murder, drug and gang increase, Puerto Rico police have begun to employ the ComStat computer system for crime pattern tracking that was very successful in New York (izette Alvarez, “Murder Rate And Fear Rise in Puerto Rico,” The New York Times, June 21, 2011).

Newark, NJ community leaders participated in a peace summit, May 13, relating to programs in local schools to teach students about peace and non-violent conflict resolution, aimed at reducing violence in school and the community (“Newark leaders look for lessons from peace summit,” http://www.app.com/article/20110508/NJNEWS10/305080043/Newark-leaders-look-lessons-from-peace-summit?odyssey=nav%7Chead”)

This fall the United States Institute of Peace is opening the Global Peacebuilding Center, a center for peacebuilding activities and education particularly for middle and high school youth. For information contact David J. Smith, JD, National Educational Outreach Officer, United States Institute of Peace, 2301 Constitution Avenue, NW/Washington, DC 20037-2900,(202)429-4709, dsmith@usip.org, Skype: david.j.smith60, www.usip.org/experts/david-j-smith.
DIALOGUING

NORWAY ATTACKS REINFORCE NEED FOR UNITED STAND AGAINST INTOLERANCE

Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu*

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The horrific and tragic incident that happened in Norway reminds us again of the importance of combating religious intolerance and promoting cultural understanding.

Anti-Islam and anti-Muslim attitudes and activities, known as Islamophobia, are increasingly finding place in the agenda of ultra-right wing political parties and civil societies in the West in their anti-immigrant and anti-multiculturalism policies, as was evident in the manifesto of the Norway killer. Their views are being promoted under the banner of freedom of expression while claiming that Muslims do not respect that right.

A few days before the Norway attack, on 15 July in Istanbul, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United States agreed to a united stand on “[c]ombating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief” through the implementation of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18.

The meeting – co-chaired by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and myself, with the attendance of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs together with the foreign ministers and officials of OIC member states and Western countries, as well as international organisations – reaffirmed the commitment of the participants to the effective implementation of the measures set in the resolution.

This was a major step towards strengthening the foundations of tolerance and respect for religious diversity as well as enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world.

The OIC, which was the initiator of Resolution 16/18, worked in close cooperation in the drafting process with the United States and the European Union in bringing about a breakthrough on 21 March.

The 2011 HRC resolution is a genuine effort to usher in an era of understanding on the issue of religious intolerance. It gives the widest margin of freedom of expression, and reiterates the rejection of discrimination, incitement and stereotyping used by the other or against the symbols of the followers of religions. The OIC has never sought to limit freedom of expression, give Islam preferential treatment, curtail creativity or allow discrimination against religious minorities in Muslim countries.

The Islamic faith is based on tolerance and acceptance of other religions. It does not condone discrimination of human beings on the basis of caste, creed, colour or faith. It falls on all the OIC member states as a sacred duty to protect the lives and property of their non-Muslim citizens and to treat them without discrimination of any form. Those elements who seek to harm or threaten minority citizens must be subjected to law. Our strong stand condemning violence perpetrated against non-Muslims whether in Iraq, Egypt or Pakistan has been consistent.

No one has the right to insult another for their beliefs or to incite hatred and prejudice. That kind of behaviour is irresponsible and uncivilised. We also cannot overlook the fact that the world is diverse. The Western perception on certain issues would differ from those held by others. We need to be sensitive and appreciative of this reality, more so when it comes to criticising or expressing views on issues related to religion and culture.

The publication of offensive cartoons of the Prophet six years ago that sparked outrage across the Muslim world, the publicity around the film *Fitna* and the more recent Qur’an burnings represent incidents of incitement to hatred that fuel an atmosphere of dangerous mutual suspicion. Freedom of expression has to be exercised with responsibility. At the same time, violent reactions to provocations are also irresponsible and uncivilised and we condemn them unequivocally.
It is not enough to pass resolutions and laws against religious incitement. We should also be diligent in launching more initiatives and measures towards better intercultural dialogue and understanding at all levels – the political, social, business, media, academic and religious.

Resolution 16/18 includes an eight-point approach that calls for various measures to foster tolerance, including developing collaborative networks to build mutual understanding and constructive action, creating appropriate mechanisms within the government to identify and address potential areas of tension between members of religious communities, and raising awareness at the local, national and international levels on the effects of negative religious stereotyping and incitement to religious hatred. The implementation of the 2011 HRC Resolution 16/18 would take us a long way in making our world a more peaceful and harmonious place to live.

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THE ATTACKS IN NORWAY AND THE PRICE OF FEAR

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There are certain events that are so painful and incomprehensible that they stop us in our tracks and make us wonder what kind of world we live in. The horrific mass murder of teens and young adults at a summer camp in Norway must make us pause to contemplate how such a thing could happen.

Simply blaming the individual as an aberrant case does not help us get to the bottom of the real issues at stake. Nor does it help us protect the children caught in the crossfire. Initial media reports on Anders Behring Breivik’s dual assault on government buildings in downtown Oslo and the Labor Party summer camp were quick to link the attack to "Islamic terrorism". It was eerily reminiscent of early reporting on the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing perpetrated by Timothy McVeigh, when "experts" were quick to claim that the attack bore the hallmarks of "Middle Eastern" and "Islamic" terrorism.

When McVeigh was identified as the bomber, the American media did not associate his "Christianity" with the attacks in the same way that "Islam" was initially blamed. Instead, his frustration with his military service and political grievances were highlighted as the root causes of his violence. Because Christianity remains the majority religion in the United States and Western Europe, most Americans and Europeans were able to see McVeigh’s version of Christianity for what it was – an extremist and politicized interpretation that had little to do with mainstream Christianity in the West.

The same cannot be said of Islam, which remains one of the least understood religions in the United States and Western Europe today. The majority of Americans, for example, do not know enough about Islam to recognize how an extremist interpretation differs from mainstream practice.

Instead, sadly, we have seen cases time and again where individuals equate Islam with terrorism. They express anger about "Islamic terrorism" and fear of a "Muslim takeover" of the government. Stories about President Obama’s "secret Muslim identity" continue to circulate, as do accounts of sharia being forced into the American legal system – despite the absence of any concrete evidence supporting either of these claims.

Such a simplistic equation often leads to an exaggerated sense of threat. It can also lead to violence. For example, some "concerned" members of the Oklahoma City community in 1995 responded to early guesses about the perpetrators of the bombing by harassing local Muslims and creating an atmosphere of fear, intimidation and hatred.

According to early reports, Breivik, fearing Muslim colonization of Western Europe and the rise of multiculturalism – and allegedly citing the influence of individuals promoting exclusive and intolerant worldviews – decided that the time for action had come. 76 people, mostly children and young adults, paid the price for his fear with their lives.

Our views of the world are shaped by what we read, see and hear, and by the ideas we are exposed to. Most people recognize that there is no justification for such atrocities and that the actions of terrorists cannot be excused. At the same time, if we fail to recognize and address the societal factors at the root of such behaviour, the cycles of anger, violence and hatred will continue.
How many more cases of angry responses to fear-mongering and Islamophobia must happen before we recognise its consistently deadly consequences? Preaching hatred, racism and bigotry leads to violence. It is never innocent and without intent. At some point, someone will take action. And, more often than not, innocent children, who know nothing of the issues at stake, get caught in the cross-fire.

May God forgive all of us for allowing any child to live in an atmosphere where hatred and fear rule the day. The adults of this world owe children a commitment to learning to listen to and understand each other so that we can all live in an environment where everyone’s dignity, humanity, and, yes, religion, are respected. Their safety and their lives depend on it.


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**ALL HAIL THE (DEMOCRATIC) KING**

Ahmed Charai and Joseph Braude*


It isn’t news anymore when an Arab ruler facing mass protests pledges sweeping reforms. But Morocco’s 1 July constitutional referendum may be the most significant development in the Arab world all summer. For the first time since the Arab Spring began, a population broadly embraced its leader’s reforms and scaled back anti-government demonstrations. In the weeks before the referendum, over 100,000 people had taken to the streets; after the vote only about 10,000 did.

A sizable majority of Moroccans approved the new constitution, which calls for King Mohammed VI to cede half his power to a prime minister appointed from the parliament’s majority party and ensures the rights of women and non-Arabs, including the country’s large Berber population.

Morocco appears to have found a new model for political transition. If the constitutional experiment succeeds, the country will have the opportunity — and responsibility — to take on the regional leadership role that has traditionally been played by Egypt.

The major parliamentary opposition parties, including the main Islamist party, endorsed the constitution. Those rejecting it, including a radical Islamist group which aims to overthrow the king and install a caliph, had the chance to make their cases on public radio and television. Some officials believe this new openness is serving as a force for moderation. “The more the extremists go on TV, the more ridiculous they look,” said Nawfel Raghay, who manages the country’s broadcasting authority. “We should have done this 20 years ago.”

The constitution’s power split provides a check against Islamists, if they were to win elections. In the event of an Islamist landslide, a new *sharia*-minded prime minister would have the authority to appoint all senior civil servants and oversee domestic security. However, control over the army and foreign intelligence services would rest with the king. The monarch would also retain his traditional role as the country’s highest religious authority — meaning that he could block attempts to use mosques, the news media and religious education to impose chauvinist religious mores.

This novel arrangement also addresses the historic dilemma between values and interests the West has faced in its relationship with Morocco. The country has long been regarded as a constructive player in regional affairs, but its pro-Western authoritarian elite has a troubling human rights record and has constrained political and economic opportunity for the country’s impoverished majority. The constitution could allow the emergence of new elites and open up the political arena.

It is important for America and its allies that Morocco achieve this balance at a time when Egypt is not in a position to serve as a regional powerbroker. Under its former president, Hosni Mubarak, Egypt served as a bridge between Arab monarchies like Saudi Arabia, and Arab dictatorships like Syria and Libya. But today, there is a new Arab political divide — between autocracies and countries undergoing democratic transitions. Morocco, a transitioning government itself and a prospective member of the Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council, is uniquely positioned to bridge this divide.
Whereas Mubarak mediated between Israelis and Palestinians, the new Egyptian government has yet to form a coherent policy on that conflict, let alone earn the trust of both sides. Morocco, by contrast, has a history of doing so. Years before Egypt normalised diplomatic relations with Israel in 1980, the Moroccan king Hassan II was a liaison between Israel and its neighbours. The country’s distance from Israel was not a serious disadvantage then, and it is even less so today in the era of instant communication and intercontinental strategic partnerships.

Morocco also has a deep historical bond with the Jewish people: the king protected 200,000 Moroccan Jews from the Nazis during World War II, and nearly one million Israelis have Moroccan roots — including some senior political and military officials. Morocco can extract concessions from both parties to the conflict that Egypt never could.

The Moroccan constitutional model sets an obvious example for Jordan, whose king also claims some religious authority and remains relatively popular. For the more embattled Sunni kingdom of Bahrain, a similar pact of electoral power-sharing with the Shiite majority may be the only way, in the long run, for Bahrain's dynasty to survive.

Before the referendum, scores of protesters were wounded by the police, and one was killed. While this violence is deplorable, it is a far cry from that of Egypt, where hundreds died, let alone Libya and Syria, where state security forces have killed thousands.

There is great optimism in Morocco today. Millions have signalled their desire for freedom and opportunity within a constitutional framework. If parliament is vigilant in ensuring that the reforms are swiftly applied, Morocco can set an example for peaceful political transitions across the Arab world.

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CULTURES OF PEACE, LASTING CHANGE IN EGYPT?

Joseph Mayton*

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Instead of falling victim to Egypt’s eye-for-an-eye past, a concerted effort to create a culture of peace in what has quickly become a starkly fractured political scene – between religious groups, the military and activists, and activists and the people – may well be the best opportunity to bring about a new Egypt with social justice, transparency and tolerance.

Egyptians are striving daily to show the world that societies can change. Cairo is not the same city it was six months ago. As voices now begin to breech the political and social stalemate in the country, Egyptian society can, through a culture of peace, set a precedent not only for their own country but for the whole region.

UNESCO defines the culture of peace as “a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue”. In Egypt, for example, this could help develop an overall sense that the "other", who participated in violent acts in the past, can become part of society, instead of remaining on the outskirts as they are currently. Building such a culture in Egypt would follow the South African model of reconciliation, which allowed the country to look forward instead of focusing on the frustrating and sad past of apartheid. Instilling a culture of peace in the younger generation could be a great antidote to the older generations’ mistrust and antagonism toward one another – Christian versus Muslim; Worker versus Owner; Military versus the People; and so on.

In Egypt, one of the root causes of a lack of a culture of peace is the educational system. Young Egyptian students are taught that they are different from one another, that their respective faiths are cause for separation. In schools, Christian students study the history and faith of Christianity separately, while Muslim students do the same for Islam. This creates a sense that each group is separate and divided when it comes to any national cause. Without jointly learning the country’s history of Christianity and Islam, this helps build an idea that Egypt was, and is, “Christian” or “Muslim”.

A few years ago, I met a history teacher from a local secondary school in Cairo. She wanted to invest an entire week of the curriculum in discussing Judaism and Christianity, and their role in Egyptian history. The headmaster of the school told her she was not allowed to do so.
“They told me that Egypt is a Muslim country and the government has given students the opportunity to learn about Christianity if they are Christian,” the teacher said. She was frustrated. Students had been making slurs against their peers on a regular basis and she thought that a little education into the cultures that make up Egypt — such as Coptic history, the early years of Islam and the integration that subsequently came about — would go a long way. But that was not the way the government looked at this issue. Here, the headmaster of the private school refused to accept her proposal. For public schools, there is no debate — the government has simply not allowed integrated religious education.

This imposed division was broken down by the revolution, at least for a few months. But through a concerted effort by educators and peace advocates, Egyptian society can be transformed into one where a culture of peace and coexistence prevails, which can help implement the notions of tolerance and understanding through what UNESCO says is “dialogue, consensus-building and active non-violence”.

As Egypt pushes on in a new direction, now is the time to create a society that understands all facets of its history and its people. Through a greater push toward a culture of peace, Egypt can once more show the world that it is a country that is forward-thinking and can create a better world based on peace and tolerance.

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PALESTINIAN STATUS AT THE UN: BREAKING THE LOGJAM

Rene Wadlow

There is a good deal of discussion in the halls of the UN, both in New York and Geneva, concerning a possible application of full membership in the UN by the Palestinian Authority. The discussions reflect similar discussions within Foreign Ministries in the hope that there can be an agreed-upon program of action (or non-action) by September when the new General Assembly meets. Currently Palestine has observer status at the UN from a time when liberation movements were given observer status — two organizations for South Africa, one for South West Africa as Namibia was then, and for the PLO. With the changes in South Africa and Namibia, the liberation movement observer status was dropped for the three, and only the PLO remained.

In practice, there is little effective difference between observer status and full membership. Observers can not vote, but voting in the UN has been largely replaced by ‘consensus making’. Effectiveness for all countries except for a small number of Great Powers depends on the skills of the diplomats which represent them. The Vatican has only observer status but a good deal of influence due to an effective diplomatic team. The Palestinian diplomats in Geneva have been weak, in New York somewhat stronger. The Palestinian diplomats have always been in the shadows of the representatives of the Arab States who want to play ‘Big Brother’, but with the exception of Egypt which has always had a strong core of diplomats, the Arab diplomats have rarely been more competent than the Palestinians.

Being overshadowed by the larger Arab States would probably not change even if full membership is granted, but full membership would be a symbolic victory of legitimacy and open the door to the independent use of the World Court. As Mahmoud Abbas has written “Palestine’s admission to the United Nations would pave the way for the internationalization of the conflict as a legal matter, not only a political one. It would also pave the way for us to pursue claims against Israel at the United Nations, human rights treaty bodies and the International Court of Justice.”

As of now, there are a number of variations being discussed around three possible approaches:

1) The first approach favored by the USA, some of the Western European members of the European Union, in particular Germany, and a few others including Israel is that the issue should go away. It is felt that there are enough problems in the world, especially in the Middle East not to have a complicated procedural battle in September. This has been the ‘advice’ given to the Palestinians by the US, Canada, and some Western European States. It may be also what some of the Arab States are saying more privately. To reinforce their arguments, the US and the Western European governments have a strong card — they can cut off funding to the Palestinian Authority. The pretext would be the Hamas support or participation in a ‘unity government’ even if such a government is made of ‘non-political technocrats’. Hamas is still listed by the USA and the European Union as a ‘terrorist organization’ and so cannot receive funds from the US or EU governments. The Palestinian Authority depends largely on external financing; thus cutting off financing is an argument that carries weight — even if it is called ‘blackmail’ in other settings.
In exchange for dropping the full membership application, there would be some sort of short Israel-Palestine meeting where each side would speak of a ‘peace process’ through September when the membership issue has gone by. Such a sleight of hand will not advance real negotiations but may ‘buy time’ which is what many governments now want.

2) There is, however, a real possibility that the Palestinian Authority will ask for full membership in September. This will depend in part on discussions among the Palestinian leadership and the views of the three key States concerning the Middle East: Egypt, Turkey, and Iran. Iran which is one of the Vice Presidents of the upcoming General Assembly will be particularly influential in procedural matters. The UN Charter states that the admission of new members “will be effected by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council”. The Council makes its membership recommendation through a resolution; thus it must be approved by at least nine of the Council’s 15 members and not be vetoed by the one of the five permanent members. If the USA abstains — abstentions are not considered a veto — it is likely that there would be at least nine positive votes for Palestinian membership in the Security Council. Then it is most likely that the General Assembly would follow the Security Council recommendation as it has always done in the past. Thus current discussions turn around what could convince the US to abstain rather than veto. We will return to this key issue after a consideration of a third possibility.

3) The third possibility in the case of a US veto is to move the issue to the General Assembly under what is known now as the “Uniting for Peace” mechanism. UN General Assembly resolution 377(V) of 3 November 1950, first known as ‘the Acheson Plan’ from the name of the US Secretary of State who proposed it and later re-named Uniting for Peace states that in cases where the UN Security Council fails to act to maintain international peace and security, owing to disagreement among the five permanent members, the matter shall be discussed immediately by the General Assembly. If the General Assembly is not in session, an Emergency Special Session can be called. This procedure has been used 10 times since its 1950 start. (1) As from September to December, the General Assembly will be in session, a Special Session will not have to be called. For a resolution to pass under the Uniting for Peace mechanism, there must be a 2/3 majority, meaning now 135 States if all are present and voting. However, not being present is a ‘diplomatic’ way of not having to be seen making a choice. Currently, 112 UN members recognize a Palestinian State within the pre-1967 frontiers. What can not be analysed is how hard the USA and some of its allies would work to prevent the 135 positive voters.

To turn back to the Security Council procedure, we can ask could there be a ‘deal’ that would satisfy no one completely but not dissatisfy any of the five permanent powers to the extent of their casting a veto. Here we can turn to precedent because at the UN everything functions by precedent. If something has been done once, one can argue that it can be done again. If it has never been done, it takes an exceptional situation and a few highly skilled diplomats to get any innovation.

Thus we can turn to the 1954 period and the breaking of the ‘logjam’ on membership. During the first ‘hot round’ of the Cold War — the June 1950 to July 1953 Korean War— the Soviet Union and the USA blocked each others potential allies from UN membership. At the end of the Korean War, there was a host of pending membership applications on which no progress had been made. There seemed to be little possibility of moving things forward.

The 1954 membership issue was my start at looking closely at diplomatic negotiations around procedural issues at the UN. At a time when I should have spent my time chasing girls, I was a university student representative on the Executive Committee of what was then the United World Federalists in the USA. In 1955, the issue of a review conference on the UN Charter was to be placed automatically on the agenda of the General Assembly. During the 1945 negotiations that led to the creation of the UN Charter, a review conference on the Charter after 10 years was to be placed on the agenda. This a demand of some of the smaller States at San Francisco, in particular Australia. It was expected in 1945 that such a review conference would be held and that was still the expectation in the period 1953-1954. There was a good deal of reflection on how to improve and strengthen the Charter during such a Review Conference. Universal membership was one of the demands of UN reformers, both some diplomats and activists such as those in the United World Federalists who had taken a lead on the Charter Review issue.

However, both the USA and the USSR opposed holding a Charter Review conference and brought most of their allies along with them. The result was that when the Charter Review conference came upon on the agenda, it was swept under the rug, and there has never been a review. Nevertheless, the diplomats of the USA and the USSR felt that some of the ‘steam’ for a Review Conference had to be lowered and this could be done by getting rid of ‘universal membership’ as an issue. Negotiations to break the logjam on pending applications started with the aim of making as close-to-possible balance between pro-USA, pro-USSR and neutral States entering the UN. The negotiations were carried out in 1954 and in 1955, before the debate on Charter Review, the membership logjam broke and Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Laos, Libya, Nepal, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sri Lanka entered the UN. Japan should have been part of the
group, but there was still the “enemy states” clause in the Charter which took more negotiations concerning Japan. Japan only came in the next year, 1956.

Can there be something comparable in September? In an article “Coming in from the Cold: UN Membership Needed for the Phantom Republics”, I suggested at the time of the Georgia-Abkhazia-South Ossetia conflict that Abkhazia, Chechenya, Kosovo, Nagrono-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Transnistria be given UN membership as a necessary first step for security and a lessening of tensions. I had stressed that “to find mutually acceptable forms of government in these conflicts will require political creativity (breaking out of thinking in fixed patterns) and then new forms of constitutional order such as renewed forms of federal-confederal types of government, greater popular participation in decision-making and new forms of protection of minorities. Flexibility, compromise and cooperation are the hallmarks of success when it comes to resolving such conflicts concerning independence and autonomy. There is a need for a healing of past animosities and a growth of wider loyalties and cooperation.”

Both diplomats and members of the UN secretariat as well as secretariat of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe where I had also floated the idea explained in detail why such a joint membership procedure would not happen. None the less, if we added upgrading the status of Palestine in the UN, another membership logjam might be broken. The point I have repeatedly made is that membership does not solve difficulties; it just provides a framework where serious negotiations might be carried out. The 1955 access to membership of Cambodia and Laos did not ‘solve’ the Indochina conflict. The French-led war in Vietnam was still going on, to be followed a decade later by the US-led war.

Thus, I think that a world citizen position is that full Palestinian membership in the UN will not ‘solve’ all the Israel-Palestine issues, and certainly not the issues of the wider Middle East. However UN membership will allow the Palestinians to come out from the shadows of the Arab States and to negotiate with the Israelis as equals. Such is a very modest step forward but it is worth taking.

1. For a useful discussion of the background to the Uniting for Peace procedure see Dean Acheson Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York: W.W.Norton, 1969, chapters 47-51).

ISRAEL’S CHOICE VIS-À-VIS PALESTINE’S BID FOR STATEHOOD

Jerome M. Segal*

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Having despaired of productive negotiations with the Netanyahu government and having lost confidence in the Obama administration, the Palestinians are expected to seek recognition of the State of Palestine from the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September.

Attaining recognition from the General Assembly will be easy, but once recognition is attained, they face the hard part: getting Israel to end the occupation, share Jerusalem, and make a meaningful accommodation on refugees. It can be expected that the Palestinians will continue to pursue internationalisation through the UN General Assembly. Their likely next step will be to ask the UN to re-establish the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). The committee was originally founded in May of 1947 by the General Assembly in order to formulate a detailed plan for resolving the Palestine question.

In four months’ time, UNSCOP galvanised public attention. It travelled to the Middle East and received testimony from Ben Gurion and Chaim Weizman. It visited the displaced persons camps in Europe. It heard from governments around the world and solicited Palestinian views. Regrettably, the Palestinians boycotted UNSCOP.

UNSCOP unanimously recommended an end to the British Mandate, but was divided on what should come next. The majority report called for two states, one Jewish and one Arab; it detailed the border and spelled out the structure of an international regime for Jerusalem. The minority report called for a federated state. UNSCOP reported back to the General Assembly, and in November 1947, the majority report was enacted as UNGA Resolution 181, the historic Partition Resolution.

If the Palestinians follow this path, within a year there will be a new 181, and the basis for an imposed solution will be laid down. Legalists will remind us that UN General Assembly resolutions are only recommendations, but given the historical
role of UNSCOP in the creation of Israel, this legal point will be swept aside. The details of a peace agreement will have been
determined, and the world will focus on getting Israel to accept them.

As UNSCOP-2 undertakes its work, the Israeli government will have to decide whether or not to boycott. Like the
Palestinians in 1947 it could decide that it is better to boycott than to provide legitimisation.

However, the wisdom of following the Palestinian example is questionable. What Israeli policy makers should be
thinking about is not how to prevent an aggressive Palestinian internationalisation strategy, but rather how to turn this into an
opportunity for peace.

Rather than flat opposition to UNSCOP-2, Israel should enlist the United States in an effort to alter the UN
SCOP trajectory. Instead of leading to a new 181 and an imposed solution, UNSCOP-2 can become a pathway to a new and more
productive form of negotiations.

The United States could tell the Palestinians that it will support UNSCOP-2 as an instrument of the Security Council
provided three issues are satisfactorily addressed. First, the terms of reference for UNSCOP-2 must be ones that Israel can live
with, such as those provided in the 2002 Roadmap drafted by the Bush administration. Second, UNSCOP-2 must be headed by
a fair-minded friend of Israel who is also acceptable to the Palestinians, perhaps someone like Bill Clinton.

Most importantly, UNSCOP-2 should differ from the original UNSCOP once the peace plan is developed. Rather than
embedding the plan in a new UN resolution, Israel and the State of Palestine could be asked to negotiate for three months to
see if they can agree on any mutually acceptable improvements to the draft treaty.

After three months, the two sides would report back to the UN Security Council to ask for more time, or to announce
their failure to reach an agreement or, hopefully, to announce an agreed text. If failure ensues, then the Security Council could
ask the United States to resume its central role and offer bridging proposals, or it could call on both states to hold binding
referenda on a draft treaty. Or perhaps it would determine that at this point in history an end-of-conflict agreement cannot be
reached and that what is needed, either by agreement or by Security Council action, is a determination of the border that will
separate the two states. There is no guarantee that this approach will lead to an enduring peace, but it is hard to see how
anything could be worse for Israel than just digging in its heels and allowing events to take their course.

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A CIVIL COMPROMISE TO THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Khaled Diab*

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Is it possible to have statehood without a state? This is the puzzling question raised by the dramatic Palestinian bid to
seek United Nations membership which Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas launched with a rousing speech to the General
Assembly last Friday.

However, for the Palestinian plan to work requires not only that the Palestinians succeed in acquiring UN membership,
but also in mobilising the international community, despite its dismal track record over the past two decades, to bring pressure
to bear on Israel. The likelihood of either happening is highly questionable, as the US threat to veto any possible resolution at
the Security Council amply demonstrates. This underlines the fact that the UN bid is unlikely to change the Israeli-Palestinian
dynamic on the ground and could even make matters worse. So, with the two-state solution caught between the rock of
Israeli-Palestinian deadlock and the hard place of international dithering, what can be done?

In my view, the space to create two states on the pre-1967 borders has largely disappeared. The upshot of this is
that Israelis and Palestinians are effectively living in a single state, albeit one that is largely segregated and in which millions are
disenfranchised.

Since questions of statehood seem irreconcilable for the foreseeable future, it is best to focus on tangible “bread and
butter” issues until the situation improves enough to enable an honest and broad public debate on the bigger picture. In short,
the Palestinian national struggle should be transformed into a civil rights movement for equal rights. Activists on both sides
should join forces to demand full citizenship, the right to vote and full mobility for both Palestinians and Israelis to live and work where they please.

For different reasons, this course terrifies many Israelis and Palestinians. Such worries reflect historical and psychological anxieties, heightened by the maximalist visions of extremists on both sides, more than they do real future possibilities.

Most Israelis currently worry that a single-state resolution would spell the end of Israel as a Jewish state. However the demographic trend - a growing Palestinian population - underpinning Jewish fears will not go away regardless of the outcome. So the question is whether to handle this growing segment of the population justly or unjustly. With a secular democracy guaranteeing the rights of all, the millions of Jewish Israelis will give the future state an unmistakable Jewish character, albeit one that is part of a melting pot of other identities.

Though the single state is more popular among Palestinians, many are apprehensive that by choosing this path, they will be legitimising the occupation and surrendering their rights. But this process will act as the final nail in the coffin of the occupation as everywhere in mandate Palestine becomes open to Israelis and Palestinians alike, and the future army – drawn from both sides – redefines its role as the protector of all.

Once everyone in Israel-Palestine has become enfranchised, the groundwork will be laid for a truly democratic, grassroots resolution to this conflict. Although the de facto single state may act as only a stepping stone on the path to two independent nations, Israelis and Palestinians may, after years of intense collaboration, decide that their future is best served by continuing to live closely together in one bi-national, democratic, secular country.

Or they may opt for a looser union. In that case, the state can adopt a federated model which affords Jews and Arabs the bells and whistles of statehood, such as separate flags and national anthems. Non-territorial community governments would represent them wherever they live on the land, while issues common to both sides, such as defence and foreign policy, would be decided in a federal parliament.

Or, instead, the equal citizens of this future state may ultimately opt for a magnanimous divorce, though the intertwined nature of their existence on this tiny land may mean that their independent countries are effectively a one-state “light”.

A single democratic state could well be the best option because it ensures that both Israelis and Palestinians, individually and collectively, enjoy unhindered access to the entire land, including the crown jewel for both: Jerusalem. More pragmatically, in Israel-Palestine’s diversity, and the creative energy this promises, lies its most unsung and under-utilised strength.

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**ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN SELF-ENTRAPMENT**

Alon Ben-Meir,* September 15, 2011

The United States should preempt the Palestinian bid for UN membership by introducing its own resolution at United Nations Security CouncilAmerican, Israeli and Palestinian officials today are frantically grappling with the various pros and cons concerning the Palestinian Authority's plans to seek recognition from the United Nations next week. Regardless of the merit or wisdom behind such a move, the Palestinians seem determined to proceed with their plans unless Israel agrees to negotiate in earnest while freezing settlement construction during the negotiations-an unlikely option at this late juncture. Unfortunately, however, neither side has been willing or able to agree to rules of engagement to support their professed desire to conclude a peace agreement resulting in a two-state solution.

The failure to reengage in negotiations before the UN General Assembly (UNGA) convenes over the next two weeks or to modify any resolution passed by the UN to produce positive momentum will usher in a period of instability with unpredictable consequences for all parties: the United States, Israel and the Palestinians.
First, the clear consequences of the UN plan are reduced influence of the United States in the Middle East. Long believed to be the only credible mediator of the Arab-Israeli dispute, the internationalization of the conflict serves as a de facto vote of no confidence in the Obama administration’s ability to bring the parties back to the negotiating table with a chance to succeed in reaching an equitable peace agreement.

Second, Israel would face an unprecedented wave of continued delegitimization efforts. An increasing number of states, certainly more than two of the international community, will join in solidarity with the Palestinians. Furthermore, the continued decline of US influence in the Arab-Israeli arena is likely to increase tensions between Washington and Jerusalem.

Finally, the test for the Palestinian Authority (PA) will be managing the strategy for the post-UNGA environment to meet the elevated expectations that have come with the international push to recognize Palestine as a UN member state. All the while, the PA is threatened by its rival, Hamas, which opposes Abbas’ bid to go to the UN because it would affirm Israel’s right to exist within the 1967 borders. As a result, Hamas may return to violence against Israel which could have horrific consequences for the Palestinian people.

Although both Israel and the Palestinians pretend to be weary of the unending conflict, they nevertheless have been pursuing counterproductive policies, undermining the very premise on which a lasting peace can be erected. If Netanyahu truly sought a two-state solution and to prevent the Palestinians from going to the UN, he could have agreed to starting negotiations with borders and even accepted a temporary freeze on settlement construction to give Mahmoud Abbas a face-saving way out. The Palestinians, on the other hand, could have intimated to the Americans that they were willing to stop promoting old narratives, particularly about the return of Palestinian refugees, and agreed to a significant land swap thereby encouraging the Israelis to take them seriously.

Meanwhile, the August 2011 meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo failed to play any constructive role and left it to Palestinian devices to decide on the next course of action. In so doing, Arab leadership too has signaled inaptitude rather than trying to genuinely advance the cause of peace.

In the past, I have opposed the Palestinian move to unilaterally seek UN recognition of their state, but at this late hour the only way to avoid what will be an unprecedented period of uncertainty is for the United States and the European Union to lead the way. They can still find an alternative before the UNGA convenes that can help advance the peace process and avoid a potential catastrophe.

Rather than simply vetoing the proposed Palestinian resolution, the Obama administration should introduce a resolution that could garner the support of the UN Security Council (UNSC) with provisions that will inevitably have to be accepted by both Israel and the Palestinians. The US should join leading EU members like France, Britain and Germany who have and would certainly still consider proposing four parameters that any future Israeli-Palestinian negotiations will have to accomplish: 1) the future border to be established based on the 1967 borders with mutually agreed land swap, 2) expanded security arrangements throughout the West Bank that will satisfy Israel’s strict national security requirements, 3) a shared capital in Jerusalem by institutionalizing what is on the ground without uprooting any Israeli or Palestinian residents and, 4) a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, which must be achieved through compensation and or resettlements in their homeland – the West Bank and Gaza.

Instead of offering a detailed framework for an agreement that would be rejected by each side, the above terms provide a general framework with regard to the need to establish a two-state solution and address the core final status issues, starting with borders and security as proposed by President Obama. In doing so, the resolution should be framed as a continuation of the efforts the UNSC has made on this issue since the end of the 1967 Six Day War. The resolution could serve to reaffirm UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338, which Israel and the Arab states have accepted, with the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and the 1993 Oslo accords—all of which have endorsed the land for peace formula and realizing the vision of a two-state solution.

Having failed to persuade the Israelis and the Palestinians to resume negotiations it would be understandable if the Obama administration simply tries to veto the resolution in an effort to curry favor with Israel’s advocates in the US, especially the massive, Evangelical and Methodists constituency prior to the upcoming presidential election. This, however, would be a major mistake. Without successful diplomacy to find an alternative path forward, the US position will be considerably undermined in the Middle East, where the US must buttress its influence at this time of change and upheaval.

Only a different, nuanced and creative resolution that provides international support for the two-state solution and a workable framework to bring the parties back to negotiations could prevent both Israelis and Palestinians from racing towards a new quagmire with unpredictable consequences.
WHO NEEDS A CEASEFIRE ANYWAY?
Adam Keller, “Who needs a ceasefire anyway?”


A bit of the past week’s history: after several days of escalated fighting on the Gaza Strip border, a ceasefire was declared. The Government of Israel approved it after a meeting of the "Forum of Eight" lasting deep into the night, and next morning the press was told that "The State of Israel formulated a policy of examining the situation on the ground and noting whether or not the shooting continues, and the IDF shall conduct its operations accordingly".

On the next day the behavior of the Gaza Palestinians was thoroughly examined, and - wonder of wonders - the ceasefire was adhered to, the shooting of rockets did stop, residents of the South began to leave the air raid shelters, and at the Ashkelon National Park began preparations for the 2011 Sea Breeze Festival, a large scale Israeli Music outdoor event which the people of the city and the entire region have long been looking forward to.

But a few hours before the festival was to take place, somebody – in the government or army or security services – took the decision to send the Air Force to perform a "liquidation" in the Gaza Strip. The assassination was carried out on schedule, the car traveling on the Gaza Strip's main highway was destroyed and its passenger killed on the spot. A smooth and precise implementation, exactly as planned. The citizens of Israel were informed that it had been a dangerous terrorist and that the action had been necessary - and who can independently monitor and judge the Security Services of the State of Israel, in exercising their authority to issue and implement death sentences?

So, there was no question of an open air music festival, and the sound of singers was replaced by air raid alarms and loudspeakers stridently announcing "Code Red! Code Red!". Fortunately, during the days of renewed escalation nobody was killed (not on the Israeli side, that is). The case of an Israeli baby who was lightly wounded by the shrapnel of a Palestinian missile received considerable publicity in our media. Only those who follow the Palestinian media heard of two Palestinian children aged two, killed at two different locations in Israeli Air Force bombings.

"The liquidation of one militant, one out of the thousands roaming Gaza, was unnecessary," said yesterday Yehiel Lasry, Mayor of Ashdod – one of the cities which got back into the line of fire as a direct result of that liquidation (Ma’ariv, August 26, 2011).

Last night, another ceasefire on the Gaza border went into effect. Will it last, this time? And if not, who will be responsible for breaching it this time? And how does this relate to the social protest, which is about to resume tonight at full force, with demonstrations scheduled simultaneously at five places? And with Noam Shalit, father of the famous captive soldier, who tonight joins with the social protesters to call for a prisoner swap which is the only way to bring home his son Gil’ad?

Yechiel Zohar, Mayor of Netivot - another of the southern communities entering the line of fire at every new Gaza border flare-up - called upon the government to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians, and reach a long-term stable peace which would give breathing space to residents of the Negev. But who in the government is going to pay attention to this voice from the Negev, in the commotion of the September events which are speedily coming upon us?

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OBAMA’S MIDEAST SPEECH: TWO STEPS BACK, ONE STEP FORWARD

Stephen Zunes*


Although President Barack Obama’s May 19 address on U.S. Middle East policy had a number of positive elements,
overall it was a major disappointment. His speech served as yet another reminder that his administration’s approach to the region differs in several important ways from that of his immediate predecessor, but he failed to consistently assert principled U.S. support for human rights, democracy, or international law.

Obama was most eloquent in noting how popular nonviolent struggles were the driving agent of change in the region, and how this had in many ways made al-Qaeda decreasingly relevant even before the killing of Osama bin Laden earlier this month. Correctly recognizing that, through the use of nonviolent action, "the people of the region have achieved more change in six months than terrorists have accomplished in decades," the president also observed, unlike the problematic efforts of "democracy promotion" in Iraq, "It is not America that put people into the streets of Tunis and Cairo -- it was the people themselves who launched these movements, and must determine their outcome."

Also to his credit, Obama did not just talk about free elections as the sole determinant of democracy, but the right of a free press, free assembly, and the right to information. Similarly, it is positive that he committed the United States to "build on our efforts to broaden our engagement beyond elites, so that we reach the people who will shape the future -- particularly young people."

In doing so, however, he will face the widespread opposition of these young people and other democratic forces to continued U.S. arms transfers and security assistance to corrupt and repressive regimes, the pursuit of a neo-liberal economic agenda that has exacerbated inequality in their countries, and ongoing U.S. support for the continued Israeli occupation and colonization of Palestinian land.

Bahrain and Syria

In his most forceful comments on the situation in Bahrain to date, Obama addressed concerns about the worsening repression in that island kingdom. However, he did not push for democratic change in Bahrain, a U.S. ally, nearly as much as he did regarding Syria, a longtime U.S. adversary. This unbalanced emphasis was particularly striking given that -- as a percentage of the population -- even more people have been killed and jailed in the former. For example, while calling for greater freedom for Bahrainis, Obama did not call on King Hamad to "lead that transition or get out of the way" as he did with Syrian President Assad. The United States has enormous leverage with Bahrain through its contributions to the government’s coffers in rent for military bases, as well as through arms sales and related security assistance that has been used to oppress pro-democracy demonstrators. But Obama has refused to impose sanctions on Bahrain as he did on Syria.

Another double standard apparent in the president's speech was, while complaining that Iran has allegedly "tried to take advantage of the turmoil" in Bahrain, Obama refused to endorse international demands that U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates withdraw the troops they sent into that island kingdom to brutally repress the overwhelmingly nonviolent freedom struggle.

Obama’s claim that, in Iraq, "we see the promise of a multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian democracy" is rather incredible given the ongoing sectarianism and political repression, including the killing and jailing of pro-democracy activists -- including leading journalists and intellectuals -- and the destruction of offices of civil society groups calling for greater freedom and transparency in the U.S.-backed regime.

It is gratifying to hear a president say that the United States "will oppose an attempt by any group to restrict the rights of others, and to hold power through coercion -- not consent." However, as long as the United States continues to provide allied regimes with billions of dollars worth of security assistance to make that coercion possible, there remain serious questions regarding how seriously Obama is willing to follow through on that commitment.

In addition, his claim that the United States "will not tolerate aggression across borders" continues to be somewhat selective given its ongoing support for the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara and support for Israel’s continued occupation of the Palestinian territories. And although Obama opposed the invasion of Iraq, he has yet to withdraw U.S. forces from that country whose borders the United States crossed in what is recognized by most authorities of international law as an illegal act of aggression.

Israel/Palestine

The good news is that Obama stressed that the Israeli occupation should end and an independent Palestinian state should be established, with its boundaries based on the internationally recognized pre-June 1967 borders. Though this has
been the international consensus for years, right-wing Republicans and other allies of Israel's rightist government have attacked Obama for his position.

However, Obama did not call for a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops and settlers from occupied Palestinian territory. The unspecified variations from the pre-1967 borders, Obama insisted, should be made through "mutually agreed-upon" land swaps. Unfortunately, despite Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas agreeing to such reciprocal territorial swaps -- even though it would leave the Palestinian state with a bare 22 percent of Palestine -- Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu has refused to consider trading any land within Israel while simultaneously insisting on annexing large swathes of occupied Palestinian territory. How such "mutually agreed-upon" swaps will take place without the United States exerting enormous leverage -- such as witholding some of the annual $3 billion in unconditional aid provided annually, which Obama has already ruled out -- is hard to imagine.

The failure of Netanyahu to compromise has forced the Palestinian Authority to consider a unilateral declaration of independence in September within the areas of Palestine recognized by the United States as under foreign belligerent occupation -- the 22 percent of Palestine consisting of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. However, in his speech, Obama arrogantly dismissed such an exercise of the Palestinians' moral and legal right to self-determination as "symbolic actions to isolate Israel at the United Nations." His line that "a growing number of Palestinians live west of the Jordan River" came across as particularly bizarre since this is exactly where Palestinians had lived for centuries, not the neighboring Arab countries where millions of refugees now live.

Similarly, despite ongoing violations of a series of UN Security Council resolutions, a landmark advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and basic international humanitarian law by the government of Israel, Obama vowed "we will stand against attempts to single it out for criticism in international forums."

It was positive that Obama specified that Palestinian borders must be with "Israel, Jordan and Egypt." This appears to be an open challenge to Israeli efforts to control the occupied Jordan Valley (thereby having Israel completely surround a proposed Palestinian mini-state and closing off their access to its eastern neighbor) and -- since the West Bank does not border Egypt -- to prevent the Gaza Strip from joining the new Palestinian republic.

It seemed particularly odd that Obama refused to point out areas of Israeli intransigence and violations of international legal norms but made a point of chastising the Palestinians for their "efforts to delegitimize Israel" and insisting "Palestinians will never realize their independence by denying the right of Israel to exist." Although such criticism of such actions are certainly reasonable in themselves, he seemed to ignore the fact that the Palestine Authority, their president and prime minister, the ruling Fatah party, and the Palestine Liberation Organization have repeatedly reiterated their recognition of Israel's right to exist as an independent viable state in peace and security, which is more than the current Israeli government has ever done in regard to Palestine.

Also disturbing is Obama's insistence that the borders of the new Palestinian state be agreed on prior to negotiations over the status of East Jerusalem, the nominal Palestinian capital and the base of leading Palestinian universities, businesses, and cultural and religious landmarks. Any idea that the Palestinians will accept an independent mini-state without East Jerusalem as its capital is frankly naive.

Most disturbingly, Obama raised concern about whether the Israeli government should even negotiate with the recently announced national unity government formed between the two largest Palestinian parties, Fatah and Hamas, on the grounds of Hamas' ongoing refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist. Obama failed to note that the current Israeli government includes parties that refuse to recognize Palestine's right to exist or raise concerns about whether the Palestinians should negotiate with an Israeli government that included such parties. This blatant double standard raises serious questions regarding Obama's commitment to being an honest broker in resolving the conflict.

Obama concluded his speech by declaring that "we cannot hesitate to stand squarely on the side of those who are reaching for their rights, knowing that their success will bring about a world that is more peaceful, more stable, and more just." Unfortunately, for decades, the United States has refused to do this. And, although the Obama administration has taken small steps in that direction relative to previous administrations, it still has a long way to go before fulfilling such a promise.

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CHANGING REALITIES: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ISRAEL AND ITS NEIGHBORS

Ghanem Nuseibeh and Naava Mashiah*

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The uprisings in the Middle East are plunging the region into uncharted territory. But, as international and other regional powers scramble to adjust to the changing realities, they are also an opportunity for Israel and Arab countries to forge mutually beneficial economic ties and to coalesce around common regional interests.

The Arab uprisings are redefining regional relationships at a speed far greater than regional players are used to. For example, pre-uprising relations between Israel and Egypt are now being re-assessed by the Egyptians. A recent poll by the Pew Research Center showed that 54 percent of Egyptians want to annul the peace treaty with Israel. If this happens, Israel looks set to lose its preferential rates for gas, of which Egypt supplies 40 per cent. And other Arab states are also likely to re-evaluate their relations with Israel.

In the current situation, Israel has two options. It can either accept increasing isolation in the region, or seize the situation as an opportunity during a time when geopolitical interests are being re-aligned and alliances redrawn. So too the Arabs: they can become even more reliant on foreign assistance, or recognise that at their doorstep is a neighbour who can help them achieve a greater degree of self-reliance.

Israel and the Arab states now share the need to ensure that the region can withstand the changes brought about by the uprisings, and the need to recognise the opportunities that these changing realities could give rise to.

The biggest stumbling block is, of course, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the importance of which must not be underestimated. Given that the widespread anti-Israeli sentiments within the Arab world are primarily linked to the conflict with the Palestinians, cooperating with the Israelis will be a very difficult task to sell to the Arab street.

But the changing political realities now offer a momentum that if harnessed could propel Palestinian and Israeli leaders towards more action-oriented approaches. The Palestinians could potentially become the biggest beneficiaries of this collaboration. They hold the key to Israel’s integration in the Arab world and should use this not only as a bargaining chip, but as a way to look beyond the conflict.

The Gulf states are generally viewed positively by Palestinians since they have not played the same role in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict as other Arab states have. This relationship can become an opportunity for Palestinians to play a key role as bridge-builders in strengthening economic relations between Israel and the Gulf states.

The potential benefits to the Gulf are significant. The likely permanent damage to the Bahrain financial sector as a result of the uprising there is forcing banks to relocate to Dubai for now, but potentially out of the region altogether. If this happens, Gulf states will need to intensify their economic diversification efforts. There is a real appetite in the Gulf to become home to a cutting-edge technology industry, but they show only modest gains so far.

Israel can help the Gulf make this shift, and it too has much to gain from such a relationship. Israel has been unable to sustain a corporate culture and capital to enable its high tech start-ups to develop into successful international industry leaders. After a few years, Israeli start-ups tend to migrate to the West. But the Gulf can ensure that these start-ups do not leave the brand new Middle East for the West. The capital – and to some extent, the nascent but growing corporate culture – already exists in the Gulf. This collaboration could also lead to the creation of more jobs, of which the region is in dire need. Failure can mean further brain drain, rising socio-economic tensions and risks of further instability.

The changing reality is challenging the Middle East to look beyond "business as usual", and challenging Israel to integrate rather than alienate itself from the new realities.

There is incentive, motivation and a responsibility for Middle Eastern countries to collaborate more closely for the prosperity of the region’s future. One just needs to change the lens and view the region in a different light – which includes the full participation of all its neighbours.
As the turbulent winds of the Arab Spring continue to blow, and efforts to bring a September vote in the UN General Assembly to recognise the Palestinian state pick up steam, the urgency of a final status Arab-Israeli peace agreement increases by the day.

After decades of false starts, missed opportunities, and “almost-theres”, events in the past few weeks unmistakably demonstrate an increasing acknowledgement by key players – especially in Israel and the United States – of the compelling insistence of “now!” And while the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement injects a new element into the equation, the urgency is unabated.

Note the new entry in the Israeli peace camp: in early April, a group of prominent Israelis unfurled an Israeli Peace Initiative (IPI) as a direct and constructive response to the groundbreaking 2002 Arab Peace Initiative (API). The 40 proponents of the IPI include ex-Israeli army chief Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, former head of Mossad – Israel’s intelligence service – Danny Yatom, two former internal security agency (Shin Bet) directors, ex-general and Labor Party Chief Amram Mitzna, and the son and daughter of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated in 1995.

Hoping to extend a receptive hand to the Arab world, and to spur a response from the Benjamin Netanyahu Administration, the Initiative’s ultimate goal is the resolution of all claims and an end to the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The IPI’s two-page document acknowledges “the suffering of the Palestinian refugees since the 1948 war, as well as of the Jewish refugees from the Arab countries.” It accepts the API as a framework for regional peace negotiations and shares its statement “that a military solution to the conflict will not achieve peace or provide security for the parties.”

Its substantive terms resemble closely those embodied in a series of earlier iterations, including the Clinton Parameters and the Geneva Accord: an independent, de-militarised Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with borders based on the 1967 lines, subject to limited one-to-one land swaps; greater Jerusalem as the capital of both states, with Jewish neighbourhoods under Israeli sovereignty, Arab neighbourhoods under Palestinian sovereignty, and special, internationally-supervised arrangements for the Old City of Jerusalem; financial compensation and a limited, agreed-upon return to Israel for Palestinian refugees. The Initiative also puts forward potential cooperative regional security arrangements, as well as economic development projects culminating in a “Middle East Economic Development Bloc”.

While the Initiative and its ideas are not new, it represents yet another acknowledgement, by prominent, thoughtful, experienced Israeli leaders, that the time for a comprehensive settlement has arrived. Naysayers, however, will insist that the Initiative’s proponents are naïve or wrong-headed and, for any of a host of reasons, that the conditions for peace are not right.

The surprise announcement last Wednesday – of a reconciliation pact between Fatah and Hamas to be signed this week – is the most recently cited reason to balk. Admittedly, this development presents new challenges, but it also offers unmistakable opportunities. As Efraim Halevy, the former head of Israel’s Mossad, told The New York Times, "There will be no serious progress in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without some way of including Hamas in the process so as to transform them from being part of problem to being part of the solution."

If the agreement comes to fruition, it will offer Hamas the chance to renounce violence – as Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has, repeatedly – and to truly serve the interests of a united Palestinian people by endorsing negotiation, and not conflict, with Israel.

In Qatar three weeks ago, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that US President Barack Obama would soon be “speaking in greater detail about America’s policy in the Middle East and North Africa.” Netanyahu, meanwhile, is expected to set out his own new proposal when he addresses Congress in May.
News outlets reported last week that Obama and Netanyahu are “jockeying” to take the lead in reopening the stalled talks. But this isn’t a horse race. The message is clear: it’s time for all interested parties together to embrace the well-known parameters for an agreement.

That’s the critical next step. But history will be made only when the key players summon the courage and wisdom to sit together and finally make the difficult but inevitable compromises peace requires. The table is set. The world waits.

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THE FURY OVER THE 1967 BORDERS IS DISINGENUOUS

Alon Ben-Meir,* May 23, 2011

Although President Obama stated nothing new during his speech last Thursday about the 1967 borders with "mutually agreed land swaps" as a basis for a negotiated Israeli-Palestinian agreement, he put it in a manner that should give the Palestinians pause before they go to the United Nations General Assembly to seek statehood recognition. Moreover, in doing so he has marginalized the settlements problem, which has been a major stumbling block to resume the negotiations, while encouraging some key member states of the European Union to rethink their endorsement of a Palestinian state come September. The fury of Israeli and Jewish leaders over what the president said is entirely misguided, misplaced and disingenuous.

Every American administration since President Carter has supported the idea that the 1967 borders provide the baseline for negotiations. Furthermore, in every negotiation between Israel and the Palestinians since the Oslo Accords in 1993, both sides have agreed on the same principle: a land swap to accommodate the Palestinians for the land on which Israel's three major settlement blocs are situated. Indeed, every Israeli government, regardless of its political leanings has - and will continue - to insist on incorporating these blocs of settlements into Israel proper under any peace agreement. For most Palestinians and Israelis, this formulation has become a given. There will be other territorial disputes in connection with Ariel, for example, which is located deep in the West Bank, and Silwan near Jerusalem. But both sides know that any agreement would entail a land swap, albeit they will argue about the quality, contiguity and equivalence of the land to be swapped. That said, there is no question that these and many other even more intractable issues can be resolved if both parties are genuinely committed to peace.

However modified the borders will be to accommodate both sides, the contour of the final borders will not substantially enhance or severely undermine Israel's national security. Prime Minister Netanyahu is being fundamentally disingenuous when he proclaims that the 1967 borders leave Israel "indefensible." The annexation of more land two or three kilometers deep into the West Bank will make little difference from a security perspective. A mutually acceptable land swap, required because of demographic necessity, where more than 70 percent of the settlers reside along the 1967 borders is one thing, to go beyond that is a simple land grab in the guise of national security. What Netanyahu and his hardline coalition partners have in mind is to surround the Palestinians from the east, west, north and south which theoretically enhances Israel's security while isolating the Palestinians completely, and denying them contiguity. This will not only be rejected off-hand by the Palestinians, but will also deny Israel even a semblance of real peace with security.

Israel's ultimate national security requirements rest on five pillars agreed upon by every politically non-biased Israeli defense and security expert. The Obama administration should begin to articulate these requirements to demonstrate that Israel's genuine national security cannot be met by mere annexation of more swaths of land in the West Bank but must rest, first and foremost, with peace augmented by other measures to alleviate Israel's long-term security concerns.

First, all efforts must focus on achieving a peace agreement negotiated to accommodate Israel's legitimate national security and demographic requirements while providing the Palestinians the right and the space in a contiguous land mass to live freely in their own independent state, alongside Israel with dignity. In the final analysis, only a genuine peace that meets the aspirations of both peoples and the acceptance of one another as partners and neighbors will endure and offer Israel the real security it seeks.

Second, since there is - and will continue to be - a lingering distrust between the two sides, Israel must maintain a credible military deterrence that will make it abundantly clear to all those who now or in the future harbor ill intent against Israel that they will suffer an utter devastation should they threaten Israel's security. In this regard, Israel and the United
States can make sure, as they have in the past that no single country or a combination of states can overwhelm Israel militarily, along with America's continued guarantee for Israel's national security.

Third, the alleviation of Israel's concerns over the smuggling of weapons and the infiltration of terrorists from the Jordan Valley cannot be achieved by maintaining Israeli residual forces along the Jordan River, which for many Palestinians will be tantamount to continued occupation. Instead, an international peacekeeping force (perhaps with some Israeli and Palestinian participation) will have to be stationed along the Jordan River. The force should be assembled from specific countries that have a vested interest in maintaining peace, including Arab states such as Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, EU nations like Britain, France and Germany, all under the command of the United States. Such a robust force should be empowered by the United Nations Security Council to act as it sees fit to maintain calm, to foster close relations with all neighboring states and not be removed without an explicit UNSC resolution where the US enjoys a veto power.

Fourth, the newly established Palestinian state must be demilitarized, with its security assured by the same peacekeeping forces. The Palestinians should accept the fact that they will never be in a position to challenge Israel militarily. Moreover, no country, including Israel, will ever threaten a Palestinian state that lives in peace and harmony with its neighbors. Instead of wasting money on military hardware, presumably to boost its national pride, future Palestinian governments should respond to the yearning of the people by investing in economic developments, education, health care, infrastructure and democratic institutions that will enable them to take pride in their achievements. This is what the Arab youth demands from their governments throughout the Arab world and the Palestinian people are no exception.

Fifth, once a peace agreement is achieved, the United States could offer a security umbrella, along the lines of what Secretary of State Hillary Clinton proposed more than a year ago, to which all nations in the region at peace with Israel and with each other can belong. Such a regional security umbrella could also serve as a major deterrence against Iran to prevent it from intimidating or threatening any state in the area.

Finally, national security for Israel is a state of mind; no one should fault Israelis for their preoccupation with national security. Indeed, the Jewish historical experience speaks for itself. But national security in the current technological environment - with the sustained exponential growth in social and economic connectedness on the world stage - make it imperative for Israel to recalibrate its national security strategy. Instead of reaching out and demonstrating its willingness to achieve an equitable peace, Israel is becoming a garrison state, building fences and walls, isolating itself not only from its neighbors but also from the international community. Surely there will always be risks involved in making concessions but as long as such risks are calculated and can be mitigated should they come to pass, seeking absolute security becomes a liability as it offer no room for concessions necessary to make peace.

The President's speech was one of the most pro-Israel speeches ever delivered by any sitting US president. Netanyahu's reaction to it was both divisive and counterproductive. It is time for the Israeli public to rise against such hypocrisy and disdain to demand accountability from a government that has led the country astray from Day One. Thanks to Netanyahu's government, no one can say that Israel is better off today than it was two years ago. It is time to put an end to the illusion that Israel will be more secure by further territorial entrenchment in the West Bank.

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PALESTINIAN UNITY AGREEMENT IS A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

Khaled Diab*

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The Egyptian-brokered Palestinian “national unity” agreement between the two main Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, took the world by surprise when it was announced on 27 April. Palestinians hope this internal peace deal – officially inaugurated in Cairo last Wednesday – will bring an end to years of infighting and conflict, and mend the burnt bridges between Fatah, which currently dominates the West Bank, and Hamas, which controls Gaza. With national unity, Palestinians also hope they will get a government that can best serve their immediate and long-term national interests.

However, the agreement is so vague and brief that it raises questions as to whether it can serve as a basis to heal the deep-seated political and ideological rifts between Fatah and Hamas. But if it enables the Palestinians to create the
infrastructure for a state-in-waiting, then it will serve a useful purpose. Encouragingly, it also details a clear path to elections, which will enable the Palestinian people to choose between the two factions.

Although much of the world welcomed the news of the deal and saw in it an opportunity to inch towards an eventual Palestinian-Israeli peace deal, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately rejected the agreement, calling on Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah to cancel it.

“The agreement... is a hard blow to the peace process,” Netanyahu said, following a meeting in Jerusalem with former British Prime Minister and Quartet on the Middle East Envoy Tony Blair, and just ahead of a European tour aimed at mobilising European opposition to the deal.

Netanyahu’s position has raised Palestinian suspicions that Israel prefers a divide-and-rule approach to the Palestinians in order to keep alive the idea that Israel has “no partner for peace” while it quite literally cements its hold on the West Bank through settlement building.

Of course, Hamas’s own pronouncements do not help matters. In response to Netanyahu’s rejection of the Palestinian unity deal, Hamas’s Ismail Haniyeh, Prime Minister in Gaza, called on Fatah to withdraw its recognition of Israel in wake of its “denial of the rights and unity of the Palestinian people.”

To many Israelis, this confirms Netanyahu’s assessment when he asked Blair: “How is it possible to achieve peace with a government – half of which calls for the destruction of the State of Israel...?” Of course, Netanyahu is conveniently overlooking his own Likud party’s political platform, which “flatly rejects the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state west of the Jordan river.”

Haniyeh’s comment is particularly unwise when considering that it is targeted at a society in which memories of mass murder and near-extinction at the hands of the Nazis are still alive and traumatic, as illustrated by the sombre spectacle of the annual Holocaust Memorial Day in May. The prism of the Holocaust makes the symbolic recognition of Israel an issue of paramount importance to many Israelis.

If Haniyeh’s heart is really with the Palestinians and he truly wishes to serve “the interests of our people”, then refraining from such harmful statements would be a first step. This is especially true since he and other senior Hamas figures have, since coming to power, indicated their acceptance of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, as recently reiterated in Cairo by Khaled Mashal, the Syria-based political chief of Hamas.

It is high time for the Hamas leadership to stop beating around the bush, in order to appease hardliners within the movement, and come out with a clear statement that it recognises Israel’s right to exist within its pre-1967 borders.

Among Israelis, although concern over Hamas’s record of violence and its refusal to recognise Israel is understandable, it is important to distinguish between the symptoms – strident support of political Islam in Gaza – and the disease – a crushing occupation, poverty and denial of a people’s rights.

It is also wise to recall that Israel helped empower Hamas by illicitly supporting the movement and its precursors, starting from the late 1970s, as a counterbalance against the secular Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and in order to avoid negotiating with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat following the first intifada, and then by refusing to deal with it once it came to power in 2007. Such blowback illustrates that the only way to break the cycle of hardening positions is for Israel to recognise Hamas and Palestinian statehood, just as Hamas should recognise Israel. The gun has failed to deliver peace. It’s time to give the olive branch a real chance.

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THE CHARGE OF THE NEW YORK TIMES, OR BAKSHEESH FOR THE DOOR KEEPER

Uri Avnery, July 23, 2011

A Riddle: Which fleet did not reach its destination but fulfilled its mission?

Well, it’s this year’s Gaza solidarity flotilla.
It could be said, of course, that last year’s “little fleet” – that’s what the word means in Spanish, much as “guerrilla” means “little war” – is also a reasonable candidate. It never reached Gaza, but the commander of the Israeli navy could well repeat the words of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, whose victory over the Romans was so costly that he is said to have exclaimed: “Another such victory, and I am lost!”

Flotilla 1 did not reach Gaza. But the naval commando attack on it, which cost the lives of nine Turkish activists, aroused such an outcry that our government saw itself compelled to loosen its land blockade of the Gaza Strip significantly.

The repercussions of this action have not yet died down. The very important relations between the Israeli and Turkish militaries are still ruptured, with Turkey demanding an apology and indemnities. The victims’ families are pursuing criminal and civil proceedings in several countries. An ongoing headache.

Flotilla 2 reached its end this week, when a huge naval action led to the capture of 1 (one!) little French yacht and the detention of its sailors, journalists and activists – all 16 (sixteen) of them. Even our tame broadcasters could not help themselves from sneering: “Why didn’t they send an aircraft carrier?”

The 14 boats that were prevented from sailing, and the one that did sail, not only kept our entire navy on alert for weeks, but also helped to keep the Gaza blockade in the news. And that, after all, was the whole point of the exercise.

What happened to the 14 boats which did not sail? Incredible as it sounds, the Greek navy and Coast Guard forcibly prevented them from leaving Greek ports. There existed no lawful grounds for this, nor was there any pretense of legality.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the Greek navy was acting under orders from the Israeli Chief of Staff. A proud sea-faring nation with a nautical history of thousands of years (“nautical” even happens to be a Greek word) degraded itself to perform illegal actions to please Israel. It also ignored acts of sabotage carried out by naval commandos – guess whose - against the boats in Greek harbors.

At the same time, the Turkish government, the defiant sponsor of the Mavi Marmara, the ship on which the Turkish activists were killed last year, prevented the same ship from sailing this year. Also at the same time, groups of pro-Palestinian activists who tried to reach the West Bank by air were stopped on their way. Since there is no direct access to the West Bank by land, sea or air except through Israeli territory or Israeli checkpoints, they had to travel via Ben-Gurion International Airport, Israel’s gateway to the world. Most did not make it: under instructions from our government, all international airlines blocked these passengers at check-in, using “blacklists” provided by our government. It seems that the long arm of our diligent security service reaches everywhere, and that its orders are obeyed by countries large and small.

A hundred years ago, the secret police of the Russian Czar, the dreaded “Okhrana”, forged a document called “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”. (In those times, the secret police everywhere was still called Secret Police, before being dignified as “Security Services”.) The document reported a secret meeting of rabbis in the old Jewish cemetery of Prague, to decide upon strategy to secure Jewish rule over the world. It was a crude falsification, which lifted entire passages verbatim from a novel written decades earlier.

In its pages, the real situation of the Jews was grotesquely distorted – they actually had no power at all. In fact, when Adolf Hitler – who used the Protocols for his propaganda – set in motion the Final Solution, almost nobody in the whole world lifted a finger to help the Jews. Even US Jews were afraid to raise their voices.

But if the authors of the falsification were to return to the scene of their crime today, they would rub their eyes in disbelief: this figment of their sick imagination looks like coming true. The Jewish State – as Zionists like to call us – can order around Greek naval authorities, get Turkey to climb down, instruct half a dozen European states to stop passengers at their airports. How do we do it? There is a simple answer, consisting of three letters: USA.

Israel has become a kind of Kafkaesque doorkeeper to the world’s sole remaining superpower. Through its immense influence on the American political system, and especially on the Congress, Israel can levy a political tax on anyone who needs something from the US. Greece is bankrupt and desperately needs American and European help. Turkey is a partner of the US in NATO. No European country wants to quarrel with the US. Ergo: they all need to give us a little political baksheesh.

To cement this relationship, Glenn Beck, the obnoxious protégé of Rupert Murdoch, visited us and was enthusiastically received in the Knesset, where he told us “not to be afraid”, because he (and, by implication, Fox and all of America) was supporting us to the hilt.
It is because of this that a few lines, which appeared this week in the New York Times, caused near panic in Jerusalem. The NYT is, perhaps, the most “pro-Israel” paper in the whole world, including Israel itself. Anti-Semites call it the Jew York Times. Many of its editorial writers are ardent Zionists. A news story critical of Israeli policies has almost no chance of appearing there. No mention of the Israeli peace movement. No mention of the dozens of demonstrations in Israel against Lebanon War II and the Cast Lead operation. Self-censorship is supreme.

But this week, the NYT published a blistering editorial criticizing Israel. The reason: the “Boycott Law”, passed by the right-wing Knesset majority, which forbids Israelis to call for a boycott of the settlements. The editorial practically repeats what I said in last week’s article: that the law is blatantly anti-democratic and violates basic human rights. The more so, since it comes on top of a whole series of anti-democratic laws that were enacted in the last few months. Israel is in danger of losing its title as the “Only Democracy in the Middle East”.

Suddenly, all the red lights in Jerusalem started to blink furiously. Help! We are going to lose our only political asset in the world, the pillar of our strength, the basis of our national security, the rock of our existence.

The result was immediate. On Wednesday, the right-wing clique that now controls the Knesset, under the leadership of Avigdor Lieberman, brought to final vote a resolution that would appoint two Committees of Inquiry into the financial resources of human-rights NGOs. Not all NGOs, only “leftist” ones. This was another item on the long list of McCarthyist measures, many of which have already been adopted and many more of which are waiting for their turn.

The day before, Binyamin Netanyahu appeared specially in the Knesset to assure his followers that he fully approved, and indeed had sponsored, the Boycott Law. But after the NYT editorial, when the Commission of Inquiry resolution came up, Netanyahu and almost all his cabinet ministers voted against it. The religious factions disappeared from the Knesset. The resolution was voted down by a 2 to 1 majority.

But one ominous fact emerged: Apart from Netanyahu and his captive ministers, all the Likud members present voted for the resolution. This included all the young leaders of the party – the coming generation of Likud bosses. If the Likud remains in power – this group of ultra-rightists[,] will be the government of Israel within ten years. And to hell with the New York Times.

Fortunately, there are signs that a new phenomenon is in the making. It started innocently with a successful consumer strike on cottage cheese, in order to compel a cartel of fat cats to reduce prices. This has been followed by a mass action by young couples, mostly university students, against the impossibly high prices of apartments. A group of protesters put up tents in the center of Tel Aviv and have now been living there for over a week. Soon after, such encampments sprang up all over the country, from Kiryat Shmona on the Lebanese border to Beer Sheva in the Negev. It is much too early to tell whether this is a short-term protest or the beginning of an Israeli Tahrir Square phenomenon. But it clearly shows that the takeover of Israel by a neo-fascist grouping is not a foregone conclusion. The fight is on. Perhaps - just perhaps! - even the New York Times could be starting to report on the reality of our country.

+<xxxx>+ HOW GOODLY ARE THY TENTS

Uri Avnery, “August 6, 2011

First of all, a warning. Tent cities are springing up all over Israel. A social protest movement is gathering momentum. At some point in the near future, it may endanger the right-wing government. At that point, there will be a temptation – perhaps an irresistible temptation – to “warm up the borders”. To start a nice little war. Call on the youth of Israel, the same young people now manning (and womanning) the tents, to go and defend the fatherland. Nothing easier than that. A small provocation, a platoon crossing the border “to prevent the launching of a rocket”, a fire fight, a salvo of rockets – and lo and behold, a war. End of protest.

In September, just a few weeks from now, the Palestinians intend to apply to the UN for the recognition of the State of Palestine. Our politicians and generals are chanting in unison that this will cause a crisis – Palestinians in the occupied territories may rise in protest against the occupation, violent demonstrations may ensue, the army will be compelled to shoot – and lo and behold, a war. End of protest.

Three weeks ago I was interviewed one morning by a Dutch journalist. At the end, she asked: “You are describing an awful situation. The extreme right-wing controls the Knesset and is enacting abominable anti-democratic laws. The people are indifferent and apathetic. There is no opposition to speak of. And yet you exude a spirit of optimism. How come?” I answered
that I have faith in the people of Israel. Contrary to appearances, we are a sane people. Some time, somewhere, a new movement will arise and change the situation. It may happen in a week, in a month, in a year. But it will come.

On that very same day, just a few hours later, a young woman called Daphne Liff, with an improbable man’s hat perched on her flowing hair, said to herself: “Enough!” She had been evicted by her landlady because she couldn’t afford the rent. She set up a tent in Rothschild Boulevard, a long, tree-lined thoroughfare in the center of Tel Aviv. The news spread through Facebook, and within an hour, dozens of tents had sprung up. Within a week, there were some 400 tents, spread out in a double line more than a mile long.

Similar tent-cities sprang up in Jerusalem, Haifa and a dozen smaller towns. The next Saturday, tens of thousands joined protest marches in Tel Aviv and elsewhere. Last Saturday, they numbered more than 150,000. This has now become the center of Israeli life. The Rothschild tent city has assumed a life of its own – a cross between Tahrir Square and Woodstock, with a touch of Hyde Park corner thrown in for good measure. The mood is indescribably upbeat, masses of people come to visit and return home full of enthusiasm and hope. Everybody can feel that something momentous is happening. Seeing the tents, I was reminded of the words of Balaam, who was sent by the king of Moab to curse the children of Israel in the desert (Numbers 24) and instead exclaimed: “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, Oh Israel!”

It all started in a remote little town in Tunisia, when an unlicensed market vendor was arrested by a policewoman. It seems that in the ensuing altercation, the woman struck the man in the face, a terrible humiliation for a Tunisian man. He set himself on fire. What followed is history: the revolution in Tunisia, regime change in Egypt, uprisings all over the Middle East.

The Israeli government saw all this with growing concern – but they didn’t imagine that there might be an effect in Israel itself. Israeli society, with its ingrained contempt for Arabs, could hardly be expected to follow suit. But follow suit it did. People in the street spoke with growing admiration of the Arab revolt. It showed that people acting together could dare to confront leaders far more fearsome than our bumbling Binyamin Netanyahu.

Some of the most popular posters on the tents were “Rothschild corner Tahrir” and, in a Hebrew rhyme, “Tahrir – Not only in Cahir” – Cahir being the Hebrew version of al-Cahira, the Arabic name for Cairo. And also: “Mubarak, Assad, Netanyahu”. In Tahrir Square, the central slogan was “The People Want to Overthrow the Regime”. In conscious emulation, the central slogan of the tent cities is “The People Want Social Justice”.

Who are these people? What exactly do they want? It started with a demand for “Affordable Housing”. Rents in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and elsewhere are extremely high, after years of Government neglect. But the protest soon engulfed other subjects: the high price of foodstuffs and gasoline, the low wages. The ridiculously low salaries of physicians and teachers, the deterioration of the education and health services. There is a general feeling that 18 tycoons control everything, including the politicians. (Politicians who dared to show up in the tent cities were chased away.) They could have quoted an American saying: “Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner.”

A selection of the slogans gives an impression:

- We want a welfare state!
- Fighting for the home!
- Justice, not charity!
- If the government is against the people, the people are against the government!
- Bibi, this is not the US Congress, you will not buy us with empty words!
- If you don’t join our war, we shall not fight your wars!
- Give us our state back!
- Three partners with three salaries cannot pay for three rooms!
- The answer to privatization: revolution!
- We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, we are slaves to Bibi in Israel!
- I have no other homeland!
- Bibi, go home, we’ll pay for the gas!
- Overthrow swinish capitalism!
- Be practical, demand the impossible!

What is missing in this array of slogans? Of course: the occupation, the settlements, the huge expenditure on the military. This is by design. The organizers, anonymous young men and women – mainly women – are very determined not to be branded as “leftists”. They know that bringing up the occupation would provide Netanyahu with an easy weapon, split the tent-dwellers and derail the protests. We in the peace movement know and respect this. All of us are exercising strenuous self-
restraint, so that Netanyahu will not succeed in marginalizing the movement and depicting it as a plot to overthrow the right-wing government.

As I wrote in an article in Haaretz: No need to push the protesters. In due course, they will reach the conclusion that the money for the major reforms they demand can only come from stopping the settlements and cutting the huge military budget by hundreds of billions – and that is possible only in peace. (To help them along, we published a large ad, saying: “It’s quite simple – money for the settlements OR money for housing, health services and education”). Voltaire said that “the art of government consists in taking as much money as possible from one class of citizens to give it to the other”. This government takes the money of decent citizens to give it to the settlers.

Who are they, these enthusiastic demonstrators, who seemingly have come from nowhere? They are the young generation of the middle class, who go out to work, take home average salaries and “cannot finish the month”, as the Israeli expression goes. Mothers who cannot go to work because they have nowhere to leave their babies. University students who cannot get a room in the dormitories or afford accomodation in the city. And especially young people who want to marry but cannot afford to buy an apartment, even with the help of their parents. (One tent bore the sign: “Even this tent was bought by our parents”) All this in a flourishing economy, which has been spared the pains of the world-wide economic crisis and boasts an enviable unemployment rate of just 5%.

If pressed, most of the protesters would declare themselves to be “social-democrats”. They are the very opposite of the Tea Party in the US: they want a welfare state, they blame privatization for many of their ills, they want the government to interfere and to act. Whether they want to admit it or not, the very essence of their demands and attitudes is classically leftist (the term created in the French Revolution because the adherents of these ideals sat on the left side of the speaker in the National Assembly). They are the essence of what Left means - (though in Israel, the terms “Left” and “Right” have until now been largely identified with questions of war and peace).

Where will it go from here? No one can say. When asked about the impact of the French Revolution, Zhou Enlai famously said: “It’s too early to say.” Here we are witnessing an event still in progress, perhaps even still beginning. It has already produced a huge change. For weeks now, the public and the media have stopped talking about the borders, the Iranian bomb and the security situation. Instead, the talk is now almost completely about the social situation, the minimum wage, the injustice of indirect taxes, the housing construction crisis.

Under pressure, the amorphous leadership of the protest has drawn up a list of concrete demands. Among others: government building of houses for rent, raising taxes on the rich and the corporations, free education from the age of three months [sic], a raise in the salary of physicians, police and fire-fighters, school classes of no more than 21 pupils, breaking the monopolies controlled by a few tycoons, and so on.

So where from here? There are many possibilities, both good and bad. Netanyahu can try to buy off the protest with some minor concessions – some billions here, some billions there. This will confront the protesters with the choice of the Indian boy in the movie about becoming a millionaire: take the money and quit, or risk all on answering yet another question. Or: the movement may continue to gather momentum and force major changes, such as shifting the burden from indirect to direct taxation. Some rabid optimists (like myself) may even dream of the emergence of a new authentic political party to fill the gaping void on the left side of the political spectrum.

I started with a warning, and I must end with another one: this movement has raised immense hopes. If it fails, it may leave behind an atmosphere of despondency and despair – a mood that will drive those who can to seek a better life somewhere else.

THE RETURN OF THE GENERALS

Uri Avnery, August 20, 2011

Since the beginning of the conflict, the extremists of both sides have always played into each other’s hands. The cooperation between them was always much more effective than the ties between the corresponding peace activists. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” asked the prophet Amos (3:3). Well, seems they can. This was proved again this week.
At the beginning of the week, Binyamin Netanyahu was desperately looking for a way out of an escalating internal crisis. The social protest movement was gathering momentum and posing a growing danger to his government. The struggle was going on, but the protest had already made a huge difference. The whole content of the public discourse had changed beyond recognition. Social ideas were taking over, pushing aside the hackneyed talk about “security”. TV talk show panels, previously full of used generals, were now packed with social workers and professors of economics. One of the consequences was that women were also much more prominent.

And then it happened. A small extremist Islamist group in the Gaza Strip sent a detachment into the Egyptian Sinai desert, from where it easily crossed the undefended Israeli border and created havoc. Several fighters (or terrorists, depends who is talking) succeeded in killing eight Israeli soldiers and civilians, before some of them were killed. Another four of their comrades were killed on the Egyptian side of the border. The aim seems to have been to capture another Israeli soldier, to strengthen the case for a prisoner exchange on their terms.

In a jiffy, the economics professors vanished from the TV screens, and their place was taken by the old gang of exes – ex-generals, ex-secret-service chiefs, ex-policemen, all male, of course, accompanied by their entourage of obsequious military correspondents and far-right politicians. With a sigh of relief, Netanyahu returned to his usual stance. Here he was, surrounded by generals, the he-man, the resolute fighter, the Defender of Israel.

It was, for him and his government, an incredible stroke of luck. It can be compared to what happened in 1982. Ariel Sharon, then Minister of Defense, had decided to attack the Palestinians and Syrians in Lebanon. He flew to Washington to obtain the necessary American agreement. Alexander Haig told him that the US could not agree, unless there was a “credible provocation”. A few days later, the most extreme Palestinian group, led by Abu Nidal, Yasser Arafat’s mortal enemy, made an attempt on the life of the Israeli ambassador in London, paralyzing him irreversibly. That was certainly a “credible provocation”. Lebanon War I was on its way.

This week’s attack was also an answer to a prayer. Seems that God loves Netanyahu and the military establishment. The incident not only wiped the protest off the screen, it also put an end to any serious chance of taking billions off the huge military budget in order to strengthen the social services. On the contrary, the event proved that we need a sophisticated electronic fence along the 150 miles of our desert border with Sinai. More, not less, billions for the military.

Before this miracle occurred, it looked as if the protest movement was unstoppable. Whatever Netanyahu did was too little, too late, and just wrong. In the first days, Netanyahu treated the whole thing as a childish prank, unworthy of the attention of responsible adults. When he realized that this movement was serious, he mumbled some vague proposals for lowering the price of apartments, but by then the protest had already moved far beyond the original demand for “affordable housing”. The slogan was now “The People Want Social Justice”.

After the huge 250,000-strong demonstration in Tel Aviv, the protest leaders were facing a dilemma: how to proceed? Yet another mass protest in Tel Aviv might mean falling attendance. The solution was sheer genius: not another big demonstration in Tel Aviv, but smaller demonstrations all over the country. This disarmed the reproach that the protest is spoiling Tel Aviv brats, “sushi eaters and water-pipe smokers” as one minister put it. It also brought the protest to the masses of disadvantaged Oriental Jewish inhabitants of the “periphery”, from Afula in the North to Beer Sheva in the South, most of them the traditional voters of Likud. It became a love-fest of fraternization.

So what does a run-of-the-mill politician do in such a situation? Well, of course, he appoints a committee. So Netanyahu told a respectable professor with a good reputation to set up a committee which would, in cooperation with nine ministers, no less, come up with a set of solutions. He even told him that he was ready to completely change his own convictions. (He did already change one of his convictions when he announced in 2009 that he now advocates the Two-State Solution. But after that momentous about-face, absolutely nothing changed on the ground.)

The youngsters in the tents joked that “Bibi” could not change his opinions, because he has none. But that is a mistake – he does indeed have very definite opinions on both the national and the social levels: “the whole of Eretz Israel” on the one, and Reagan-Thatcher economic orthodoxy on the other.

The young tent leaders countered the appointment of the establishment committee with an unexpected move: they appointed a 60-strong advisory council of their own, composed of some of the most prominent university professors, including an Arab female professor and a moderate rabbi, and headed by a former deputy governor of the Bank of Israel.

The government committee has already made it clear that it will not deal with middle class problems but concentrate on those of the lowest socio-economic groups. Netanyahu has added that he will not automatically adopt their (future)
recommendations, but weight them against the economic possibilities. In other words, he does not trust his own nominees to understand the economic facts of life.

At that, Netanyahu and his aides pinned their hopes on two dates: September and November 2011. In November, the rainy season usually sets in. No drop of rain before that. But when it starts to rain cats and dogs, it was hoped in Netanyahu’s office, the spoiled Tel Aviv kids will run for shelter. End of the Rothschild tent city.

Well, I remember spending some miserable weeks in the winter of the 1948 war in worse tents, in the midst of a sea of mud and water. I don’t think that the rain will make the tent-dwellers give up their struggle, even if Netanyahu’s religious partners send the most fervent Jewish prayers for rain to the high heavens. But before that, in September, just a few weeks away, the Palestinians – it was hoped - would start a crisis that will divert attention. This week they already submitted to the UN General Assembly a request to recognize the State of Palestine. The Assembly will most probably accede. Avigdor Lieberman has already enthusiastically assured us that the Palestinians are planning a “bloodbath” at that time. Young Israelis will have to exchange their tents in Tel Aviv for the tents in the West Bank army camps. It’s a nice dream (for the Liebermans), but Palestinians had so far showed no inclination to violence. All that changed this week.

From now on, Netanyahu and his colleagues can direct events as they wish. They have already “liquidated” the chiefs of the group which carried out the attack, called “the Popular Resistance Committees”. This happened while the fire-fight along the border was still going on. The army had been forewarned and was ready. The fact that the attackers succeeded nevertheless in crossing the border and shooting at vehicles was ascribed to an operational failure.

What now? The group in Gaza will fire rockets in retaliation. Netanyahu can – if he so wishes – kill more Palestinian leaders, military and civilian. This can easily set off a vicious circle of retaliation and counter-retaliation, leading to a full-scale Molten Lead-style war. Thousands of rockets on Israel, thousands of bombs on the Gaza Strip. One ex-military fool already argued that the entire Gaza Strip will have to be re-occupied. In other words, Netanyahu has his hand on the tap of violence, and he can raise or lower the flames at will. His desire to put an end to the social protest movement may well play a role in his decisions.

This brings us back to the big question of the protest movement: can one bring about real change, as distinct from forcing some grudging concessions from the government, without becoming a political force? Can this movement succeed as long as there is a government which has the power to start - or deepen - a “security crisis” at any time? And the related question: can one talk about social justice without talking about peace?

A few days ago, while strolling among the tents on Rothschild Boulevard, I was asked by an internal radio station to give an interview and address the tent-dwellers. I said: “You don’t want to talk about peace, because you want to avoid being branded as ‘leftists”. I respect that. But social justice and peace are two sides of the same coin, they cannot be separated. Not only because they are based on the same moral principles, but also because in practice they depend on each other.” When I said that, I could not have imagined how clearly this would be demonstrated only two days later.

Real change means replacing this government with a new and very different political set up. Here and there people in the tents are already talking about a new party. But elections are two years away, and for the time being there is no sign of a real crack in the right-wing coalition that might bring the elections closer. Will the protest be able to keep up its momentum for two whole years?

Israeli governments have yielded in the past to mass demonstrations and public uprisings. The formidable Golda Meir resigned in the face of mass demonstrations blaming her for the omissions that led to the fiasco at the start of the Yom Kippur War. The government coalitions of both Netanyahu and Ehud Barak in the 1990s broke under the pressure of an indignant public opinion. Can this happen now? In view of the military flare-up this week, it does not look likely. But stranger things have happened between heaven and earth, especially in Israel, the land of limited impossibilities.

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ISRAELI LEADERS MUST LEAD THE PUBLIC TO PEACE

Dahlia Scheindlin*

This article was written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews), June 7, 2011, with permission for publication.
US President Barack Obama’s speech to the US State Department in May should have made Israelis happy. While presenting a new vision of US policy toward the Middle East, his Israeli-Palestinian policy was all about continuity. Obama urged a return to negotiations, just like Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He insisted on Israel as a Jewish state, echoing Netanyahu’s demands, and gave no quarter to Palestinian unilateralism. Aside from the implication that Israel should leave the Jordan Valley, Obama’s speech could have come from the Prime Minister’s spokesperson.

Yet Israel’s leaders seemed stunned by the explicit mention of the pre-1967 War borders with land swaps. Netanyahu, without addressing the land swaps, called the borders “indefensible” and repeatedly stressed that Israel would not return to those lines. Instant polling in Israel following Netanyahu’s trip to the United States showed that the Israeli people supported Netanyahu’s position, viewed the trip as a victory and gave Obama mixed reviews at best. But snap polls in the immediate wake of events can be misleading.

Were the Israeli people shocked? Do they support negotiations based on 1967 borders with land swaps? Ultimately, are Israelis more willing to make compromises than their current leaders? The answers are most likely: no, yes and yes – but that may not be enough to reach peace.

Israelis were probably less surprised by Obama’s 1967 reference than Netanyahu’s response implies. Surveys show that Israelis have basically accepted the concept of a Palestinian state (which is basically about the territory conquered in 1967) since the Oslo Accords of 1993. Support rose from roughly 20 per cent in the late 1980s to nearly 60 per cent by 1999, according to the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies.

So do Israelis support 1967-based borders with swaps? A survey in the daily paper Israel Today conducted after Netanyahu’s visit to Washington showed that 60 per cent of Israelis opposed “Obama’s call for negotiations based on the 1967 [borders] with agreed land swaps.” But polling over the last decade shows that roughly half the Jewish population or more tends to support the 1967 borders as the basis for a Palestinian state.

A Peace Index survey at Tel Aviv University in 2003 showed that 59 per cent of Jews supported “1967 [borders] with adjustments”. From 2005 to 2007, surveys by the Truman Institute at Hebrew University found that about half of Israelis supported detailed descriptions of the borders and swaps (without using the term “1967”). In a 2009 survey for the peace organisation One Voice, 52 per cent of Israelis said 1967 borders with swaps was either “essential, desirable, acceptable or tolerable”. Only 39 per cent of Israelis found this “unacceptable”.

Further, when borders are part of a larger comprehensive peace agreement, support rises. In 2010, two different surveys – one by the Geneva Initiative and the other by the polling firm Dahaf – showed 54 per cent and 67 per cent support, respectively, among all Israelis for similar full peace packages.

Finally, the Israeli public at present seems to be “ahead” of its leaders on peace in general. The Dahaf survey also sampled Knesset members: only 46 per cent supported the full agreement, compared to two-thirds of the public.

But that doesn’t mean that the Israeli public will actively drive its leaders forward. Israelis are demoralised about peace and can easily turn sour. In all surveys, nearly half of the Jewish population defines itself as right-wing, and that means they are not at all happy about accepting the compromises Israel will have to make. The “support” response in surveys hides the pain of past disappointments and deep distrust Israelis feel even as they acknowledge what must be done. So Israelis are in no rush to make sacrifices, and will take any excuse to defer them.

Therefore when the Prime Minister rejects basic compromises, large portions of the Jewish Israeli public follow. That explains the results of Israeli newspaper surveys following Netanyahu’s visit to Washington, and fluctuations over the last decade in general.

In this cynical environment, leaders who genuinely want peace need to leverage latent public support, with bold initiatives. It’s possible: a Truman Institute survey from October 2010 shows clearly that even though Israeli respondents were deadlocked on the full agreement (44 per cent support it and 43 per cent oppose it), when told that the Prime Minister might initiate a referendum and ask them to vote on this same agreement the balance shifts: 47 per cent support it, 15 per cent are undecided and 38 per cent do not support it.

This result shows the power of leadership. Were the Prime Minister of Israel to face his people in reality – not in a survey – and say, “These compromises, this agreement is best for both our peoples”, three per cent more Israelis can be convinced. That’s a majority.
YOGAKARTA RULER’S TOLERANCE AN EXAMPLE FOR INDONESIA

Ahmad Suaedy*

This article is part of a series on religious leaders speaking out, written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), June 14, 2011, with permission granted for publication.

In Yogyakarta, the cultural centre of the island of Java in Indonesia, the governor, Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, has set an interesting precedent by refusing to ban the Ahmadiyah religious group. The group was founded by a 19th century Indian religious leader, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who claimed he was the promised Messiah foretold by the Prophet Muhammad. Though Ahmadis consider themselves Muslim, mainstream Muslims disagree with the belief that the Messiah has returned and therefore consider their teachings blasphemy.

The right to freedom of expression and organisation in Indonesia, granted in 1998, has provided fuel for the emergence of a wide variety of civil society groups. Unfortunately, not all of these groups reflect the positive aspirations of the Indonesian people and a small but significant number of these groups have chosen violence as a way of making their demands heard.

The Ahmadi community has sadly borne the brunt of this violence in recent months, often at the hands of minority extremist religious groups who believe the Ahmadiyah faith is heretical.

In an attempt to avoid confrontation and violence in their regions by appeasing militant groups, governors in Banten and East and West Java, as well as some local regents and mayors, have issued decrees that ban the practice of the Ahmadiyah faith to “prevent further violence”. This means rather than protecting the Ahmadis, the government places the blame for violence and disorder on the victims of the violence.

Yogyakarta is a province that has inherited an effective traditional government. In addition to serving as Governor, the Sultan – as he is also known – is a traditional ruler who, although not elected, has a very close relationship with his people. The Sultan’s predecessor held an important role in the founding of the Republic of Indonesia and as a result this position is still respected by the central government and his actions often have national importance, as well as setting examples informally for other government officials and regional leaders.

The Sultan persistently maintains the local tradition of tolerance towards emerging cultures by providing opportunities for newly formed groups to develop, regardless of their ideology, provided they do not attack and endanger other groups. He sets an example for his constituents, demonstrating that they must look past differences, religious or otherwise, and co-exist peacefully.

Because the Sultan shows respect for his people and their differences, the majority of the people have respect for him in return. Such a unique relationship has empowered the Sultan to stand speak out in objection to the ban on practising the Ahmadiyah faith despite opposition from, or the need to pander to, minority groups that support the ban, even those who sometimes resort to violence.

His example stands to show how politics that are divisive and potentially violent are unsustainable. While intolerant policies might be popular among the vocal minority, it will only diminish the popularity of rulers among the majority of their constituents and in fact goes against the bond of traditional leadership – to treat all groups equally – that is still respected by the majority of Indonesians.

Indonesia’s formal political establishment should consider the example of the Sultan of Yogyakarta as an opportunity to reconnect culturally with citizens by reaffirming its commitment to protect citizens from the threat of violence without discrimination, and to uphold the rights of all citizens to organise and practice their beliefs. Above all, they must lead the people through example, rather than pursuing short-term political goals.

Informal leaders, especially religious leaders, can also play a role as moral authorities who can encourage unity over division and act as voices of reason. They can educate their communities in the messages of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, and provide guidance and the necessary moral courage for the government to do their job.
While voices supporting violence and negative conflict avoidance techniques, such as banning groups that are sometimes the target of violence, are often given the loudest megaphones through which to speak, it is important to highlight the silent strength of those who choose instead the quieter and often more difficult path of tolerance and peace.

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WINNING WITHOUT WAR IN INDONESIA

Testriono*

This article is part of a series marking the tenth anniversary of 9/11 written for, AND DISTRIBUTED BY, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), with permission for publication.

I recently met some friends through social media who were elementary or junior high students when the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States. Most of these young people agree that such terrorism could never be warranted. For example, Qurrota Ayuni, 24, said: “Whatever the reasons behind the 9/11 attack, it cannot be justified in the name of humanity. It killed thousands of innocent people for the sake of narrow, sectarian interests.”

However, the main concern of these youth was the effect of 9/11 on their own country. Unfortunately, in Indonesia the effects of 9/11 are linked to the perception that the West is at war with Islam – a perception that has indirectly contributed to an increase in the number of extremist Indonesian Muslim youth. For the upcoming tenth anniversary of 9/11, a fitting legacy is to encourage peaceful outlets for youth to engage in society.

Sadly, a small but significant number of Indonesian youth have taken part in terrorist attacks in the country in recent years. For instance, in January 2011 police arrested six terrorist suspects between the ages of 19 and 21 in Klaten, Central Java. Muslim youth involvement in extremist movements was also confirmed by a survey conducted in Jakarta from 2010 to 2011 by the Institute for Studies on Islam and Peace. The survey revealed that some junior and senior high school students are willing to engage in various acts of violence, shut down or attack night clubs, forcibly close houses of worship of other faiths or aid Muslims in conflict zones by providing them with weapons.

Important to the process of de-radicalising youth is their involvement in meaningful organisations. Sadly, associations targeting youth have been on the decline in recent years. After Indonesian President Suharto’s departure in 1998, which resulted in a new era of reform in Indonesia, many youth associations were incorporated into local or national political parties in order to provide additional support for electoral candidates. Of those groups not focused on politics, many seek to raise collective piety, and offer youth involvement in radical organisations such as the Islamic Defender Front (FPI).

The radicalisation of Muslim youth is taking place concurrently with the declining popularity of youth organisations focused on developing character and creativity. Karang Taruna – a network of youth organisations in villages that empower youth through activities like playing sports, learning financial skills and creating artwork – are rarely found these days. The General Chairman of Karang Taruna, Taufan E. N. Rotorasiko, says that one of the reasons Karang Taruna is both less attractive to youth and less active in conducting activities than in past years is that the Ministry of Social Affairs, once the main patron of Karang Taruna, was disbanded during the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid in 1999.

Involving young people in creative activities like art and sports can reduce the risk of them joining extremist groups because they have the opportunities to develop friendships with youth from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds, thereby increasing their tolerance of diversity.

For example, the students of Pesantren Pabelan in Magelang, Central Java, are involved in the International Award for Young People (IAYP), an international award programme that is aimed at individuals between the ages of 14 and 25, and who are interested in engaging in a voluntary self-development programme.

Nurul Faizah, IAYP’s programme coordinator, works at an Islamic boarding school called Pesantren Pabelan. Faizah says that the programme helps students be more open to differences in others’ backgrounds. For instance, student participants engage in discussions with peers from non-Muslim schools and play friendly sports matches with students from Catholic seminaries nearby.
There are also examples of successful youth associations at the university level, such as the Ciputat Student Forum, which is the oldest Indonesian student study club. Based in the Banten province, its activists develop open, democratic and critical thinking, and are committed to defending human rights. The club’s members also actively oppose discrimination against minorities.

These examples show that de-radicalisation programmes that encourage the growth of youth associations independent of politics should be part of the solution to stop radical movements. Countering radical movements requires a soft approach. Sadly, one of the legacies of 9/11 was the so-called “war on terror”, which helped regenerate radical movements by attracting youth to radical, mainly anti-US causes.

There is a better way to combat radicalism and terrorism, which has been proven to work in Indonesia – and in many other countries. It is to empower youth, helping them achieve positive aspirations and, in the process, abandon negative and violent ones. Following this path would provide youth with a better outlook for the future and a more fitting closure to the 9/11 tragedy.

*Testriono is a researcher at the Center for the Study of Islam and Society at the State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta.

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**THE NEW ARAB SPIRIT**

Mahmoud Amin Hishmeh*

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Over the past few years, we have often heard about a new Middle East, as envisioned by the United States and its allies. What is happening in the Arab world now, however, is a new Arab spirit generated by Arabs themselves. This positive change first started in Tunisia, but we don’t know yet how far it will spread.

Despite the fact that the new Arab spirit is as of yet undefined, and that Bahrain, Libya, Syria and Yemen are witnessing high levels of violence, change is happening. One can see changes in economies and policies, as well as in the responses of Arab government to the demands of their citizens, clearing the way for effective democracies in countries where revolts have been successful.

This new spirit is founded on the idea of self-sacrifice for others. It began after one Tunisian citizen, Muhammad Bouazizi, set himself on fire. His act became a symbol of the need for revolution, and it continues to be a rallying cry for thousands of other citizens, taking to the streets daily throughout several Arab countries to raise their voices for change. They are well aware of the dangers, but they still risk being arrested or even shot, because they believe that through their sacrifice their fellow citizens will be able to gain dignity and freedom.

Among the most prominent features of the new Arab spirit is respect. Those who participated in the Egyptian revolution cleaned up the litter left in Tahrir Square after protests, showing respect for their environment. And then there’s respect that extends to concern for others, which was evident when Christian Egyptians locked arms and built a human wall between Muslims worshippers and any would-be attackers during a protest. And prior to the revolution, Muslims defended a Christian church and its occupants from potential attacks, demonstrating the same spirit.

In Libya and Yemen’s revolutions, tribal leaders have set aside their weapons out of respect for the peaceful nature of the revolutions they are participating in. In these countries, men normally wear a weapon – such as a rifle or small sword – as a symbol of their masculinity. But in recent demonstrations they have been leaving their weapon behind as a way to show peace and respect for fellow demonstrators.

The most prominent features of the new spirit in the Arab world, however, are the changes that are taking place on a government level, especially regarding laws and constitutions. In Egypt, for example, an interim constitution has been written. It consists of 62 articles, including eight articles of the 1971 constitution that were amended as a result of the 19 March public referendum. One article reduced the presidential term from six to four years. In Tunisia, the people will elect an assembly on 24 July to reform their constitution. And in a historic speech the Moroccan King Mohammed VI said he would give up his right to appoint the prime minister, who would instead be chosen by parliament.
Economic and social changes also show the shift that is happening in the Arab world. To avoid demonstrations in some countries, authorities have started to try to improve the lives of their citizens. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, the wages of all government officials were increased and a minimum wage was established – at $800 per month – when previously there was none. Saudi Arabia, like other countries that have made similar efforts, is trying to avoid upsetting the status quo through such changes. However, despite being positive, these changes should be more drastic and allow for a shift toward a democratic political system.

Ultimately, this new spirit in the Arab world has shown global society's recognition of, and belief in, the current young generation and its leadership of the revolution. This recognition comes after they have long been marginalised, and perceived as being primarily concerned with more self-serving endeavours, such as their love lives and spending time on the internet. In fact, countries that have been in the midst of these revolutions now refer to those events as the “Youth Revolutions”. There is a new wind in the Arab world. Democracy is on its way.

* Mahmoud Amin Hishmeh is Director of the East and West Center for Developing Human Resources in Jordan.

COMMENT ON “THE NEW ARAB SPIRIT”

Stephen M. Sachs

Of course it is not so simple. A great many forces are, and continue to be, at play in the Arab world, and just what will be the new pattern in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria... and elsewhere will take time to become clear, as the many struggles continue. But Hishemeh is right that a new set of models, ideals, ways of being has emerged, and recognizing its image is important for improving the region and its internal and external relations, and hopefully for moving toward a more progressive world.

PREVENT WARS BY ARRESTING CRIMINAL LEADERS:
USE SPECIAL FORCES INSTEAD OF ARMIES

Crandall R. Kline*

Dear Peace Friends,

Two recent events in the news prove the validity of the plan for world peace wherein criminal leaders are arrested.

Obama bin Laden Killed.

On May 1, U.S. Navy Seals made an attack on a compound in Pakistan and killed Osama bin Laden. The President’s Defense team wasn’t even sure that bin Laden would be there; they had only circumstantial evidence. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said on TV that it was the gutsiest call any U.S. president has ever made.

The team flew helicopters over a foreign country, at night, landed in the compound, killed the guards, broke open doors, searched three floors, found bin Laden and carried his body away, without any of our men being killed.

This was a seminal event in peace history. It proves that the arrests can be made. Bin Laden could have surrendered, but he chose not to. He could have been tried by the International Criminal Court and been given life imprisonment because the ICC is not allowed to issue capital punishment.

The success of this raid proves that the policy advocated by “Peace Within Our Grasp” is the correct one for bringing peace to the world. The book’s main theme is that instead of fighting a war by sending an army, we should capture the criminal leader and try him in the ICC. I talked with two graduates of West Point who said that this type of arrest could not be done. I should have talked with an Annapolis Graduate because the Seals can do it. And now, with this experience, I’m sure the Army Rangers can do it also.

Ratko Mladic Arrested
On May 27, Ratko Mladic, who slaughtered 7,000 men and boys in Srebrenica in 1995, was arrested. He faces charges of genocide and war crimes at the U.N. war crimes tribunal in the Hague, Netherlands. This court also does not apply the death penalty.

International Criminal Court

The U.N. Charter gives the Security Council the legal authority to arrest, try and incarcerate criminal leaders. They can enforce the U.N. laws on genocide, aggression, repression, war crimes and terrorism. The Security Council gave the ICC the authority to indict al Bashir, the President of Sudan for his genocide in Darfur. Now ICC prosecutors are gathering evidence to indict Gaddafi for killing protestors in Libya. This is the right way to prevent wars.

“Peace Within Our Grasp” contains a chapter on the International Criminal Court that explains the purpose and origin of the Court. It also lists all the criminal leaders who have been arrested and tried in this and previous tribunals, showing that the system works. The book is available at www.peacewithinourgrasp.com or can be ordered at any bookstore.

Advocates and teachers of peace need to embrace this plan as the most practical way to attain world peace. This book should be required reading in all high school social studies classes.

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AMERICAN JEWS, IT’S TIME TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Michael Felsen*

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It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to recognise that these are especially turbulent times in Israel. In the past few days, deadly terror attacks in Israel’s south have prompted retaliatory strikes into Gaza, a regrettable resurgence of cross-border violence with an uncertain end. Before this latest flare-up grabbed attention in the Middle East and abroad, from the United States we had been watching spellbound as hundreds of thousands of Israelis protested current government policies, demanding greater equity and “social justice” that they now find wanting.

Stasis in the “peace process” and the ramifications of 44 years of occupation of the West Bank haven’t been the focus of these weeks-long protests, but many quietly acknowledged the great sucking sound – financial and otherwise – attributable to the settlement enterprise.

Meanwhile, the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has continued to cement "facts on the ground", having recently granted another 930 building permits in a disputed section of East Jerusalem and 277 in the Ariel settlement. In response, the Quartet – the United States, Russia, the EU and the United Nations – expressed "great concern". At the same time, the Palestinian "street" is growing increasingly anxious for an end to the Occupation and establishment of a state of their own. The Palestinian Authority will seek a UN vote on statehood. Much of the world community – in the General Assembly and beyond – hears its cry and sympathises.

What is the American Jewish community to do? This depends, of course, on what our objective is. While with each passing day the window for a two-state solution – a safe, secure and democratic Israel living in peace with a viable Palestinian state – grows smaller, most American Jews would agree that’s the goal. If it is, then it’s fair to ask what actions the leading organisations of the American Jewish community should undertake to most effectively help the parties reach that goal.

In what is presumably its answer to that question, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the largest Jewish advocacy group in the United States, has decided to mount a major campaign to oppose the expected UN vote on Palestinian statehood. There are, indeed, good and sufficient reasons why that vote is problematic: for Israel, for the United States – which has vowed to use its veto in the Security Council – and for the Palestinians. But is pulling out all stops to stifle the Palestinian move the most effective means to help the parties reach that ever-elusive two-state goal? We can’t afford to spend time and resources on any campaign that serves anything other than our sole objective: how best to help the parties reach a negotiated resolution.
If American Jews are serious about getting to "yes", there are likely more effective strategies than waging a losing battle in the General Assembly. What about pressing our government to join with the other Quartet players in laying out the terms of a comprehensive resolution, along the well-known lines of the Clinton parameters and the Geneva Accord? Rather than treating the Palestinian Authority as an adversary that bears the blame for the ongoing impasse, shouldn’t our Jewish communal organisations be spearheading a campaign for the kinds of difficult mutual compromises that are most likely to lead to a sustainable end to the conflict?

It would also behove our communal leaders, when they speak with those holding the reins of power in Israel, to echo the words of Gabriela Shalev, Israel’s former Ambassador to the UN. Interviewed in the Los Angeles Times on 8 August, Shalev asserted that in order to move forward, “Israel could show by gestures that when Netanyahu talks about negotiations without preconditions, there really are no preconditions; that we are not only willing to speak about painful concessions, but show that we are willing to do it by not going on with building settlements; and by not putting new things on the table, like the requirement that Palestinians recognize Israel as the homeland of Jewish people....” These are the kinds of views that leaders who, like Shalev, love Israel and whose goal is a two-state peace should be championing.

In a 7 August editorial on this topic, The New York Times concluded: “We see no sign that Washington or the Israelis are thinking beyond the incremental.” Likewise, it’s fair to ask whether the AJC’s anti-UN vote campaign is anything more than incremental. The current situation – the current crisis, really – cries out for needed compromises that will effectively deliver two states for two peoples. Blocking, finger-pointing and “incremental” simply won’t do. It’s time for the AJC and the broader American Jewish community to step up, boldly, and help make peace.

Michael Felsen is an attorney and President of Boston Workmen’s Circle, a 110-year old communal organisation dedicated to secular Jewish education, culture and social justice.

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NO HONOR IN ‘HONOR’ KILLINGS

Rasha Dewedar*

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Women in Arab countries have become increasingly visible in demonstrations for democracy, especially in Egypt and Tunisia. However, they still face several hurdles, many of which were discussed at a recent training program in Stockholm for opinion makers from the Middle East and North Africa. As a journalist from Cairo, I had the opportunity to get to know different people from the rest of the Middle East, as well as Sweden, to understand what women experience in different contexts.

One of the most important issues women face are so-called “honour” killings. Across the world, too many women are murdered by their male relatives, because they have “dishonoured” their families by engaging in “unacceptable” relationships. Although having a sexual relationship outside of marriage is what usually comes to mind, causing “dishonour” may also include marrying a man from different religion or sect, or even a husband the family simply doesn’t accept.

Sadly, “honour” crimes continue, primarily because of the absence of effective regulation and the lack of implementation of existing laws, in addition to negative attitudes towards women. But slowly, governments are doing something about it. According to the Ma’an News Agency, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas ordered an amendment to the existing “honour killing law” in May, which states that perpetrators of crimes “in defence of family honour” should no longer receive lenient sentences. This decision came after the Ma’an News Agency highlighted the case of Ayah Barad’iyya, a 20-year-old woman from Hebron who was drowned by her uncle because he disagreed with her about the man she had chosen to marry.

Earlier, in 2009, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad issued a decree to amend the Syrian Penal Code with an article that confers a more severe sentence for “honour” crimes than before. Article 548 of the Syrian Penal Code previously stated that anyone who commits an “honour killing” could claim mitigating circumstances and receive a reduced sentence. The new article, however, clearly states that murder in the name of “family honour” would result in a sentence of no less than two years.

However, Bassam El-Kady, the director of the Syrian Women Observatory (SWO), one of Syria’s main women’s rights organizations, said that the “article should be cancelled, not amended”, echoing sentiments of many women’s rights activists who believe the sentence isn’t harsh enough.
Individuals and organizations are also working to end these crimes. Breaking the silence around the act is one of their most important tools. One of these efforts is *Murder in the Name of Honor*, a book written by the Jordanian journalist and activist Rana Al-Husseini in 2009 to raise awareness of the brutality of these killings. The book chronicles Al-Husseini’s 15-year journey to uncover stories of violence against women and draw attention to the fact that this is a global epidemic, not something that only happens in Arab or Muslim communities.

In Egypt, the Center for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance (CEWLA) started a project four years ago, focusing on four governorates in Upper Egypt. The group uses different activities and media programmes on local radio and television channels to break the taboo around discussing crimes of “honour” by allowing those listening to the shows to call and ask questions or share their stories.

A Facebook group, “No Honor in Crime” also works to raises awareness about the issue and talks about positive steps taken to combat “honour” crimes. The Jordan-based group, which reaches out to Arab activists in all countries, decided not to focus on honour and human rights, but instead on debating “honour” as a concept.

By creating spaces where “honour” was discussed as a concept, participants had to subject their current understandings of honour to logic and reason, and therefore had to take a more critical attitude to the issue. The mission of the group therefore became a “society-wide conversation to reclaim honour”.

But another factor in women’s lives might actually have the greatest impact. According to the September 2005 Population Reference Bureau Report, Arab women now have similar or higher levels of education compared with their husbands, especially in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine. Women are fast becoming more educated, and information is an important source of empowerment, as education will offer women more opportunities to work and become financially independent. In a few years, this could result in more women speaking up for laws that protect their rights – and countries instituting more policies that show they are listening to women.

*Rasha Dewedar is a freelance journalist from Egypt with special interest in covering Middle East, gender issues and science.

RESISTING REVENGE: A TERRORISM VICTIM STOPS THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Helen Thompson*

This article was written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), July 12, 2011, with permission for publication.

On the day of the Bali bombing in 2002, Hayati Eka Laksmi received a call from a representative of a car rental firm. The car her husband rented with some friends had been caught in traffic in the nearby tourist district of Kuta and a bomb had exploded just three vehicles away.

Eka had already heard about the bombing, but it never crossed her mind that her husband could have been affected. Her initial horror that a group could perpetrate such an attack in the name of Islam gave way to personal grief. She began a frantic search for information, trying to find out if her husband was still alive.

It took seven days before Eka found her husband’s body lying in a mortuary. “I had to identify his body based on marks pointed out by the forensic team and through DNA testing,” said Eka. “I was deeply shocked when it was confirmed that ‘Mr. X’ in Bag Number 145 was the body of my husband.”

The loss of her husband left Eka to bring up her two young sons on her own. “I relied on my husband’s income. My two boys were very young at the time, two and three years old. We were all deeply affected. I became ecognizes and depressed.”

Eka noticed that her children were also becoming angry, sad and sometimes aggressive. On the first anniversary of the bombing, she felt that she must do something to move her family out of the grief into which they had sunk.

For six months, Eka received ecognizes from at a non-governmental ecognizes that actively helps survivors and victims’ families. Once she completed therapy, the ecognizes asked her to start working for them, which allowed her to earn some money. Like many women affected by terrorism, she had lost the household’s main breadwinner, and struggled to keep
the family going economically. With the help of her mother, she opened a small shop selling domestic goods like sugar, coffee and gas.

Once she had resolved the most pressing needs of everyday life, Eka turned to the emotional needs of her children, taking them to ecognizes. She ecognizes that many families were going through the same trauma, and decided to bring friends who had also lost relatives in the bombings to ecognizes as well.

Gradually, Eka helped create a network of victims called Isana Dewata (Wives Husbands Children of Victims of the Bali Bombings). Through discussion and mutual support, victims were able to find the strength and spirit to overcome their hardships and turn their grief into positive action. The group now consists of 22 families, including 47 children. The Bali bombings killed people from 22 countries around the world and from several different religions.

Eka recently travelled to Vienna for the Mothers MOVE conference, ecognize by SAVE-Sisters Against Violent Extremism, the world’s first female counter-terrorism platform. SAVE aims to break through barriers of nationalism, religion and ethnicity to create a global network of women dedicated to ending violent extremism, and to highlight the voices of victims to expose the human cost of terrorism.

In Vienna, Eka joined women from Nigeria, Yemen, Egypt, Pakistan, Palestine, Israel and Northern Ireland, all of whom have lost relatives to terrorism or who are working actively to counter violent extremism. Eka shared her own story and learnt from the experiences of others. Over the three days, the women built up an intimate trust. They gained inspiration from each other’s stories and ecognizes that even across cultures, the pain a mother feels on losing a husband or child is the same.

Eka ecognizes that a mother’s influence is very important: “Mothers are the basis of the family. [A mother] can give her children direction. Those children who were affected by the Bali bombing might have anger in their hearts. Mothers can explain to them that it is no good to seek revenge. Through cooperation with other mothers, women can better support their children.”

“My children’s lives were changed because of cowards who acted in the name of religion, but these bombings are not about religion,” Eka adds. “Islam does not teach us to kill each other. Religion is a basic need, and it is my foundation for life. I have learnt to appreciate the blessings that God has given to us and accept all of this with a sincere heart and without a grudge against anyone, not even against the terrorists who killed my husband.”

*Helen Thompson is the Information Officer for SAVE-Sisters Against Violent Extremism, the world’s first female anti-terrorism platform. SAVE functions as a strategic platform to promote women’s voices and victims’ testimonials in international security, counter-terrorism and peacebuilding debates.

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MEXICAN “CITIZEN’S PACT OR PEACE WITH JUSTICE AND DIGNITY,” June 10, 2011


For more than four years now, our country has suffered a war on drugs that officially does not exist. It is really a war against the people that has cost 40,000 Mexican lives, mostly youths, and another 10,000, also mostly youths, who inhabit the terrifying limbo that authorities have coldly labeled “disappeared.”

For years now, long before this war was declared, the friends and relatives of victims whose voices silenced the violence of a system of corruption and impunity, have again raised their voices to call for justice, to demand that those who took the lives of their loved ones are punished, or that their relatives are returned alive, as they were before disappearing.

These voices have received little attention. Only those that have lived it understand the degree of exasperation, frustration, pain, and criminalization that comes with the tremendous and unequaled task of fighting for justice in this country.

Today, because they are so many and so vehement, these voices—the voices of victims through the voice of their surviving relatives—are starting to coalesce, to find each other, to identify themselves, to understand that, because they are so many, they are in fact one. And this voice has manifested itself with a force fed by pain paradoxically in silence—in the silence of a march called by the poet Javier Sicilia.
And this voice demanded, with its eloquent silence, that things cannot continue like this; that our Mexico must be remade, that the lost foundation on which it once rested must be found again, which has brought us to the point where all Mexicans are victims of institutional and criminal violence.

We are a Mexico that has stood up against the manifold violence that has ripped it apart, torn its fabric of solidarity, devastated the instinctual generosity of its people. We are a Mexico that marches, tired of being fed fear and distrust, when what springs naturally from our people are embraces and celebration. We are a Mexico tired of impunity, crime, and insecurity because day after day we love justice, solidarity and peace.

We are a movement just beginning, but we have history: the pain tied to years of struggle binds us together. We are protesting nationally, setting roots in a great diversity of local battles: women’s fight against femicides; young people’s fight against the violence that deprives them of their rights and even threatens their lives, and against the criminalization that targets them merely for being young; the struggle of human rights defenders; the struggle of rural and urban workers; the struggle of indigenous peoples and communities in defense of their rights, culture and territory; the citizen’s struggle for true democracy; and the struggles of children and those who work with them, so that the country is rebuilt with their rights in mind.

This movement is a means for citizens to demand, to resist and to make proposals—not institutionalized, but diverse and horizontal—to address the specific problems of violence and militarization that turn public security forces against society, especially its women, youth and most vulnerable.

We are movement working toward Peace with Justice and Dignity that, through the victims, whose pain and demands for justice give them moral authority, ethical leadership and a hopeful perspective before this national effort, wants to create spaces to meet and make proposals with other expressions of struggle and resistance.

Therefore, we are a movement that rejects the logic of polarization and the hate that accommodates violence and the culture of militarization and war. Rather, we are based on a horizontal dynamic and politics of solidarity and non-violence.

In the face of the violence devastating the entire country, our movement agrees on today, June 10, 2011—a date that calls to mind the brutal suppression suffered by those young students forty years ago—this CITIZEN’S PACT FOR PEACE WITH JUSTICE AND DIGNITY, with the purpose that victims and citizens carry out strategic and programmatic actions to improve conditions for registering complaints, resistance, and the seeking of justice, as well as the transformation of the dominant militarist concepts, models and strategies that were imposed on us and that we know to be misguided.

Aware of the national crisis and that it is largely due to our dependence on and submission to neighboring imperial interests, and acting from a base of peaceful civil resistance and dialog between citizens, we are committed to expressing the demands, revindications and social proposals as a summons to the powers that be, whether formal or de facto, of the State and Government, not because we have confidence in them or want to legitimize them, but because they are obliged to respond to our ethical call, which is where our strength and identity reside.

Therefore, we understand that this Pact in Movement is not born only to respond to the immediate context but that it must respond to that context, assuming the challenge to strengthen its capacity for alternative proposals. We know that the historic role of the Pact surpasses the immediate mobilizations that could be called or the number of organizations that are participating. In this moment of national emergency, our task and our essence have a qualitative sense due to the demand to rebuild our Mexico, from a perspective of transformation and citizen security with a focus on human rights.

So, after having travelled thousands of kilometers in a long Caravan of Solace, which gathered innumerable voices of indignation, protest and hope along the way, we are gathered here in Juárez, Chihuahua. We are here not just because it is the city that has suffered the most from this irrational war. We are also here because, more than anywhere else, the dignity and resistance of the victims themselves have generated actions that are an example to the nation and light a path toward hope. We have come here for dialog, which we achieved through nine working groups. These groups arrived at the agreements and commitments that constitute this CITIZEN’S PACT FOR PEACE WITH JUSTICE AND DIGNITY.
Table 1. Truth and Justice from the Victims

Demands:
1. A law that protects the rights of the victims directly affected (the murdered) and indirectly affected (their families)
2. Rights of the citizens to monitor cases
3. Police forces that are efficient, capable, sensitized, and that investigate and conclude cases. They must be obliged to protect the case files.
4. To put an end to the corruption and impunity
5. Obligation that the media fulfills its job ethically

Actions of Resistance:
1. Demonstrations in front of public offices with specific demands
2. The inclusion of civilians and the media as witnesses to processes of investigation
3. Participation of citizens organizations in the monitoring of cases
4. Monitoring of all levels of government through networks of organizations of human rights and civil defense
5. Promote organization against arbitrariness
6. The education of civil society of its political and social rights
7. To demand and influence the media to carry out its job ethically and that it be educational for the society.

Table 2: End to the War Strategy. Citizen Security with a Human Rights Perspective

Demands:
1. We demand the immediate end to the war strategy, demilitarization of the police, and the return of the army to its barracks, and an end to military immunity from civil courts.
2. We demand that no reform initiative to the Law of National Security be approved; on the contrary, we demand that the legislature develop jointly with society a Law of Social and Citizen Security.
3. We demand that the Merida Initiative be canceled, along with and any other project of police-military advising from the United States, such as the police academy in Puebla.

Actions of Resistance:
1. Carry out concrete actions in solidarity and support to the movement of Cheran and assure the presence of social organizations, especially human rights organizations
2. Hold a National Forum for Demilitarization and for Peace with Justice and Dignity.
3. Carry out bi-national actions among the people of Mexico and the United States to denounce the militarist strategy of the U.S. government and to demand a stop to the trafficking and purchasing of weapons in Mexico.

Table 3: Corruption and Impunity

Demands:
1. Revise and integrate a judicial reform to demand the application and strengthening of the existing legal framework.
2. Create true autonomy for comptrollers/auditors with accountability mechanisms, to avoid the corruption generated from the State being the regulatory body for its own offices.
3. Create citizen-run comptrollers, through citizen consultation, with the option to revoke the mandates of all corrupt officials on all three levels of government.
4. That national government offices are distributed throughout all of Mexican Territory, to avoid the concentration of power in the Federal District.

Actions of Resistance:
1. To cross the 32 states to demand at each of the States Attorney General offices that they meet with the most representative victims, as occurred in Monterrey during the Caravan.
2. To create a symbol that characterizes our movement with the intent to identify ourselves and make ourselves visible to the citizenry.
3. To have a monthly national event with the objective of creating a collective presence to follow up on victims’ cases and application of the national pact.
4. Commercial boycott of corporations that damage environmental rights, that put in danger the lives of different communities in the country, as well as the economic sustenance of small and medium businesses.
5. Tax boycott in the case of the non-fulfillment of the points of the national pact.
6. The establishment of a weekly, “No Crossing” on international bridges at the northern border of the country, synchronized by day and hour.
7. An urgent statement from the National Caravan, repudiating the case of Miss Ana, which occurred in this city.

Table 4: The Economic Roots of Organized Crime

Demands and Actions of Civil Resistance:
1. The government must be held accountable and govern with justice and efficacy. If the state does not respect the constitutional framework, we will undertake specific actions of peaceful civil resistance, to assure that citizens, social actors and the state have due access to their rights and fulfill their responsibilities. In this regard, we propose to organize an international campaign against money laundering and the trafficking of weapons; the symbolic occupation of the Bank of Mexico, as it is the regulatory body of the monetary and financial activities of the country, as well as the symbolic occupation of its branches in other parts of Mexico and abroad.
2. To open a forum for a discussion on...
the decriminalization of the consumption of drugs, not just nationally, but also in international forums. 3. Elimination of banking secrecy, legislate the obligation of banking institutions to inform the Secretary of the Treasury and Public Credit of movements of deposits greater than five hundred thousand pesos. 4. Political judgement of Felipe Calderon, Genaro Garcia Lucia, Javier Lozano and any other public functionary that violates the law and utilizes power for their own benefit. We demand explanations of the fortunes of Carlos Salinas, of all of the ex-presidents and of Elba Esther Gordillo. We want to know the origin of those fortunes.

Table 5: Alternatives for Youth and Measures for the Recuperation and Reconstruction of the Social Fabric

**Demands:** 1. To substitute handout policies for social programs that increase the organizational capacity of society. 2. To expand enrollment and the budget in Universities. No more rejections. Obligatory higher education and at all other levels. 3. That the Iberoamericana Convention of Human Rights be promoted, which has yet to be ratified. 4. An emergency wage increase proportional to inflation and to the price of the basic basket of goods and services.

**Actions of Resistance:** 1. To create a network of Social Centers for Peace with Justice and Dignity. 2. A call for the formation of a National Coalition Against Militarization. 3. A National Congress for an Alternative Model of Education. 4. To create a community radio for the Movement.

Table 6: Democracy Participatory and Representative

**Demands:** 1. To have viable and operational mechanisms for popular consultations, plebiscite, referendums and revocation of mandate to be protected from use by political and economic interests. For example, lower the percentages required to call them and use the last vote in the state rather than the eligible voter list. 2. To recuperate autonomous citizen groups like the IFE and institutes in defense of human rights. 3. For urban and rural projects to be subjected to popular consultation, particularly mega-projects. 4. To further advance and promote the free transmission of community radios. 5. To demand more public service content from those granted broadcast licenses (Televisa and TV Azteca), in exchange for their use of public airwaves. 6. To demand greater access to Latin American media like Telesur and Tal that break up monopolies such as CNN.

**Actions of Resistance:**

1. Actions of resistance/ civil disobedience in the House of Representatives and the Presidency. 2. National Consultation for Peace and Democracy or for a National Re-founding: tables, votes by Internet. Proposed dates of September 13th or 16th, children included. In addition, it is proposed to use the opportunity for gathering testimonies of grievances, disappearances etc.

Table 7: Links and the Organizational Structure of the Movement

The National Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity is an autonomous citizen movement, independent of all political parties and groups, that seeks peace grounded in justice and dignity through inclusive participation. We seek to construct a horizontal, decentralized and democratic structure, formed by local, state and or regional autonomous committees, united through diversity.

We are conscious that there are no definitive or absolute approaches and that we are in a collective, constant process of construction of the country we want, valuing the context and experiences of others through their differences. It is for that reason that those here present recognize the need to widen the discussion on the meaning of civil resistance, a culture of non-violence, peace and democratic values, and the construction of a more just, respectful, plural and inclusive society.

**Demands:** 1. That official time in the media (radio and TV) is granted to the movement. 2. That the state creates a victim’s fund financed through property confiscated from organized crime and developed in accordance with the will of the victims themselves.
**Actions of Resistance:**

1. To organize a caravan to southern Mexico to make visible the problems of marginalization, poverty and other phenomena characteristic of that region.
2. To promote actions of civil resistance to confront the federal and local elections of 2012.
3. Undertake actions of national impact such as a commercial boycott or a national strike.
4. To organize a national consultation on the War Strategy.
5. To create a database of the victims.
6. To organize a National Assembly of Victims to create a network of cohesion among them.

**Table 8: Labor Reform. Unemployment and Economic Alternatives.**

**Demands:**

1. Repudiation of all forms of violence against workers, such as the criminalization of their protests.
2. Repudiation of the so-called 'labor reform' for its regressive and neoliberal character.
3. We demand the restitution of the labor rights that have been violated by the policies of neoliberal governments.

**Actions:**

1. Convene a national assembly to address the problems facing workers.
2. Promote a broad mobilization against the poorly named 'labor reform.'
3. Promote a national worker unionization campaign and the recuperation of workers’ purchasing power.

**Table 9: Indigenous Rights and Culture, Migration and Rural Alternatives**

**Demands:**

1. Fulfillment and respect for all agreements signed by the Mexican government with regard to indigenous rights and culture: Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization; the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the San Andrés Larrainzar Accords.
2. Complete respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and communities with regard to the totality of their territory and recognition of the ancient possession of said territory.
3. The immediate cancellation of the 22 mining concessions in Wirikuta, San Luis Potosí granted by the Federal Government to the Canadian firm First Majestic Silver; immediate cancellation of the mining concessions in the community territory of the Regional Coordinator of Community Authorities-Community Police, in the Montaña and Costa Chica regions of the State of Guerrero; Respect for the autonomy of Santa María Ostula, Michoacán; Respect for and protection of the forests and territory of Cherán, Michoacán; Respect for the territories of the various indigenous communities in the State of Chihuahua and restitution of invaded lands and the immediate cancellation of tourist, forestry and mining projects that threaten their rights and territory.
4. Guarantee peace and human security in the indigenous communities of the Sierra Madre in Durango and Chihuahua, and resolve cases of murder, forced disappearance, the burning of seven entire communities, and the obstruction of community members’ free movement.
5. The establishment of a national emergency food program.

Actions:

1. To carry out an Assembly of National Emergency on the Countryside and Indigenous communities
2. Repeat the signing of the national pact in the States of the Republic
3. Denounce all cases of biopiracy and bioprospecting in the communities
4. Carry out direct actions in Wirikuta, Ostula, Cheran, Durango, Chihuahua and Tamaulipas

The present document was signed at the Monument to Juarez, a national hero that from here began the rescue of the Republic; a task that today we ratify as ours, initiating the re-founding of a Mexico with peace, justice and dignity.

As citizens and social organizations we signed this pact, and we put it to a national consultation for it’s subsequent signing.

Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity
Ciudad Juárez, Chih., June 10th, 2011

Translated by Clayton Conn and Murphy Woodhouse

WHAT WE READERS ARE ABOUT?

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

Steve Sachs: It is very good to finally see a major grass roots movement taking root across the United States. Increasingly in recent years, and accelerated by the free election spending unleashed by the Supreme Court in Citizens United, a small group of extremely wealthy interests has been taking over the U.S. political system, doing terrible harm to the national interest and the vast majority of citizens. While there are also differences, a number of developments have been very reminiscent of the rise of fascism in Germany in the 1930s. For the good of the entire planet, it is very important that there be a democratic movement to counter the authoritarian power and wealth grab, and it is very good to see Occupy... is also very strong in its commitment to nonviolence.

Here are a few lines that have come to me in the last months. While it is important to have strong, positive vision, one also has to have a clear view of the problems and barriers one faces. A very important difficulty is that with the corporate take over of the mainstream media, much important news is either not reported, or badly slanted in how it is covered, while lying, especially by those on the right, all too often is not countered in the press. Many are “Republicans”. I am not against the Real Republicans who, in the traditions of Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt and Eisenhower, have very valid view points and interests to represent. I wish they would take back their party, which has been largely taken over by Rip-off Republicans in the hire of a small group of greedy, short sighted (they do not understand their own long term interest – one wonders if they are not really communists in disguise, especially from themselves, working to bring about a revolution) wealthy interests, that have become so isolated in their uber-elite milieu that they do not understand what is going on in the country. We need to be very aware of their hench-persons:

The Lying Limbaugh (On reflection, 2/26/11)
He lies on the air
With the greatest of ease.
He times what he says
The fat cats to please.
Truth he bends
To mislead the nation.
On those who object
He pours insinuation.
Thus he collects outrageous fees
For putting out nothing
But right wing sleaze.
In reflecting on events, and noting the misdeeds and difficulties, we also have to transform our view to moving ahead in the right direction:

9/11
(Written at a forgiveness ceremony at the Ascended Masters Foundation, 9/11/11)

I honor those who died that day
And all who have died in service since.
I am angry – not so much at Bin Laden,
He and his followers were misguided –
But at leaders who used the event
For narrow purposes,
Bringing more deaths,
Making life worse for very many.
I pray we can awaken across the planet,
Learn that there are better ways,
Turn all the negative energy
Into a compassionate force for coming together
And taking the Earth to the next level.

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ARTICLES

THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION AND LESSONS ON RESISTANCE STRATEGIES

Stephen Zunes*

The downfall of Muammar Qaddafi’s regime is very good news, particularly for the people of Libya. However, it is critically important that the world not learn the wrong lessons from the dictator’s overthrow.

It is certainly true that NATO played a critical role in disrupting the heavy weapons capability of the repressive Libyan regime and blocking its fuel and ammunition supplies through massive airstrikes and providing armaments and logistical support for the rebels. However, both the militaristic triumphalism of the pro-intervention hawks and the more cynical conspiracy mongering of some on the left ignore that this was indeed a popular revolution, which may have been able to succeed without NATO, particularly if the opposition had not focused primarily on the military strategy. Engaging in an armed struggle against the heavily armed despot essentially took on Qaddafi where he was strongest rather than taking greater advantage of where he was weakest - his lack of popular support.

There has been little attention paid to the fact that the reason the anti-Qaddafi rebels were able to unexpectedly march into Tripoli with so little resistance appears to have been a result of a massive and largely unarmed, civil insurrection which had erupted in neighborhoods throughout the city. Indeed, much of the city had already been liberated by the time the rebel columns entered and began mopping up the remaining pockets of pro-regime forces.

As Juan Cole noted in an August 22 interview on Democracy Now! "the city had already overthrown the regime" by the time the rebels arrived. The University of Michigan professor observed how, "Beginning Saturday night, working-class districts rose up, in the hundreds of thousands and just threw off the regime." Similarly, Khaled Darwish’s August 24 article in The New York Times describes how unarmed Tripolitans rushed into the streets prior to the rebels entering the capital, blocked suspected snipers from apartment rooftops and sang and chanted over loudspeakers to mobilize the population against Qaddafi’s regime.

Though NATO helped direct the final pincer movement of the rebels as they approached the Libyan capital and continued to bomb government targets, Qaddafi’s final collapse appears to have more closely resembled that of Hosni Mubarak and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali than that of Saddam Hussein.

It should also be noted that the initial uprising against Qaddafi in February was overwhelmingly nonviolent. In less than a week, this unarmed insurrection had resulted in pro-democracy forces taking over most of the cities in the eastern part of the country, a number of key cities in the west and even some neighborhoods in Tripoli. It was also during this period when most of the resignations of cabinet members and other important aides of Qaddafi, Libyan ambassadors in foreign capitals and top military officers took place. Thousands of soldiers defected or refused to fire on crowds, despite threats of execution. It
was only when the rebellion took a more violent turn, however, that the revolution's progress was dramatically reversed and Qaddafi gave his infamous February 22 speech threatening massacres in rebel strongholds, which in turn, led to the United States and its NATO allies to enter the war.

Indeed, it was only a week or so before Qaddafi's collapse that the armed rebels had succeeded in recapturing most of the territory that had originally been liberated by their unarmed counterparts six months earlier.

What has been notable about the successful civil uprisings against the Tunisian and Egyptian dictatorships, the serious popular challenges to the Yemeni, Bahraini and Syrian dictatorships and the smaller-scale protests sweeping the region, is that they were completely indigenous and not sullied by foreign intervention. Furthermore, the chances of a successful transition to democracy following the ouster of an authoritarian regime are much higher if the overthrow results from a massive nonviolent movement, which requires the establishment of broad alliances of civil society organizations and the cooperation and consensus to make that possible. This contrasts with an overthrow resulting from a violent struggle - led by an elite vanguard, dominated by martial values and seeking power through force of arms rather than popular participation - which, more often than not, has simply resulted in a new dictatorship.

When massive nonviolent resistance liberated a number of key Libyan cities back in February, popular democratic committees were set up to serve as interim local governments. For example, Benghazi - a city of over a million people - established a municipal government run by an improvised organizing committee of judges, lawyers, academics, and other professionals. Since the resistance to Gaddafi turned primarily violent, however, the leadership of the movement was eclipsed by top cabinet officials and military officers, who for years had been allied with the tyrant, defected only in recent months and whose support for democracy is rather dubious.

This underscores that just because the incumbent regime may be evil and resistance to the regime is just, its replacement could end up being worse, a possibility greatly enhanced if power is seized through force of arms. For example, one could certainly make an argument that the mujahidin fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s also had a just cause and that the civilian population of that country also needed to be defended from the threat of serious war crimes. However, 80 percent of the billions of dollars of US aid money sent to help the Afghan "freedom fighters" ended up in the hands of Hezb-i-Islami, an extremist minority faction, which slaughtered many thousands of Afghan civilians and is currently allied with the Taliban and attacking US forces.

During the independence struggle in Kosovo during the 1990s, the United States and other Western nations stood by - and, to a limited extent, even supported Milosevic - when the ethnic Albanians were largely united in support of the nonviolent movement led by the moderate Ibrahim Rugova and the Democratic League of Kosovo. It was only when the violent and chauvinistic Kosovo Liberation Army took the lead in the independence struggle late in the decade that the West intervened on their behalf.

The 11-week NATO bombing campaign took over 500 civilian lives, provoked the worst of the ethnic cleansing and caused enormous devastation to Serbia's infrastructure, temporarily setting back the Serbian pro-democracy struggle (which eventually triumphed in ousting Milosevic in a nonviolent insurrection in October 2000.) US and NATO policy toward Kosovo sent just the wrong message: if you are moderate and nonviolent, we will ignore you. If you take up arms, we will come to your aid.

Continued US support for the Yemeni and Bahraini governments as they brutally suppress nonviolent pro-democracy forces while simultaneously coming to the aid of the violent Libyan opposition similarly sends the wrong message.

It is critical, therefore, that those of us who would like to see democracy triumph in Libya challenge the myth that a military solution is the only alternative to ending Gaddafi's repression and tyranny.

The overwhelmingly nonviolent, pro-democracy revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt in January and February followed scores of successful unarmed civil insurrections over the past few decades, which have brought down dictatorships in scores of countries, including Serbia, Chile, Poland, Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Nepal and the Maldives. In addition, despite government repression, nonviolent protests in recent weeks have seriously challenged the governments of Yemen and Bahrain, while smaller protests have broken out in Syria, Oman, Sudan, Iraq, Algeria and Morocco.

Yet, only in Libya has the pro-democracy struggle deteriorated into a bloody civil war, which has been used as an excuse for foreign military intervention.
Some analysts have tried to attribute this to Qaddafi, arguing that nonviolence "can't work" when faced with such a ruthless tyrant. History, however, has shown repeatedly that dictators as willing as Qaddafi to unleash massive violence against unarmed citizens were nevertheless overthrown through large-scale nonviolent action.

From the Philippines to East Germany, autocratic rulers facing nonviolent civil insurrections have ordered their troops to fire on unarmed crowds, only to have them refuse, forcing the dictatorships to fall. On January 14, Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali declared a state of emergency and banned gatherings of more than three people, threatening that "arms will be used if orders of security forces are not heeded." In response, hundreds of thousands of Tunisians defied the regime, bravely marching upon the dreaded Interior Ministry and a general strike effectively shut down the country. When the head of the armed forces informed the president he would refuse to orders to attack nonviolent protesters, Ben Ali and his family then fled the country.

In 1991, Gen. Moussa Traoré, the military dictator of Mali, ordered his troops to fire on unarmed pro-democracy demonstrators, killing hundreds, but the resistance movement remained nonviolent and, within days, enough soldiers deserted to force him from power. Similarly, General Suharto, who had ruled Indonesia for 33 years and who had more blood on his hands than almost any leader of the second half of the 20th century, bearing direct responsibility for the deaths for many hundreds of thousands of Indonesians and East Timorese civilians, was ousted in a largely nonviolent uprising in 1998.

It is certainly true that a successful, popular, primarily nonviolent uprising against the Libyan regime would have been a greater challenge for pro-democracy forces than in Tunisia or Egypt, given that Libya is what political scientists call a "rentier state," a country that derives a substantial portion of its revenues not from the labor or its people, but from the "rent" of its natural resources to external clients. As a result, civil society tends to be a lot weaker. When a government is not dependent on the cooperation of its people to labor, pay taxes, serve in the security forces and perform other functions to prop up its rule, it becomes more difficult to dislodge the regime through noncooperation. The regime can bring in foreign workers, rely on oil revenues and hire mercenaries.

At the same time, there are still plenty of options the opposition could have relied upon, as well as avoiding some of the mistakes apparent in the initial phase of the uprising.

Smart strategy is key to any insurrection, whether it be armed or unarmed. The largely spontaneous Libyan uprising, in its nonviolent phase, focused almost exclusively on mass protests, making them easy targets for Qaddafi’s repression, rather than relying on more diverse tactics -- including strikes (which could have been particularly effective in the oil industry), boycotts, slowdowns, and other forms of non-cooperation. In short, the failure of the nonviolent struggle was not because it was nonviolent, but because it was not well-organized strategically.

Once the revolutionaries shifted to armed struggle, NATO air support proved critical in severely weakening Qaddafi’s ability to counterattack and that Western arms and advisers were important in enabling rebel forces to make crucial gains in the northwestern part of the country prior to the final assault on Tripoli. At the same time, there is little question that foreign intervention in a country with a history of brutal foreign conquest, domination and subversion was successfully manipulated by Qaddafi to rally far more support to his side in his final months than would have been the case had he been faced with a largely nonviolent indigenous, civil insurrection. It isn’t certain that the destruction of his military capabilities by the NATO strikes was more significant than the ways in which such Western intervention in the civil war enabled the besieged dictator to shore up what had been rapidly deteriorating support in Tripoli and other areas under government control. Furthermore, defections by security forces - critically important in ousting a military-backed regime - are far more likely when they are ordered to gun down unarmed protesters than when they are being attacked by foreign forces.

I could achieve an outcome I desired in an interpersonal dispute by punching someone in the nose, but that doesn’t mean that it, therefore, proved that my action was the only way to accomplish my goal. It’s no secret that overbearing military force can eventually wear down an autocratic militarized regime, but - as the ouster of oppressive regimes in Egypt, Tunisia, the Philippines, Poland, Chile, Serbia, and scores of other countries through mass nonviolent action in recent years has indicated - there are ways of undermining a regime's pillars of support to the extent that it collapses under its own weight. Ultimately, a despot’s power comes not from the armed forces under his command, but the willingness of a people to recognize his authority and obey his orders.

The estimated 15,000-30,000 additional deaths since the launching of the armed struggle and the widespread destruction of key segments of the country's infrastructure are not the only problems related to resorting to military means to oust Qaddafi.
One problem with an armed overthrow of a dictator, as opposed to a largely nonviolent overthrow of a dictator, is that you have lots of armed individuals who are now convinced that power comes from guns. The martial values and the strict military hierarchy inherent in armed struggle can become accepted as the norm, particularly if the military leaders of the rebellion become the political leaders of the nation, as is usually the case. Indeed, history has shown that countries in which dictatorships are overthrown by force of arms are far more likely to suffer from instability and/or slide into another dictatorship. By contrast, dictatorships overthrown in largely nonviolent insurrections almost always evolve into democracies within a few years.

Despite the large-scale NATO intervention in support of the anti-Qaddafi uprising, this has been a widely supported popular revolution from a broad cross section of society. Qaddafi's brutal and arbitrary 42-year rule had alienated the overwhelming majority of the Libyan people and his overthrow is understandably a cause of celebration throughout the country. Though the breadth of the opposition makes a democratic transition more likely than in some violent overthrows of other dictatorships, the risk that an undemocratic faction may force its way into power is still a real possibility. And given that the United States, France and Britain have proved themselves quite willing to continue supporting dictatorships elsewhere in the Arab world, there is no guarantee that the NATO powers would find such a scenario objectionable as long as a new dictatorship was seen as friendly to the West.

Another problem with the way Qaddafi was overthrown is the way in which NATO so blatantly went beyond the mandate provided by the United Nations Security Council to simply protect the civilian population through the establishment of a no-fly zone. Instead, NATO became an active participant in a civil war, providing arms, intelligence, advisers and conducting over 7,500 air and missile strikes against military and government facilities. Such abuse of the UN system will create even more skepticism regarding the implementation of the responsibility to protect should there really be an incipient genocide somewhere where foreign intervention may indeed be the only realistic option.

Furthermore, while it is certainly possible that Qaddafi would have continued to refuse to step down in any case, the NATO intervention emboldened the rebels to refuse offers by the regime for a provisional cease-fire and direct negotiations, thereby eliminating even the possibility of ending the bloodshed months earlier.

Indeed, there is good reason to question whether NATO's role in Qaddafi's removal was motivated by humanitarian concerns in the first place. For example, NATO intervention was initiated during the height of the savage repression of the nonviolent pro-democracy struggle in the Western-backed kingdom of Bahrain, yet US and British support for that autocratic Arab monarchy has continued as the hope for bringing freedom to that island nation was brutally crushed. And given the overwhelming bipartisan support in the United States for Israeli military campaigns in 2006 and 2008-09 which, while only lasting a few weeks, succeeded in slaughtering more than 1,500 Lebanese and Palestinian civilians, Washington's humanitarian claims for the Libyan intervention ring particularly hollow.

It's true that some of the leftist critiques of the NATO campaign were rather specious. For example, this was not simply a war for oil. Qaddafi had long ago opened his oil fields to the West, with Occidental, BP and ENI among the biggest beneficiaries. Relations between Big Oil and the Libyan regime were doing just fine and the NATO-backed war was highly disruptive to their interests.

Similarly, Libya under Qaddafi was hardly a progressive alternative to the right-wing Arab rulers favored by the West. Despite some impressive socialist initiatives early in Qaddafi's reign, which led Libya to impressive gains in health care, education, housing, and other needs, the past two decades had witnessed increased corruption, regional and tribal favoritism, capricious investment policies, an increasingly predatory bureaucracy and a degree of poverty and inadequate infrastructure inexcusable for a country of such vast potential wealth.

However, given the strong role of NATO in the uprising and the close ties developed with the military leaders of the revolution, it would be naive to assume that the United States and other countries in the coalition won't try to assert their influence in the direction of post-Qaddafi Libya. One of the problems of armed revolutionary struggle compared to unarmed revolutionary struggle is the dependence upon foreign supporters, which can then be leveraged after victory. Given the debt and ongoing dependency some of the rebel leaders have developed with NATO countries in recent months, it would similarly be naive to think that some of them wouldn't be willing to let this happen.

In summary, while Qaddafi's ouster is cause for celebration, it is critical that it not be interpreted as a vindication of Western military interventionism. Not only will the military side of the victory likely leave a problematic legacy, we should not deny agency to the many thousands of Libyans across regions, tribes and ideologies, who ultimately made victory possible through their refusal to continue their cooperation with an oppressive and illegitimate regime. It is ultimately a victory of the Libyan people. And they alone should determine their country's future.
While the Libyan rebels have rightfully celebrated the ousting of Muammar al-Qaddafi after 42-year reign in Libya, turning him from all powerful-dictator to a cowered fugitive, the real challenges for a new Libya are just beginning. The road to writing a new constitution, forging new political parties, rebuilding a battered infrastructure, developing a broken economy and fostering civil society will be long, difficult and punctuated by violence. Having starved his people of any semblance of participatory governance, Libyans must begin to pick up the pieces Qaddafi left behind in order to build a foundation of a free, secure and stable nation.

Restoring the rule of law and order throughout the country must be the first priority. As long as Qaddafi loyalists maintain pockets of resistance – and Qaddafi himself remains a fugitive - Libya’s transition cannot begin in earnest. Qaddafi must be captured and full control of the country must be won before security and basic public services such as electricity and running clean water can be fully and reliably restored. These must be steps 1 and 2 for the nascent transitional government.

Collecting weapons will be a key task in this effort, including the large cache of arsenals looted by rebels from Qaddafi’s Tripoli compound. Reinstating police forces and ensuring that they are fully paid and functioning properly to maintain internal security is a sine qua non to achieving any additional progress.

Many Libyans have suffered under the ruthlessness of Qaddafi’s internal security forces. Revenge and retribution will be only a natural course of action for many Libyan to settle old grievances. The transitional government should learn from the mistakes made in Iraq and begin immediately a campaign of reconciliation by welcoming the integration of police and soldiers, who had been loyal to Qaddafi, rather than disbanding them and fueling further violent retribution which would derail the effort to establish genuine security in the country.

Healing rather than exacerbating the historic east /west divide in the country must begin now. Consolidating factions to form a government that "affirms the Islamic identity of the Libyan People, its commitment to the moderate Islamic values, its full rejection to the extremist ideas and its commitment to combating them in all circumstances," as stated by the NTC in a March 30th statement would be a critical step toward a stable and prosperous Libya.

If a thriving economy is to be built and the hordes of foreign expatriates are to return to Libya, establishing security throughout the country will be a crucial, and potentially tasking. As security comes into place, the NTC, the legal authority in Libya recognized by scores of countries and the Arab League, must work to bring the nation’s oil production back online in order to infuse the country with much-needed capital. Industry analysts speculate that it could take as many as two years to bring production to the level produced during Qaddafi’s reign, which amount to 1.6 million barrels a day. In fact, as the head of the Libyan Stabilization Team in the NTC, Ahmed Jehani, recently told the BBC, the "utter neglect" of the oil industry and national infrastructure under Qaddafi could take as much as a decade to rehabilitate.

At only 60,000 barrels a day today, the unrest in the country has left the NTC with a considerable task in overhauling the state’s handling of oil contracts to ensure both transparency and equitable distribution of oil wealth throughout Libya. Finally, since oil production accounts for as much as 95 percent of Libya’s export earnings, and resumption of full oil production will take time, the gradual unfreezing of Qaddafi’s assets, estimated at over $100 billion, is critical to meet the financial obligation of the government to remain solvent and retain the people’s confidence.

Genuine economic development will be central for a country that experienced over 30 percent unemployment prior to the outbreak of the uprising. Yet there are opportunities for growth should the NTC prove successful in maintaining the kind of competent governance that can generate confidence for companies and investors. Libya could capitalize on its coastal location and proximity to Europe by investing in robust tourism, industry and manufacturing. In addition, the building of educational institutions to provide young Libyans the opportunity to acquire the necessary modern skills will open the door to greater foreign investments and with that an expanded job market.

*Stephen Zunes is a professor of politics and international studies at the University of San Francisco, where he chairs the program in Middle Eastern Studies.

ELECTIONS IN LIBYA SHOULD BE DEFERRED

Alon Ben-Meir,* August 30, 2011

While the Libyan rebels have rightfully celebrated the ousting of Muammar al-Qaddafi after 42-year reign in Libya, turning him from all powerful-dictator to a cowered fugitive, the real challenges for a new Libya are just beginning. The road to writing a new constitution, forging new political parties, rebuilding a battered infrastructure, developing a broken economy and fostering civil society will be long, difficult and punctuated by violence. Having starved his people of any semblance of participatory governance, Libyans must begin to pick up the pieces Qaddafi left behind in order to build a foundation of a free, secure and stable nation.

Restoring the rule of law and order throughout the country must be the first priority. As long as Qaddafi loyalists maintain pockets of resistance – and Qaddafi himself remains a fugitive - Libya’s transition cannot begin in earnest. Qaddafi must be captured and full control of the country must be won before security and basic public services such as electricity and running clean water can be fully and reliably restored. These must be steps 1 and 2 for the nascent transitional government.

Collecting weapons will be a key task in this effort, including the large cache of arsenals looted by rebels from Qaddafi’s Tripoli compound. Reinstating police forces and ensuring that they are fully paid and functioning properly to maintain internal security is a sine qua non to achieving any additional progress.

Many Libyans have suffered under the ruthlessness of Qaddafi’s internal security forces. Revenge and retribution will be only a natural course of action for many Libyan to settle old grievances. The transitional government should learn from the mistakes made in Iraq and begin immediately a campaign of reconciliation by welcoming the integration of police and soldiers, who had been loyal to Qaddafi, rather than disbanding them and fueling further violent retribution which would derail the effort to establish genuine security in the country.

Healing rather than exacerbating the historic east /west divide in the country must begin now. Consolidating factions to form a government that "affirms the Islamic identity of the Libyan People, its commitment to the moderate Islamic values, its full rejection to the extremist ideas and its commitment to combating them in all circumstances," as stated by the NTC in a March 30th statement would be a critical step toward a stable and prosperous Libya.

If a thriving economy is to be built and the hordes of foreign expatriates are to return to Libya, establishing security throughout the country will be a crucial, and potentially tasking. As security comes into place, the NTC, the legal authority in Libya recognized by scores of countries and the Arab League, must work to bring the nation’s oil production back online in order to infuse the country with much-needed capital. Industry analysts speculate that it could take as many as two years to bring production to the level produced during Qaddafi’s reign, which amount to 1.6 million barrels a day. In fact, as the head of the Libyan Stabilization Team in the NTC, Ahmed Jehani, recently told the BBC, the "utter neglect" of the oil industry and national infrastructure under Qaddafi could take as much as a decade to rehabilitate.

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Genuine economic development will be central for a country that experienced over 30 percent unemployment prior to the outbreak of the uprising. Yet there are opportunities for growth should the NTC prove successful in maintaining the kind of competent governance that can generate confidence for companies and investors. Libya could capitalize on its coastal location and proximity to Europe by investing in robust tourism, industry and manufacturing. In addition, the building of educational institutions to provide young Libyans the opportunity to acquire the necessary modern skills will open the door to greater foreign investments and with that an expanded job market.

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Restoring internal security, reconciling between the old and the new guards, and making major effort in rebuilding the economy will lay the strong foundation needed to move toward significant democratic reforms. The transition to a new central and democratic government will be long and arduous. Qaddafi left Libya with nothing: no political parties, no civil society no non-governmental organizations and no parliament.

The political transformation should begin by developing a new Libyan National Assembly representing all cities and communities. Although much has been done to prepare for and writing of a new constitution, the formal committee that will be officially tasked to write a new constitution should be selected from and empowered by the Libyan National Assembly. A successful Libyan constitutional framework is one that will reflect the needs of the people and allow tribal leaders to have a say as long as human rights remain constitutionally enshrined and fully enforced.

The planned general elections must be postponed at least two years. Indeed, elections in the near term, as the US and EU countries are prone to push for, would be a catastrophic mistake for Libya. In Tunisia and Egypt, observers have witnessed the growing pains of the nascent democratic movements in nations where dictators were ousted, but the civil society infrastructures in those countries are far superior to the shambles that Qaddafi left behind.

Political parties must be given time and resources to organize, develop political platforms and familiarize the public with their stand on various issues affecting the country’s future security and economic developments. Opting for elections too soon would give too much credence and undue power to isolated tribal factions and Islamists, especially the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), which is the only likely group to be able to garner loyalty in the immature Libyan political landscape. It remains to be seen if in a new Libya the remnants of the LIFG will adhere to their November 2009 pledge to renounce jihadist violence against "women, children, elderly people, priests, messengers, traders and the like."

The West was right to utilize NATO to assist the rebels in overthrowing the lunatic that ruled Libya for 42 years. The strategy was successful chiefly because while the West aided the rebels' fight, the victory was led, and ultimately achieved, by Libyans themselves. The construction of a new Libya must also be achieved in the same manner. While the international community has a critical role to play in infusing the country with much-needed investment and developments, the success of the Libyan transition will ultimately hinge on continued determination by the Libyan people themselves.

Demonstrating progress by the NTC and communicating the steps toward a strong and secure Libya while adhering to human rights from day one will be critical to engender confidence among all Libyans. While permanent change may be slow to achieve, progressive change will begin at once.

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RECONCILING LIBYA AFTER GADDAFI

Ghassan Michel Rubeiz*

This article was written for the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), September 27, 2011, with permission granted for publication.

What has really divided Libyans during the past seven months has not been tribe, class, culture, ethnicity or race. In the wake of the recent bloody events, the most divisive issues have been disagreement over the necessity of foreign military intervention and the shape of the future with the National Transitional Council (NTC) – a political body formed by anti-Muammar Gaddafi forces proclaiming to represent the Libyan people – leading the country. What is needed now is for all sides to work together in building the country’s future.

Despite the presence of a strong tribal structure, Libya remains a relatively homogeneous society, even in civil war, with the majority of the population Sunni Muslims who speak Arabic. And Libya’s oil wealth – which can help provide economic stability – and small population are favourable factors for a unified country in the future.

What many Libyans are concerned about is the necessity of foreign intervention and what it would mean for the future of the country. Several Arab media outlets, particularly Al Jazeera’s on-going discussions of Libya, however, have affirmed that most Libyans think that the country’s tyrants should be ousted through foreign intervention if necessary. Still, there are
others who believe that an external military intervention threatens domestic sovereignty and interferes with the quality of domestic political reform that can take place in the future.

Thus, there are two mind sets: one determined to oust a tyrant at any cost, and another willing to live with the status quo. As the rebel forces gain control over Gaddafi’s last strongholds, it is time to resolve the domestic tension arising from the question about how Libya ought to move forward in the wake of foreign intervention.

The two sides must now meet halfway. There are constructive steps that the NTC, which emerged in Benghazi to become “the face of the revolution” on 27 February, could take to bring both sides together. The NTC has been recognised by the international community, first by NATO and then by the UN, as the legitimate representative of the Libyan people. As such it could recognise the urgency of reform as well as the imperative of state sovereignty, and should also call for a national reconciliation conference to discuss the future of the country as soon as security is established – ideally in the next six to 12 months.

Reconciliation requires inclusion, compromise and sacrifice from all sides – engaging those newly in power and those fearing the loss of position or privilege. This conference could shift the debate from focusing on Gaddafi’s ouster to a discussion on much-needed reforms, such as separation of powers, opportunities for women and transparency of governance in the context of national self-determination.

When government is transparent and wise, the need for external involvement in local affairs declines. This shift in perspective would encourage Libyans of varying opinions to find common ground. In preparation for the national conference, the NTC should form an inclusive provisional government. The new government should soon set a timeline for national elections and the drafting of a new constitution. Crucial is the formation of a new constitution that would maximise representation, empower women and protect minorities. The NTC should not allow its leaders to run for election or be active in the drafting of the new constitution, and make this clear to the public.

Setting a timeline for national elections and drafting a new constitution would be a clear measure of sacrifice from the rebels, demonstrating that they are not seeking power but can support the interests of the country as a whole. Such a move would also be a subtle indication that all Libyans would participate in the rebuilding of the nation.

Symbols matter. If the NTC treats the nation’s former leader with fairness, it would be an impressive gesture of tolerance and equality. The court, not the rebels, should hold Gaddafi and his associates accountable for their crimes. Learning from the past and recognising the promise ahead, Libyans should unite in their support of the NTC as a transitional authority. The nature of the NTC’s reforms will be instrumental in determining whether unity is possible or how unity will look.

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REFORMING THE ARAB POLICE

Joseph Braude*

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In much of the Arab world, police are commonly regarded as agents of repression. Hopes for democracy in countries like Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere require that police take on a new role as guardians of the rule of law. That means upholding the principle that everyone, even the head of state, should be equally accountable under just laws overseen by the people.

This crucial shift won’t be easy, but valuable lessons can be drawn from one Arab country that has already begun to implement change. In 2008, I spent four months with the Moroccan police in Casablanca as a journalist. The government allowed me to shadow a unit of plainclothes detectives in their daily work, so that I could witness the street-level encounter between citizens and their regime through the eyes of a cop.

Like other Arab states in recent months, Morocco has seen demonstrations by young people demanding political reform – yet in contrast to neighbouring countries, calls for the toppling of the king are relatively rare. One reason for the difference may be that the regime’s security services tend to be more benign than those of neighbouring Arab states.
Brutality and corruption are still pervasive, but by the time I had arrived human rights groups were starting to note modest improvements. The Moroccan police were undergoing a home-grown experiment of reform, consisting of three key elements.

The first was an effort by the highest levels of government to redress past wrongs. In 2004, King Mohammed VI established the Equity and Reconciliation Commission to acknowledge and compensate victims of brutality meted out by the regime of his father, Hassan II. Apparently as a result, some cops manifested a keen awareness that they were newly vulnerable to citizens’ grievances. “If I use violence to interrogate my suspects,” one detective told me, “they have recourse and I will be punished.” I did see police beat a suspect in a shantytown one night – a display of brutality that they did not bother to hide – but the lawful behaviour I observed among others did not appear to be a charade designed for my consumption.

The second factor I observed was the beginning of an attempt to make Moroccan law enforcement more inclusive. The precinct was dominated by Arab detectives, but several of the cadets identified as Berber, an indigenous North African ethnic group. Their induction was part of a broader effort to introduce more Berber individuals into the officer corps, on the theory that a mixed ethnic force could establish better relations with, and more effectively police, a mixed ethnic urban community.

This initiative bears adopting in fractured societies elsewhere in the region. Consider the skewed composition of Jordanian police: most have roots on the east bank of the Jordan River, while the majority of the people they patrol are of West Bank Palestinian origin; this is to say nothing of Bahrain, where mainly Sunni (and sometimes foreign national) police patrol a majority Shiite population; or Syria, where mainly minority Alawites play a predominant role in the various police forces.

A third factor in Morocco is a government attempt to teach police the meaning and relevance of human rights. Not long after the present king assumed the throne in 1999, human rights education became part of police training. Younger officers whom I met occasionally spoke of these ideals in explaining their approach to law enforcement. The inculcation of human rights standards, coupled with the threat of accountability, seemed to have had some effect on police behaviour.

In this pivotal moment of hoped-for transition toward democracy and the rule of law in the Arab world, reforming Arab police forces is vital. Whether governments in the region do so will be a clear indication of the genuineness of reform, as well as its prospects for success.

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PUBLIC OPINION, POLITICAL STRATEGIES AND THE NEW EGYPT

H.A. Hellyer*

This article was written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), August 23, 2011, with permission granted for publication.

There’s a new Egypt now — an Egypt where public opinion actually matters. The country has gone through a tumultuous seven months and Ramadan provides something of a break from politics as Muslim communities engage in a month of fasting and spiritual contemplation.

But parliamentary elections are drawing closer — probably within the next few months — and political actors need to consider their strategies. It is clear that divisions already exist within the revolutionary ranks, between those focused on being agitators and those focused on the elections. Ramadan gives these people the time to discuss, debate and, afterward, to regroup.

Public opinion cannot be ignored like it was under the former regime, even while public opinion does not (yet) rule the country. While political factions are already speaking their minds in the new Egypt, good ideas alone do not make good leaders. Even when they disagree with the public mood, successful politicians must speak to the public’s concerns.

The economy, religion, the military and social media are four of the key issues politicians will need to understand and consider. The Abu Dhabi Gallup Center is now tracking the country’s pivotal transition on a monthly basis — and data from the last few months reveal some intriguing intelligence on those four issues.
Egypt’s political parties have yet to provide fully constructed economic plans — something they are going to need to do quickly. Gallup’s data show Egyptians are more optimistic about the future after the revolution; they want to know how they can improve from this economic situation, which they know will be bumpy in the short term, to a much better one in the future. It is important to emphasise that, according to public polling, the improvement of the economic situation tops all other concerns. No political force can afford not to address it properly.

The role of religion in the public sphere is another key concern — at least in the media — both nationally and internationally. According to Gallup data, there may be some benefit in reconsidering this focus. Egyptians (Christians and Muslims alike) are generally receptive of other religions; after the Lebanese, they are the most likely population in the Middle East and North Africa to welcome a neighbour of another faith. At the same time, most Egyptians (96 per cent) feel religion is important, which suggests Egyptians may want religion to play a similar role as it does in European countries with established churches — to provide a moral core in the public sphere.

However, a respect for religion does not necessarily translate into an Islamist vision: the main political Islamist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, polls at only 15 per cent support, and less than one per cent identify Iran as Egypt’s political model. Religion need be a fault line only if parties decide to make it one.

Regarding the military, Egyptian media outlets are rife with criticisms of the armed forces on a variety of issues. However, for all of the discontent expressed in different mediums, justified or not, the army enjoys widespread public popularity. Gallup recently found 94 per cent of Egyptians express confidence in the military, something any successful political force will have to consider carefully.

Finally, social media, the impact of which has been so widely publicised, is unlikely to be pivotal in the elections. World Bank figures show one-fifth of Egyptians use the Internet overall, let alone access sites such as Twitter or Facebook. Despite claims to the contrary, 25 January itself was not a "social media revolution"; only eight per cent of Egyptians say they used Facebook or Twitter to get their news about the protests, according to Gallup’s data. Social media was not then, nor is it now, the core information medium for the average Egyptian. There are no shortcuts in reaching out to that “man on the street”, and all parties must be perceived as trying to do just that.

Ramadan can give political forces a time to strategise, but Ramadan will soon end and elections are nearing. No one can take popular support for granted. Gallup’s data show a majority of Egyptians as political party agnostics, with no party polling more than one-seventh of the population. Those who react strategically to public opinion stand to benefit greatly in this environment; equally, those who underestimate it stand to lose substantially. The time for planning will not come the day after Ramadan — it came the day Mubarak was forced from power. Those who have not realised this need to catch up, fast.

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IN LEBANON, DIALOGUE AS A SOLUTION

Sheikh Hani Fahs*

This article is part of a series on religious leaders speaking out, written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), June 28, 2011, with permission granted for publication.

The Taif Agreement, ratified in 1989, brought the Lebanese civil war to an end and ushered in a new era for Lebanon. The Agreement emphasised coexistence and, since then, many of the religious leaders in the country have been striving to achieve this ideal. In the past few decades we have worked tirelessly to promote coexistence through our writings, sermons and community dialogues, as well as within the framework of our main organisations: the Arab Dialogue Team, the Permanent Lebanese Dialogue Conference and the Lebanese Congregation for Dialogue.

Our goal is to promote the concept that dialogue can complete what was announced in the Taif Agreement, and lead to a legal and practical declaration of the end of war and a national peace based on coexistence. Building and renewing any entity or state cannot be achieved by one political party or by one religious group alone. There has to be a majority – a national, all-encompassing domain – within which there are various individuals and groups from diverse origins, experiences, expertise and sensitivities. These people must meet over one project, be open to change and criticism, and help this project
gain vitality through diversity, preserve multiplicity by maintaining the necessary level of unity and enhance unity through partnership with the "other".

Religious leaders from different confessions, as well as some academics and political officials, have held many conferences since 1990 about dialogue and its importance. We have produced a charter on coexistence, mutual respect and the importance of a Christian presence in the region. Our belief is that dialogue is the door to coexistence, and through dialogue we hope to convince people that a secular state can guarantee freedom of religion and civil rights. A real state looks to its citizens as equals who can develop a relationship with the state and it various administrations without declaring their confession. Meanwhile, it retains its respect for all confessions as social coalitions.

As participants in on-going dialogue, each of us has individually achieved pride and inner security. By meeting those from other religious backgrounds, we have rid ourselves of all cysts that poison our view of the other and that cause sectarian hatred, religious rifts and national disconnect emanating from the civil war. We have placed our bets on the firm belief that the basis for a stable democratic country lies in positive coexistence.

Our time is dedicated to promoting dialogue between the different religions in Lebanon who were involved in the civil war. We discuss and debate, and hope to impart the culture of dialogue to the next generation. We work with youth through camps that we organised through the Arab Dialogue Team, and conduct dialogues on interfaith relations in order to dismantle stereotypes about the "other", to circumvent any new civil wars and achieve reconciliation among various religious groups that wage wars in the name of religion.

Our goal is to bring together young people, male and female, from various parts of Lebanon and have them spend time with together. Through recreational activities and discussions about various topics, such as the relationship between different religions, or the relationship between the state and religion. These youth get to know each other rather than rely on stereotypes and faulty misperceptions. They play together, eat together and develop meaningful relationships.

There is no path to preserving ourselves, our people or our religions except through dialogue. When differences deteriorate to the point of conflict, when struggle and infighting are engendered, dialogue becomes crucial. Perhaps we could live without coexisting in a positive, cooperative way, but such is a miserable and barren life, because the "other" is essential in everyday life and is also the condition for existence, knowledge, life and the afterlife. The more this plague of division spreads, the more we need to give. My fellow religious leaders and I remain in service to the nation and the citizens, as doctors and nurses, looking after Lebanon and caring for it until its well-being prevails.

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INDONESIAN EFFORTS TO DEFEND MULTICULTURALISM

Testriono*

This article was written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), June 28, 2011, with permission for publication.

Recent cases of religious intolerance in Indonesia have led some observers to worry that US President Barack Obama's praise of religious tolerance in Indonesia during his visit in November 2010 was exaggerated. Public statements and decrees from Indonesian government officials have discredited religious minority groups and exacerbated conflict between minority religious groups and the largely Sunni Muslim population in some Indonesian communities.

Contemporary state officials in Indonesia often consider religious freedom issues through the lens of their particular political interests. For example, it has become popular lately among government officials in Indonesia to restrict and marginalise religious minority groups. Their efforts range from banning worship or religious practices and restricting access to jobs based on religious dress codes, to turning down permits to build places of worship and implementing conservative interpretations of Islamic law. They mistakenly believe that these actions will ease conflicts and increase their own popularity.

Since it was founded in 1945, Indonesia has welcomed people of all faiths to practice their religion. Although the population in Indonesia is predominantly Muslim, various faiths and different Muslim sects co-exist peacefully. For centuries, both Sunni and Shiite mosques have stood side-by-side with Buddhist and Hindu temples (some of which date back to the 9th century) and Indonesia’s numerous Christian churches (some established as early as the 17th century). Even the Ahmadi religious group which came to Indonesia at the beginning of the 19th century – founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, an Indian
religious leader who claimed he was the promised messiah foretold by the Prophet Muhammad – was left mostly undisturbed until recent years.

Fortunately, religious tolerance in Indonesia is not the exclusive domain of the government, and other groups are actively trying to fill the gap. Despite a worrisome trend among officials to avoid, rather than deal with, conflict between religious groups, it is important not to forget the many constructive initiatives that are on-going in Indonesia to bridge divides between various religious communities, whether inter- or intra-religious.

Credit should be given to civil society organisations in Indonesia since they are currently the pillars of religious harmony in Indonesia. In March 2011, for example, the Center for the Study of Islam and Society at the State Islamic University in Jakarta, in collaboration with the Canadian Embassy, organised an international conference in Jakarta to promote multiculturalism in Southeast Asia. Attended by scholars from countries in Southeast Asia, Canada and Australia, the conference was an opportunity for sharing experiences on the practice of multiculturalism and has sparked interest to establish bilateral or multilateral efforts to pool resources and confront rising radicalisation.

Multiculturalism is also being promoted on the ground in Indonesia through training programmes in religious schools. These programmes introduce both teachers and students to a variety of ways to experience a sense of common humanity in our daily lives, and are run by civil society activists from organisations such as the Paramadina Foundation (an organisation involved in education) that is working in collaboration with The Asia Foundation, a non-governmental organisation committed to the development of a peaceful and prosperous Asia-Pacific region, and the Karuna Bali Foundation, a non-governmental organisation providing those in Bali and elsewhere with opportunities in education and individual growth.

More than 300 teachers have been trained in techniques to promote universal human values, such as love, peace and respect within the curriculum of their respective schools. Positive values are one cornerstone for mental development in children, and in a value-based and respectful environment, students can develop their interest and capacity to work for peace, respect others and avoid violence.

Indonesian civil society groups are constantly producing new ideas and initiatives to support and maintain religious harmony. Although radicalised groups are still disturbing the peace, they face formidable resistance from civil society groups who love their country, are eager to live in harmony and are working tirelessly to promote multiculturalism within the society. Civil society groups are the ones who are working to change government policies that betray the principles of democracy, freedom and human rights and Obama’s praise should be directed to them.

*Testriono is a researcher at the Center for the Study of Islam and Society at the State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta.

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WHAT’S IN STORE FOR US-PAKISTAN RELATIONS POST-BIN LADEN?

Huma Yusuf*

This article was written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), May 3, 2011, with permission for publication.

Scenes of rejoicing in Washington and New York accompanied the news that Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden had been killed by US special forces on Sunday. But in Pakistan, many remained glued to their television sets, wondering what this event means for their nation’s security and sovereignty. The killing of bin Laden signals to the Pakistani public that the United States can act with autonomy and impunity on their territory. However, if the US government acknowledges and addresses the valid concerns of the Pakistani public, bin Laden’s death could prove a high point in American diplomacy.

For most Pakistanis, news of the terrorist leader’s death was overshadowed by questions of what role their country’s government and military had played in the operation. In his address to the nation, US President Barack Obama stressed that “counterterrorism co-operation with Pakistan helped lead us to bin Laden and the compound where he was hiding.” However, senior White House officials insisted that the United States acted alone, and that Pakistani authorities were only alerted once the operation had commenced. On Tuesday, Pakistan President Asif Zardari clarified that the strike had not been a joint operation.

International media coverage has focused on the fact that the United States’ unilateral action emphasises its lack of trust in Pakistan’s security establishment. Conversely, the bin Laden operation has further weakened Pakistan’s ability to trust
the United States and its stated regional intentions. The strike follows a meeting last month between the directors of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI). The ISI reportedly asked the CIA to reduce its footprint in Pakistan, and demanded greater oversight over US intelligence operations on Pakistani soil.

In recent months, US officials have stopped giving Pakistan advance warnings of drone strikes against militants in tribal areas. Moreover, the Pakistani public has still not come to terms with the detention and subsequent release of Raymond Davis, a CIA contractor who shot and killed two Pakistani men in Lahore in January this year.

The perception that the United States can act with impunity in Pakistan will fuel a sense of insecurity. On social networks, Pakistanis are asking whether bin Laden's killing is the "beginning of the endgame in Pakistan", in other words, the start of open confrontation rather than cooperation between the United States and Pakistan. They fear that one unilateral strike within Pakistan's borders can only lead to more: a statement on Monday by US House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers that at least a dozen senior Al Qaeda leaders are based in Pakistan has led many to wonder whether the United States is preparing for a series of strikes that would violate Pakistan's national sovereignty. These concerns are exacerbated by the recent appointment of General David Petraeus as the incoming Director of the CIA; the general has vehemently criticised Pakistan for maintaining ties with militant groups and tolerating terrorist safe havens.

To be clear, Pakistanis are equally concerned about the internal security situation of their country. They dread retaliatory attacks, which the Taliban vowed to carry out barely hours after the news of bin Laden's death broke. Many are also unnerved by the fact that bin Laden was uncovered in Abbottabad, home to a Pakistani military base and the prestigious Pakistan Military Academy. The fact that the terrorist leader could hide in plain sight of Pakistan's security establishment is an alarming thought. The other possibility – that bin Laden was being sheltered by Pakistan’s intelligence agencies – is even more terrifying, given that over 30,000 Pakistanis have been killed in terror-related attacks in recent years.

Given the sense of vulnerability that now prevails in Pakistan, this is not a time for American triumphalism. Indeed, if handled properly, bin Laden's death could be the turning point in a faltering bilateral relationship. It can be an opportunity for increased transparency in US-Pakistani relations as the modalities of the operation are explained, and a reminder that while the two allies’ strategic priorities for the region diverge, they are nevertheless complementary. And if, as has been suggested, bin Laden's death facilitates US plans for withdrawal from Afghanistan, this could also be a time of unprecedented collaboration between Washington and Islamabad.

*Huma Yusuf is a journalist and researcher from Karachi. She is currently the Pakistan Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC.

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**ISRAEL/NEIGHBOURS MUST COOPERATE TO STOP THE FOOD CRISIS.**

Naava Mashiah*

This article was written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), September 6, 2011, with permission to publish.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is facing hard times as it struggles with a growing food security crisis. Food security has been in the headlines since 2008, due to the rise of oil prices and a growing demand for certain crops by alternative energy producers, which, in turn, have driven up food prices. The steep price hikes triggered mass protests and unrest in some countries, while straining government budgets as food subsidy costs soared in others.

With limited arable land, restricted water supplies and growing populations, food security and the price of commodities will become an increasingly important economic and political issue in the MENA region. The challenge for governments in the region is to come up with economic policies that place domestic agricultural industries at the heart of sustainable development.

In these circumstances, the lack of cooperation between Israel and its neighbours is a lose-lose situation for everyone. Israel has been spearheading research and innovation to overcome a harsh climate and water scarcity. But there is very little knowledge sharing between Israel and other countries in the MENA region. Although food security would best be addressed in the framework of a regional peace, the absence of such peace between Israel and its neighbours should not get in the way of cooperation on this issue, given how critical the situation facing the region is.
Being one of the world’s largest net importers of food items and per capita consumers of wheat, the MENA region is especially vulnerable to food price shocks. Today, the Arab world imports 50 per cent of its food requirements – set to rise to 64 per cent in the next decade. Although there is limited arable land and water supply (with many MENA countries falling below the UN standard for water poverty), the countries of the region must find a way to become more self-sufficient and independent of the volatilities of the global economy. Today, there is an increased awareness of the risks of food scarcity to this already unstable region and it is becoming clear that there should be more cooperation between Israel and MENA countries in this area.

Recently, several MENA countries have been taking a closer look at alternative sourcing strategies as part of their comprehensive food security policies. Qatar has established the Qatar National Food Security Programme, which focuses on self-sufficiency by increasing food production at home rather than relying on imports. Abu Dhabi has initiated the Abu Dhabi Food Security Committee which is looking at ways to maximize self-sufficiency, strengthen safety nets and enhance food supply by increasing productivity growth through greater investment in Research and Development (R&D). It aims to reduce exposure to market volatility by improving supply chain efficiency.

Israel has already gained an international reputation for innovation in crop yield and qualities, and developing new seed and plant varieties. These crops are grown in semi-arid soil and seeds are acclimatised for the particular region. Additional innovations include drip irrigation methods and dew collectors, which utilize irrigation water sparingly in specific locations. These technologies are crucial for all the countries in the region. Should we not create a pool of agricultural and water technology innovations accessible to all MENA countries?

Arab countries currently receive less funding on average for R&D than many other countries because governments have not begun to prioritise this field and remain dependent on imports. Increasing productivity requires investment in research and technology transfer.

Israel, for its part, has made much progress in crop yields, green houses technologies, seed acclimatisation, drip irrigation, dew collectors, waste-water management and other unique water technology innovations. Shouldn’t the successful results of high crop yields in arid climates be shared amongst other countries in the region?

Indeed, Abu Dhabi and Qatar have the resources to lead the R&D drive to benefit the region’s people by pooling leading technologies gained through the commercial arms of universities, including universities in Israel. When knowledge is shared it can benefit all countries.

Time is a big factor. R&D investment is time consuming and starting research from scratch is not the same as benefitting from previous discoveries. Denationalising technologies and sharing knowledge is the way forward. The sooner we realize this, the better we can deal with the urgent challenge that all countries of this region share.

*Naava Mashiah is CEO of M.E. Links, Senior Consultant at ISHRA and Editor of MEDABIZ economic news. Eldad Ben Gal, an agronomist based in Israel, contributed to this article.

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THE POWER OF FACE-TO-FACE ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

Yonatan Gur

This article is part of a series on globalisation and religious pluralism written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), with permission granted for publication.

One of the most significant events of my life took place in March 2005 in Anata, a Palestinian village north of Jerusalem. It was the first time I participated in a meeting organised by Combatants for Peace, a movement of Israelis and Palestinians leading a non-violent struggle against the Occupation. What was so significant to me about that meeting was the fact that it was the first time I had experienced a face-to-face encounter with Palestinians who today are my friends and comrades in a cause.

I had met Palestinians prior to this, for example, during my army service in the Occupied Territories (I later refused to serve there) or when I volunteered to help during an olive harvest that had been disrupted by settlers or the Israeli security forces. But these earlier encounters did not feel like a meeting between equals. By contrast, in Anata over six years ago, I experienced an unmediated encounter with Palestinians who were my equals, people who I had previously thought of as
suspicious and different. The experience has become my model for the kind of encounter that breaks down stereotypes and promotes dialogue.

Since then I have felt a need to make it possible for other Israelis and Palestinians to experience such encounters. The face-to-face experience between equals is, I deeply believe, the foundation for peace and reconciliation between our peoples.

Since the Arab Spring there has been lots of talk about the opportunities offered by new technologies as a means to encourage the forging of relationships across boundaries – the kind that will transcend a culture of incitement of hatred. But does the Internet really enable such encounters? A few years ago I was wasting some time playing an online game. My opponent was a person from Sweden, and while playing we communicated through chat. He asked me where I was from, and when I replied “Israel”, he wrote: “How many Palestinians have you killed?” He then quickly disconnected, not giving me the opportunity to tell him that I was a peace activist, that I have never been part of such violence and that I had refused to serve in the Occupied Territories.

One of the explanations for road rage is that drivers cannot see the face of the driver next to them, and there are no means for communicating, verbally or otherwise. The Internet carries a similar risk. My Swedish opponent probably wouldn’t dream of speaking thus in a face-to-face situation. The Internet encourages short, simple and, at times, aggressive exchanges, as evidenced in the harsh and verbally violent sphere of “talkbacks”.

I don’t mean to be discouraging. I am anything but reactionary and I believe that the Internet and social networks are nothing less than wonderful. The way in which the new technology enables the spreading of information and the spinning of fine filaments of encounters that become a web of strong associations, is changing our world and the way we think. But to use these new tools in a constructive way, to harness them into positive tools of change, we need to understand the challenges they pose.

Action on the web in general and social networks specifically can be meaningful. We witness the impressive activities of Avaaz.org or MoveOn.org that bring together thousands and millions of web surfers into a meaningful political force. We also see how surfers from around the world can provide spiritual and moral support for brave actions in other countries, such as the Women2Drive initiative in Saudi Arabia.

The Internet effectively overcomes one of the drawbacks of mass media, in that it offers people who thirst for knowledge and have a critical mind an almost limitless democratic sphere to develop a more complex understanding of reality. Thus the Internet is an optimal place for someone who wants to discover the reality beyond the superficial image of Islam or Judaism as it is often represented in the established media outlets, and they can use the web to research the fascinating and often more moderate aspects of these religions. The Internet is the perfect space to link people together, to brainstorm innovative ways to change reality.

But, as we witnessed in each and every one of the mass events that have been taking place in the recent months – from Manama to Madrid – what really matters is what happens beyond Facebook – on the street. The real test of the movement for change that is bubbling throughout the web is whether each and every one of us then switches off the computer and marches to the town square. When we finally meet face-to-face and raise our voices together to chant, that’s when change will happen.

*Yonatan Gur is a member of Combatants for Peace, a journalist, and is currently in training to become a teacher.

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ISRAEL'S ANTI-BOYCOTT LAW FORCES ISRAELIS TO TAKE A STAND

Mairav Zonszein

This article was written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), August 2, 2011, with permission for publication.

Last summer, a group of prominent Israeli actors and artists signed a letter declaring their refusal to perform in the newly built cultural centre in Ariel, the largest Jewish settlement situated deep in the West Bank. The letter ignited a debate in Israel about the right to publicly express and act on their opposition to the settlement project and continued occupation of the territories seized in the 1967 war.

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Nearly a year later, on the night of 11 July, Israel’s parliament passed the Boycott Prohibition Law, also known as the anti-boycott law. The law determines that any public call for a cultural, economic or academic boycott of “the State of Israel, one of its institutions, or an area under its control” is a civil offence. Under this law, any individual or organisation that calls for a boycott while on Israeli soil is liable to be sued for compensation by any Israeli individual or group that claims damages from such a call, without having to provide evidence.

The passing of the law is the latest in a series of anti-democratic legislation and a dark turning point in Israeli history. It strips individuals of the right to non-violently and openly express and act on their opposition to governmental policies in the hope of trying to change them – a fundamental staple of any democracy, and a severe violation of freedom of expression.

But, at the same time, it also represents an opportunity. By criminalising the call for a boycott of any area or institution under Israeli control, the law effectively erases the distinction between Israel and the Occupied Territories. It thus anchors into law Israel’s continued control of territories it conquered in 1967, and as such formalises the occupation. This change will hopefully force Israelis – most of whom favour a two-state solution – to become more aware of the consequences of what they will say and do, thus presenting an opportunity for citizens to take a stand and engage more politically.

In reaction to the law, an initiative was started by the left-wing Meretz Party to label all goods produced in the settlements. The veteran organisation Peace Now came out in favour of a boycott of settlement products for the first time ever. The government’s effort to silence dissent through draconian, anti-democratic legislation is in fact having the opposite effect, spurring groups to respond with increased protest and resolve.

The boycott law compels Israelis to confront the divisive issue of the occupation even more than before. For example, those artists who refused to perform in Ariel are now implicated by the law, and will have to decide whether to put their careers on the line for what they believe in. Parents who oppose settlements will have to decide whether to withdraw their kids from school tours to East Jerusalem and Hebron sponsored by the Ministry of Education – an act now considered liable for damages.

Israeli civil society and human rights organisations immediately condemned the law as anti-democratic and a severe violation of freedom of speech, insisting the act of boycotting is a legitimate and non-violent form of protest accepted in democratic countries. They announced their plan to petition the High Court of Justice to disqualify the law on the grounds that it is unconstitutional. The organisations taking part in the petition include Gush Shalom and the Coalition of Women for Peace, who openly advocate the boycott of settlement products and are now in danger of losing their tax-exempt status.

Furthermore, those Israeli individuals and groups who have been working together for years with Palestinians to bring an end to the occupation are only further empowered by this law, as it legitimises what they have been saying for years: a country cannot be democratic while controlling another people. Indeed, assuming the majority of Israelis want to live in peace and justice with their neighbours, the boycott law will hopefully provide them with an opportunity to come out of the woodwork and make themselves heard.

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DEIFYING THE RULES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Alon Ben-Meir,* June 13, 2011

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The study of conflict resolution is prefaced on the notion that two parties in conflict desire a mutually acceptable resolution to end their dispute, however intractable it may be. The behavior by Israel and the Palestinians, however, suggests a different desired outcome. Whereas both talk about their desire to make peace, their actual actions on the ground demonstrate differently. Today, Israelis and Palestinians alike are defying essential principles of conflict resolution, serving to prolong, rather than conclude their festering conflict.

Diminishing Returns

To achieve a resolution, parties in conflict must believe that continuing their dispute provides diminishing returns. That is, they must exhaust all possibilities to improve upon their positions and recognize that the situation of both sides can
only be improved through compromise and cooperation. Recent developments indicate that neither Israel nor the Palestinians have come to this conclusion.

In fact, their behavior suggests the opposite. Today, each side has contributed to preservation of the status quo: Israel through settlement construction and arrogant intransigence in recognizing any merit to Palestinian positions; Palestinians through their refusal to return to the negotiating table and insistence on the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, which Israel will not accept. The status quo has become a political asset for each side, even at the risk of serving as a strategic liability for the future of both peoples. Furthermore, with short-term political considerations dominating the political discourse in Ramallah and Jerusalem, neither side has indicated any willingness to take the kind of calculated risk that will be necessary to resolve the conflicts. Without calculated risks, or efforts that begin to mitigate the conflict, it is impossible to move forward toward a resolution-and today in Israel-Palestine, there is neither. Furthermore, the cost of maintaining the conflict today is currently acceptable to both sides. The economy in Israel and the West Bank is thriving, and it is even improving in the Gaza Strip, where Hamas' relationship with Egypt is improving with the renewed open border. From each side's perspective, today's conflict is manageable in the immediate-term, even if both parties appear headed off a cliff in the not-too-distant future.

A Zero Sum Game

Successful conflict resolution also requires a non-zero sum approach based on mutual compromises and mutual gains. Today, there is no such give and take between Israelis and Palestinians. Both sides believe that any compromise constitutes a "loss" and the other side's "gain." This situation is aggravated by the complete lack of trust today between the two sides. Without trust, political or real security risks are perceived to be virtually impossible to take.

Through their hard-line postures and rhetoric, each side is discrediting the notion and diminishing the prospect of mutual gains in the future. Their actions are even worse. Here, the "giving," for example, in relation to any territorial concession by either side, is seen as a sacrifice and the "taking" is considered to be deserved and overdue. Positions are not described in terms of what is possible; rather "what is ours." This diminishes the value of any give and take, makes it more difficult to conduct, and it becomes even harder for conflict resolution efforts to succeed.

Lack of Outside Pressure

If parties in conflict are under some level of outside pressure to reach a compromise, there is greater incentive to reach one. Today, the international community is weary of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and their resulting approach is one that is serving to perpetuate rather than resolve it. There is no pressure on Israelis or Palestinians to act. In fact, their intransigence has been aided and even encouraged by their international benefactors. For Israel, the image of over two dozen members of Congress giving a standing ovation for Prime Minister Netanyahu's diatribe of preconditions and insults confirms the unhelpful and even harmful laissez faire attitude the American Congress has taken with regard to Israel's self-destructive policies.

Meanwhile, the American Jewish community has been similarly idle. Rather than an outcry, the Jewish community is providing support for whatever Israel's policy happens to be, however reckless. For the Palestinians, their refusal to return to the negotiating table has been encouraged by the international community's burgeoning support for a United Nations General Assembly resolution which ignores any possibility of a negotiated agreement. The Palestinians may have greater international support today than at any point in their history. Instead of interpreting this backing as support for calculated risks toward peace, the Palestinians have understood the international support as providing further incentives to refuse a return to talks, and hold out for greater gains in the future. In addition, like American Jews standing by Israel in its foolhardy approaches, the Arab world is blindly supporting the Palestinians, rather than encouraging them toward a historic peace agreement. Even worse, Iran is serving to encourage continued conflict through its support of its proxies, Hamas and Hezbollah.

Domestic Complacency

Domestic outrages for conflict resolution create greater political will to generate steps to achieve it. In Israel, economic growth and a stable security environment have blinded Israelis into believing the status quo is sustainable. Support and outcry for making necessary concessions to reach an agreement hardly exists. Prime Minister Netanyahu's approval rating soared by 13 percent after his address to the United States Congress in which he provided a blueprint for prolonging the current Israeli-Palestinians stalemate. The public has been similarly complacent on the Palestinian side. The surge of Palestinian activism has been focused on efforts to isolate Israel and to demand an end to the Fatah-Hamas split, not for efforts to reach a historic compromise with Israel.
The reasons for this complacency are three-fold. First, each side fears the unknown. The Arab Spring has the region facing a period of unprecedented change. Rather than proactively seeking to shape this period of change, each side’s reluctance is based on a fear that the devil they know - continued conflict - is perhaps safer than the devil they don’t - a comprehensive resolution reached through mutual compromises. Second, there is a lack of political consensus on both sides. Without a clear path developed by policymakers on both sides, each is settling for the lowest common denominator. Without consensus, Jerusalem and Ramallah have settled on internal compromises of mediocrity, and inaction. Finally, each side is locked into old political narratives against one another while each side is suffering from internal division hardly conducive to a united political action. Israel remains focused on an archaic notion of security despite the changed landscape of warfare and defense in the region. Rather than recognize that the only guarantee for security is through a comprehensive peace, Israel is locked into a narrative of an inability to compromise for peace because of the security liabilities they worry it would create. Meanwhile, Palestinians remain committed to the impossible return of refugees to Israel and Hamas’ repeated existential threats against Israel. The teaching of this narrative in schools, and the espousing of the right of return by politicians to the Palestinian public is politically expedient. These hardened positions are incompatible with genuine efforts to reach a lasting two-state solution.

Prevailing Pessimism

To achieve a resolution to a conflict, both sides must believe that they can succeed. Being positive about the prospect of deal is an important mindset – if you are entering a room to negotiate without a belief that it will lead anywhere, it will then be a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is what is happening today in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Neither side believes in the merits of negotiations at the present time. The publics are equally skeptical about the prospect for peace. This is a dangerous combination. If peace is not possible, why try? Why create alternatives that could offer mutual accommodations? Why be creative? Without hope that the conflict can be resolved, there is no motivation to work toward a historic compromise—and violence becomes the more likely outcome. In the current pessimistic atmosphere, creative ideas in the search for a solution are being stifled and readily dismissed, if not ostracized and condemned. After years of failure, the parties and the international community are equally wary of concepts which have been tried and failed in the past as they are of new and inventive ones.

The Religious Component

In conflict resolution, different political ideas are considered, argued about and negotiated ad nauseum if need be until a compromise is reached provided that the parties are committed to a resolution. Even in intractable conflicts, time highlights the inability to sustain hardened ideologies, leading to an eventual realization in the benefits of a change in tactics toward greater compromise and cooperation. The religious components of the Israeli-Palestinians conflict have obfuscated this process. Religious precepts deem that it does not matter if one side is right or wrong—God ordained it, and so it is so. The Jews’ affinity, for example, to Jerusalem and the Palestinians’ claim of East Jerusalem to be their future Capital are deeply rooted in religious rather than political convictions. Regardless of how much time passes, and what developments may occur, religion, particularly in its fundamentalist forms, provides a hardened foundation from which parties cannot deviate. It is very difficult, though not impossible, to reconcile these religious convictions.

Peace is still possible; however bleak the picture may appear today. The geopolitical dynamics must be changed in profound ways to overcome the current shortcomings to achieving a successful conflict resolution. Each of the aforementioned obstacles must be addressed because the alternative to the current impasse is mutually perilous. What is needed then are bold actions that can change the dynamic of the conflict in a dramatic way.

A visit by President Obama to Israel and Ramallah to speak directly to the Israeli and Palestinian people would spell out with clarity the advantages of peace and the adverse consequences of continued stalemate. Such a personal, perhaps overdue visit by the president could have a significant impact on creating incentives for the parties to act, and to adjust their internal calculations regarding the continuation of the conflict.

Similarly, a push by the leading Arab states to reinvigorate the Arab Peacelinitiative (API) could begin to reverse the atmosphere of pessimism and intransigence that pervades the region. Indeed, regardless of the regional Arab turmoil, and perhaps because of it, the API remains central, if not the only viable framework; to any successful negotiations to ending the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Since the conflict has a strong religious component, sustained dialogue among the religious groupings will be required. Although today, there is virtually none occurring between Jews and Muslims religious leaders, and no incentives being created to do so, the religious leaders have a special moral responsibility to rise up in the name of their religious teaching to find a solution to the religious element of the conflict which bears heavily on the overall search for a solution.

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Most importantly, any chance to improve the prospects for a conflict resolution will require one critical element that is currently in extremely short-supply: leadership. Without leadership to act in recognition of the danger the current stalemate poses, Israelis and Palestinians will continue blindly prolonging a conflict that appears manageable yet dangerously simmering. Otherwise, one day they will be awakened by the kind of horrific violent eruption that could spin the region out of control.

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SUPPORTING NETANYAHU IMPERILS ISRAEL

Alon Ben-Meir,* September 26, 2011

Regardless of all the protestations by Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu to return to peace negotiations if only the Palestinians would agree, one simple fact cannot be masked: Mr. Netanyahu does not want a two-state solution. He wants only to delay decision-making at all costs. Thus far he has succeeded, and he is likely to continue to succeed with the unwavering support of US Congress and pro-Israel advocates in the United States. But in doing so, Netanyahu and his American backers are jeopardizing Israel's national security.

In a recent tongue-in-cheek YouTube video that now has hundreds of thousands of views online, Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon reasserted what Prime Minister Netanyahu stated at the joint session of Congress: the West Bank should not be considered occupied territory. Ayalon claims that Israel has already compromised by not establishing its state on the East Bank of the Jordan River, in what is today Jordan, in addition to the West Bank.

With this kind of position deeply entrenched in the Netanyahu government's policy, getting to a viable, negotiated two-state agreement is a fantasy at best. Meanwhile, members of Congress, like the Chairwoman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R), have introduced legislation to cut off funding for the United Nations and any state that votes in favor of a Palestinian state at the U.N., as well as cuts to U.S. bilateral aid to the Palestinian Authority.

Statements by Republican presidential candidates, like Texas Governor Rick Perry, saying President Obama is "throwing Israel under a bus" may be mere campaign rhetoric, but do nothing but further encourage Israeli intransigence. Pro-Israel advocates in the United States have fueled policymakers to take imprudent but politically advantageous positions by supporting Netanyahu seemingly at all costs. Perhaps with the best of intentions to protect Israel's interest in this highly contested US political campaign season, Israel is being used largely by Republicans to seek political advantage. Ironically, it is being done to Israel's detriment. The fact that the Republicans have successfully made support for Israel a major domestic political issue has forced President Obama, who is seeking re-election, to wholly support Netanyahu's unyielding stance as well.

Such unmitigated political support for Netanyahu's government certainly helps to undermine U.S. influence and credibility in the region and beyond. Even more worrisome, however, is that with "friends" like these in Congress and the White House, Israeli rejectionists of Palestinian statehood in Netanyahu's governing coalition are encouraged to continue to advance disparaging policies which threaten Israel's long term national security. Netanyahu and his cohorts may see this as a major victory, but in truth it only serves Netanyahu's self-delusion that Israel will be better off by stalling rather than directly confronting the Palestinian conflict in search of an equitable solution.

To be sure, Israel has legitimate security concerns, perhaps now more than ever. The Israeli experience of withdrawing from Gaza and Lebanon-however unilateral and without a clear understanding with the Palestinians and the Lebanese respectively-only to receive rockets in return alarmed the Israeli public with regard to "land for peace principle." That Palestinian Authority controls only the West Bank, leaving many Israelis doubtful that any agreement could be implemented on the ground. Hamas and other extremist groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon, who have the open support of Iran, still seek Israel's destruction and systematically engage in acts of violence and terrorism.

Certainly the prevailing security conditions in the West Bank are dramatically different from those that existed prior to the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza or southern Lebanon. Even so no one should expect Israel to simply withdraw from the West Bank without iron-clad security arrangements built upon and exceeding the already existing Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation.
This raises the question whether Israel is better off today than it was when Netanyahu assumed the premiership nearly three years ago. The answer is clear. Israeli-Egyptian peace is the most precarious it has ever been, Israel’s relations with Turkey have appreciably deteriorated; its ties with the Obama administration have been strained. The international community, including many of the EU members, largely identifies Israel as the culprit behind the prolonged stalemate in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

Meanwhile, the uncertainty engulfing the broader Middle East as a result of the Arab Spring redoubles Israeli anxiety. To suggest that this state of affairs and Israel's growing isolation would have happened regardless of Netanyahu’s policy and the continuing occupation is groundless. The occupation continues to nurture anti-Israeli sentiments throughout the international community, and especially in the Arab and the Muslim worlds. Israel can walk the high moral ground and claim its rightful place among the free nations only by ending the occupation.

The burden of proof now rests on Netanyahu's shoulders. His policy to date has been simply "delay." In his speech to the UNGA, he missed yet another golden opportunity not only to make the case that Israel is seeking a genuine peace with security but also identify what Israel will be willing to do to move toward a genuine two-state solution. Instead, he placed Israel on the defensive by justifying the occupation and the settlements, offering no new initiatives or ideas, and most noticeably, no new gestures of good will, like temporary freeze on settlement construction to lure the Palestinian to the negotiating table. Whereas today the Palestinians and the Arab world have a clear strategy: to use the United Nations to enhance their international position by advancing the Arab Peace Initiative, Netanyahu has no plan. Indeed, Netanyahu's policy is to reject any opportunity to pursue peace if it is predicated on and must lead to a two-state solution.

Until his backers in the United States stop mere politicking and recognize their culpability in contributing to Israeli isolation, they continue to delegitimize and further endanger Israel's national security which US officials are presumably trying to safeguard. Meanwhile Netanyahu is placing Israel on a dangerous course that will further increase its isolation and renew violence that will place the security of Israeli citizens and the future of Israel in jeopardy.

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THREE KEYS TO CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RAPPROACHEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Michael S. Bos*

This article is part of a series marking the tenth anniversary of 9/11 written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), August 23, 2011, with permission for publication.

In September, attention will turn to the tenth anniversary of 9/11, and pundits will have their say about the significance of this tragic event. The one thing on which all Americans will agree is that this was the day that transformed our understanding of Islam.

Before 9/11, many Americans were blissfully ignorant about Islam. After 9/11, everyone had something to say about it. Unfortunately, much of it was based on half-truths and unsubstantiated claims that cast Islam's past, present and future as one of violence. This has left us with the great need and challenge of reshaping our public understanding of Islam in America.

This work will require much more than the dissemination of accurate and fair information. Sadly, many people tend to consume or believe only that information which confirms their existing beliefs or opinions. So while information is an important and necessary part of the solution, this makes it incredibly difficult to change unfair characterisations through the spread of information alone, and it represents a potential impasse in effecting change.

However, two emerging trends highlight other factors that are key for real change. The first trend is represented in the growing number of evangelical Christian leaders who are committed to a rapprochement with Muslims. Just a cursory review of the number of evangelical Christian responses to “A Common Word” (www.acommonword.com), a letter written by a number of high profile Muslim leaders that outlines common principles in the Muslim and Christian scriptures, evidences this.

This is remarkable because not long ago it seemed as if evangelistic ambitions, for which this group was known, were equated with maligning the faith of others. Further, it would have been extremely difficult to find anyone from these ranks who would publicly support interfaith cooperation.
How did such entrenched positions change? It was not necessarily because people had better information about Islam, though this is important. People have overcome biases and changed opinions because of their relationships with Muslims. It is through the face of another, not facts about them, that we are forced to re-examine our positions. As the number of people who find themselves in relationships with Muslims increases, so will the fairness and respect with which they treat their faith.

Though I wholeheartedly want to see this trend continue, I do not think it will effect large-scale change in our public understanding of Islam. The notion that “everyone needs a Muslim friend” is important but, like information, interaction with Muslims does not represent the whole solution either.

I think there is a more important trend that has been overlooked: the increase of religious illiteracy. The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) documented in the United States that while the majority of youth is open to religion, they demonstrate little understanding of their faith traditions. America’s ignorance about all things religious is increasing, and few religious leaders are celebrating this news.

However, there is a positive side to this development. American youth now have vast social networks that include people of other faiths, and with this has come a more positive attitude towards other religions. This represents a tremendous opportunity to reshape our public understanding of Islam. Rather than trying to counter strongly held opinions – which I noted earlier is very difficult to do – we could look to our youth as a model, who are able to approach religion in general and Islam in particular with less bias and more openness.

As I consider what the next ten years will hold in our rapprochement with Islam, I think the answer largely depends on where our youth will get their information. Make no mistake about it, someone will teach them. This should be a call to action to ensure that they have access to information that is grounded in reality. And in doing so we will need to rethink how we inform people about Islam. Our youth have been exposed to disparate components of Islam and will not accept only broad generalisations and a bottom line message that Islam is a religion of peace – please be clear that I am not countering this as the religion’s ideal.

Youth want to know how to fit such elements as Islam and gender equality, political Islam, and the challenge of militant understandings into a more coherent and complete understanding of Islam. The opportunity of educating our youth brings with it the task of finding ways to give a more nuanced understanding of Islam without making it overly daunting. Our youth are ready. The question is, are we?

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**ENGAGED SAUDI YOUTH CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE**

Lulua Asaad*

This article was written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews), with permission to publish.

When we read or watch news about the Middle East and North Africa what we hear are politicians gathering to talk about the economy, employment rates or education; or an analyst breaking down headline news stories. What we don't usually hear about are youth coming together hand-in-hand – regardless of their differences, their doctrines and their upbringing – to create a better world to live in, one city or one home at a time. These stories deserve to be heard and can serve as a powerful reality check, dispelling popular stereotypes about a country, a culture or a religion.

The Youth Initiative Group (YIG) is new in Saudi Arabia, founded in 2010 with the aim of bringing together volunteers in Saudi Arabia to work together for positive change in their society. YIG encourages individuals to volunteer their time and skills to benefit the society they live in.

Many YIG initiatives began in the basements, garages and homes of founders and volunteers, where people came together to consolidate their efforts and donations (supplies, food, furniture, kitchen equipment, health supplies, etc.) to help those in need.

It is especially in times of devastation when the goodness in people really shows. For example, when Jeddah was hit severely by flooding, many people sought help to rebuild their homes. YIG volunteers gathered in the Al-Harithy Exhibition Center in Jeddah to reach out to private companies and individuals to donate food, supplies, cleaning products and other key items.
Doctors, students, bankers, experts and children reached out to over 2,000 people daily. Men and women worked together to help those who were in need. The official campaign ran for a week, but even after the centre closed volunteer efforts continued, distributing appliances – such as air conditioning units during the summer heat, refrigerators, stoves, etc. – to families in need.

Refreshing stories such as this one need to be highlighted. Filling the gap for this type of news, the online platform 1001 Stories of Common Ground, provided a space for me to post pictures showing these youth working together as a way to tell their story. 1001 Stories of Common Ground is an online initiative created by the international non-profit conflict transformation organisation Search for Common Ground, but the stories are driven by its members.

It provides an opportunity to share constructive stories of change in the Middle East and North Africa as an innovative way to reinterpret the renowned One Thousand and One Nights, bringing people together who believe that positive change in the world starts with sharing positive stories and perspectives at the interpersonal level.

To help further its goal of highlighting positive stories, the website is currently running a competition for the best original photos, videos and articles that showcase different groups working together for a shared goal. These stories of positive change are seldom mentioned in the media. However no act of kindness or positive thinking should ever be underestimated. No matter how small, it's never wasted.

The youth generation is today’s catalyst for positive change. Society can thrive only when its members share their knowledge, wealth, and advice with one another – when we are working together to build a better place for us, our children, our families and our friends to live.

The youth of the Middle East are already participating in the awakening of civil society, embracing their civic duty and encouraging one another. These initiatives should be highlighted, not only as encouragement to others, but also to show the world the real image of Arab youth, women and men, active citizens creating positive change in their society.

*Lulua Asaad is a Saudi national based in Austria who has worked at the IAEA and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. To learn more or enter the Positive Change in Action competition, visit: www.1001cgstories.org.

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COUNTERING RADICALISATION AMONG BITISH MUSLIM YOUTH

Dilwar Hussain*

This article was written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), May 17, 2011, with permission granted for publication.

British universities have been under some considerable scrutiny of late, especially after it emerged that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who attempted the "Christmas Day bombing" of 2009 on a flight headed for the United States, studied as an undergraduate at University College London. The ensuing inquiry and report, released earlier this year by Universities UK – the representative professional body of the sector– asserted the need for academic freedom and freedom of speech, while at the same time encouraging vigilance amongst youth on university campuses.

But even before this time, universities have been seen as a "problem" vis-à-vis the radicalisation and politicisation of Muslim youth. Even if, as the report "Seen and Not Heard: Voices of Young British Muslims" says, young Muslims feel just as opposed to radical views as any other sector of society, these youth tend to be spoken about, rather than engaged directly.

There is a very complex interplay of theological, sociological and political factors at work that lead some university youth toward extremism. Some theological arguments twist the teachings of Islam to portray a world split into binary opposites, in which current geo-political events are given new meanings in line with a narrative of enmity between Islam and the West. Social realities of exclusion, poverty, inequality, weak community infrastructure and poor leadership also create the environment in which radical messages have more traction than they should. Add to this political complexities, not least of which include the role of Western governments turning a blind eye to injustice or waging war in countries without just cause, and a number of young British Muslims feel disenchanted with the current political realities. For some, this means that there is no longer hope in a legitimate process. So a number of these youth find illegitimate ways to express their anger, and then try to make that legitimate by creating their own theology of despair.
Given the very complex nature of this picture, it is difficult to even begin to think of what one does to counter it. Understandably, there is little patience to "get under the skin" of the problem, to examine the root causes of anger and frustration.

The British government is realising that the fight is a long term one that involves "winning hearts and minds" of Muslims both domestically and abroad, but also bringing real change to the way in which foreign and domestic policies are thought out and implemented.

Muslim communities have also realised that a genuinely mature, open and reflective discourse about extremism from within needs to be effectively nurtured. There are signs of progress. Recently when a London-based scholar, Usama Hasan, was criticised for arguing that evolution was compatible with Islam (including receiving a death threat and an attempt to oust him from his position in the mosque), thousands came to his defence in an online campaign for free speech. The real issue wasn’t about evolution per se, but that there should be the space for an open dialogue within the Muslim community.

Similarly, in universities there should be a space for open dialogue to challenge extreme views. To be truly open, the dialogue has to engage extreme views and concerns, even if the intention is to robustly counter those very opinions. Only an open discussion about the frustrations, anxieties and even anger that people have can generate a meaningful conversation. The law already sets the parameter for tolerance. Speech that advocates hatred or incites to violence would most likely fall outside of that parameter.

One very innovative way of dealing with some of these discussions was pioneered by Campusalam, a project operating within UK universities that decided to adopt comedy as a means of talking about issues related to radicalisation and extremism. The project has organised comedy events bringing Muslim stand-up comics to universities to open up conversations in a relaxed and light-hearted way about issues such as terrorism, but also wider topics such as identity, the headscarf, etc.

The point is that more dialogue, not less, is needed within our society. We need to foster a spirit of freedom rather than restriction. It is by confidently living the very values we feel are under threat, rather than constraining them, that we will win the battle of ideas.

*Dilwar Hussain is Head of the Policy Research Centre at the Islamic Foundation in Leicestershire, UK. For more information on the report, "Seen and Not Heard: Voices of Young British Muslims": www.policyresearch.org.uk.

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THE MEDIA’S POWER TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Ghassan Michel Rubeiz*

This article was written for, and distributed by, the Common Ground News Service (CGNews, www.commongroundnews.org), May 3, 2011, with permission granted for publication.

Much of the debate about the recent burning of the Qur’an in a Florida church by Pastor Terry Jones focused on its devastating impact overseas. But beyond the power of symbolic actions to stir up religious tensions, this event also demonstrated the degree to which new technologies can speed up the dissemination of hate messages in our ever-shrinking global village.

The proliferation of new media has a potentially very positive or negative impact on relations between ethnic and religious groups. Online social network sites like Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, as well as global satellite stations, have facilitated the instant spread of news. The Qur’an burning, for example, was initially reported on YouTube and spread through television satellites on repetitive display.

We all know that bad news spreads much faster than good news. Acts of hate broadcast over and over again can have devastating consequences for relations between communities, as the events in Afghanistan following Jones’ despicable act demonstrate.

But what can be done to counter the negative impact of new media? How can we harness the power of new media to communicate actions and words that promote understanding, tolerance and compassion?
There are three categories where action can be taken: wider dissemination of inter-religious news that reflect compassion and understanding, advocacy for responsible use of the air waves, and monitoring of the media. For the first category – how do we convince the media to redress the imbalance and bring in more “good news” stories? One possibility is to seek those stories that contain elements of suspense, courage and sacrifice. Events revealing how, say, a Muslim saved the life of a Jew during a crime, or how a Jewish boy saved an elderly Muslim woman in a hurricane, could be brought to the attention of television producers and creators of new media content.

Yet, even less dramatic events may be of interest. For example, a recent visit by a group from our Florida church to a mosque countered, albeit in a small way, what had happened in Jones’ Gainesville church, only three hours away. Our group engaged in a conversation with the imam. The particular experience of learning and the bonding generated through personal contact cannot be conveyed simply through preaching tolerance. The face-to-face meeting between our communities broke down barriers. Such personal stories may not be of interest to the large television networks, but we could harness the availability of self-made media online to share our interfaith message and stimulate similar events.

The second category of action – advocacy for a free and fair media – is already emerging. Advocates educate people about the rights of local communities to have a say in radio or television programming. The dominance of the press is worldwide and corrective action is needed at the global level, perhaps region by region.

In the United States, Sue Wilson – a California-based film-maker and an advocate for a free and honest media – lobbies national officials for better legislation, shames fear-mongering pundits and mobilises local communities. I heard Wilson speak passionately about media ownership last month after a screening of her film, Broadcast Blues. Wilson believes that people should own their local airwaves. She pleads: save your local newspaper, radio and television station from corporate ownership that is consolidated, autocratic, alarming and self-serving.

Yet new legislation and social action cannot, in and of themselves, tame the mainstream media. Regulation and monitoring of the media for religious diversity could add an important dimension of professional discipline. Such monitoring should be a global endeavour since the problem is not limited to the United States. The Washington-based Center for Religious Freedom annually compares countries on tolerance for religious diversity. Could we dream of creating an international body for rating the media on respect for cultural and religious diversity?

If we cannot stop religious bias in the media, we can dilute it with positive stories that demonstrate inter-religious understanding. Tolerant and diversity-based religious education can generate compelling stories. Challenging media standards and advocating socially responsible journalism – both within the main networks and in online forums – could allow for a greater balance in reporting. And creating significant institutions for monitoring the media would create greater pressure on editors, producers and reporters to disseminate content that gives us hope.

*Dr. Ghassan Rubeiz (grubeiz@comcast.net) is an Arab American commentator on issues of development, peace and justice. He is the former Middle East Secretary of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches.*

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REIEWS

TOWARD CLIMATE JUSTICE

Randall Amster, May 19, 2011


Humankind stands at the cusp of its gravest challenge, and the prospective survival of the species itself hangs in the balance. While there is a clear attempt on the part of many invested in the status quo to depict this crisis as debatable or the product of “fuzzy science,” the reality is that an unprecedented and near-unanimous consensus exists among all credible sources that indeed the predicament is real and the window of action is rapidly closing. Against this backdrop of deniers and the potential disempowerment inherent in dire predictions, a global movement has arisen to meet the challenges of climate change in all of its dimensions — from the social to the ecological, and as to both its short- and long-term impacts.

Brian Tokar’s essential new book, Toward Climate Justice, chronicles the theoretical foundations and pragmatic aims of this emerging global movement. In so doing, the work embodies a critical spirit that embraces challenges by seeing them as equivalent opportunities, and yet does not shirk from starkly depicting the magnitude of the crises before us.
Tokar’s clear prose and seasoned perspective guide the reader through a heady understanding of the climate change controversy and the creative, dynamic responses being offered. While no single work can encapsulate the totality of these defining epochal inquiries, *Toward Climate Justice* renders itself indispensable simply by being eminently rational in the face of impeding chaos. This is as much a testament to Tokar’s presence as it is to the thesis advanced.

The premise of the book is contained in the statement that the climate crisis perhaps “can indeed help us envision a transition toward a more harmonious, more humane and ecological way of life” (98). Tokar rejects the apocalyptic tendencies reflected in some anti-authoritarian left thinking, and instead seeks to radically reclaim “hope” as an essential and sustaining component for building a movement capable of fending off cataclysm and interposing a new vision at the same time. But this is not a false hope of the sort plied by “green capitalists” and their ilk at every turn, and Tokar thoroughly debunks many of the standard alternatives bandied about by the power elite, from nuclear power and biofuels (a net climate change contributor) to carbon markets and offsets (which perpetuate the inequalities that brought us to the brink in the first place). At the same time, options such as wind and solar are explored in terms of their viability as part of a future that likewise includes reductions in energy use and increased efficiency.

On the nuclear question in particular, Tokar reaches perhaps his most eloquent and passionate pitch. The anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s and ‘80s is cited as a primary precursor of today’s global justice and climate justice movements, and its successful intervention has prevented even a single new nuclear plant from being brought online in America since Three Mile Island. Tokar exposes the centralizing, toxicifying, and bankrupting qualities of nuclear power, and likewise points out that it is a failure both in terms of its inputs (destructive uranium mining that impacts indigenous communities and the environment) and outputs (deadly wastes that cannot be sequestered or disposed of in any feasible manner) alike. It is further cogently observed that nuclear power feeds directly into the interests of “a police state — due to the massive security apparatus necessary to protect” its volatile workings (87).

Against this, *Toward Climate Justice* propounds a vision of a radically decentralized, solar powered, democratically governed, and locally controlled future. Applying the tenets of “social ecology” in which he is unequivocally steeped (Tokar directs the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont), a “reharmonization” of social and ecological issues is proposed that devolves upon long-range thinking, the rejection of all forms of domination, and political activity aimed at producing a rich ecological consciousness. One of the salient points demonstrating this inherent social-ecological nexus is that “those who contribute the least to the problem of global warming will continue to face the most severe consequences” (24), a point echoed by others who have explored in-depth the disparate burdens of climate change faced by communities of color and impoverishment (e.g., Hoerner and Robinson, 2008).

Tokar further investigates the emergence of a vibrant, multifaceted climate justice movement that seeks to address the underlying roots of global warming, which necessitates calling into question the workings of the entire capitalist model as well as the socio-political edifice that serves it. Notions of “greening” capitalism and democratizing the “permanent war economy” are rejected as merely extending “a way of life that can only continue to devour the earth and its peoples” (124). Still, Tokar is no anti-civilization nihilist rooting for “collapse” to open a space for the emergence of a new world; rather, he grasps the deeper reality that “our very survival now depends on our ability to renounce the global status quo and create a more humane and ecologically balanced way of life” (52). In order to accomplish this, we must “evolve a broad, counterhegemonic social movement that refuses to compromise its values and settle for partial measures” (124), lest we find that our narrow window of opportunity is forever closed.

Undoubtedly, there are those who will criticize Tokar’s uncompromising perspective — including some who are otherwise aligned with his broader thesis about the urgency of the historical moment in which we find ourselves. For instance, a number of potentially like-minded climate justice advocates have embraced nuclear power as part of the potential solution, including James Lovelock and Stewart Brand (78), and especially James Hansen, a pioneer in climate science and an early voice causing global warming (Farley, 2010). Those with a more scientific bent in particular will point out that *Toward Climate Justice* is longer on rhetorical descriptions than it is on hard science, and indeed the work would benefit from the inclusion of more sober analyses that demonstrate unshakingly how and in what manner certain climatic and ecological thresholds are being crossed in a mutually-reinforcing and almost certainly irreversible manner (e.g., Rockstrom, et al., 2009).

Still, likely readers with a movement-oriented perspective will find much to be informed about and inspired by in Tokar’s important and persuasive book. The reality is that for much of the public, science remains a mystery, and many misconceptions abound as to even relatively simple climate-related matters such as photosynthesis and the seasons (see Somerville, 2010). What we most urgently need are pragmatically-grounded calls of the sort that Tokar is issuing, namely ones that integrate the best qualities of environmentalism, philosophy, social science, and creativity (cf. Nisbet, et al., 2010). It is in this integrative vein that *Toward Climate Justice* spectacularly succeeds, as a holistic and accessible reminder of the stakes that we face and the indomitable spirit that is rising up to meet the challenge.
NEW BOOK BREAKS DOWN MUSLIM ‘MONOLITH’

Mark Scheel

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To many non-Muslims, it might come as a surprise to learn that Islam is not a monolithic religion. Practices and observances can and do vary from region to region and from group to group. And headlines in mainstream media, particularly in Western countries, tend to emphasise the less flattering, repressive aspects attributed to minority groups while ignoring the many positive aspects of Islam’s mainstream majority.

A new book, Islam without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty authored by Turkish journalist Mustafa Akyol, however, helps correct a great many of those misconceptions, focusing especially on the misperception that Islam is an inherently authoritarian religion with little room for individual freedom. The work is a search for the roots of liberalism (in the classic sense) within Islam and a critique of the oppressive laws and attitudes within the religion – such as bans on apostasy or blasphemy – which the writer argues are based on tradition rather than revelation.

Akyol begins with a historical and theological overview of the development of Islam over the centuries and demonstrates that Islam’s core message – monotheism – saved the individual from “the bond of the tribe”. In other words, the Muslim way was grounded in the powerful idea that the individual is responsible to God and God alone. Akyol then explains how this Islamic message advanced freedom in the medieval Middle East, as evidenced by the principles of Islamic law (it becomes “rule of law, not of the ruler”). Nevertheless, disputes over freedom led to a serious conflict in medieval Islam, resulting in internal doctrinal struggles – such as the “Traditionalists” versus the “Rationalists”. Akyol even relates how non-religious factors, such as the geography of the Middle East, played a role in this “medieval war of ideas” by favouring less rational and more oppressive schools of theology.

The book also employs the examples of the oft-forgotten late Ottoman reforms and the political evolution in modern Turkey to shed light on the practice of Islam today and how contemporary Turkish society, and especially its “Islamic bourgeoisie”, is developing a liberal view of politics and economics that can serve as a beacon to the present-day Muslim world.

Finally, Akyol offers a vision for the future that suggests a means of dispelling the more authoritarian interpretations of Islam in favour of pluralistic accommodation within and without that includes such seemingly controversial headings as “Freedom from the State”, “Freedom to Sin” and “Freedom from Islam”.

Throughout, Akyol’s touchstone is the Qur’an, and although he respects the “second source” of Islam, the hadiths (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad), he argues for a critical revision of hadith literature, which he finds less reliable than what the traditional view might claim. He shows that most controversial aspects of Islamic law – from stoning to bans on apostasy or sinful behaviour – come from hadiths and not the Qur’an, and he argues that these hadiths might reflect historical attitudes rather than eternal injunctions of Islam.

Modern readers may find it surprising that during early Islam’s so-called “Golden Age”, many Christians were drawn to the intellectual freedom and progressive scholarly attributes of the faith and became more or less Muslim “wannabes”. Some
forgotten but fascinating movements are introduced, such as the “postponers” (Murjiites) who, by their willingness to “postpone” the settling of religious disputes to the afterlife, created a base for tolerance that the 17th century British liberal philosopher John Locke would restate a millennium later. And some concepts that hold grave connotations in the West at present, such as “sharia law”, are seen within their historical context as an advancement and a force for fairness and liberation. One reason why most Muslims respect Islamic law is that it has protected the rights of the individual from the tyranny of despots.

Quite simply, Akyol’s treatise offers non-Muslims and Muslims alike a detailed examination of the faith that readers are bound to find elucidating, educational and thought-provoking. And it’s done in a spirit of invitation and shared enthusiasm – not to mention a prevailing spirit of hope – rather than dry didacticism. Akyol’s intent, it would seem, is not to be a “Muslim Martin Luther” – the figure of religious reformation some yearn for – but perhaps a “Muslim John Locke”, who articulates the importance of religious tolerance and individual liberty.

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MEDIA NOTES


Maria Armoudian, Foreword by Tom Hayden, Kill The Messenger: The Media’s Role in the Fate of the World, including a chapter on Search For Common Ground’s media work in Burundi, is $26 list from Prometheus Books, and is available on Amazon.com: http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1616143878/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_il_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=mcbrendan-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1616143878.

Case Studies and Timelines of Nonviolent Actions and Movements in History from by the Albert Einstein Institution is available via: http://www.peace-ed-campaign.org/newsblog/?p=225.

Engineering Nonkilling: Scientific Responsibility and the Advancement of Killing-Free Societies is a free download from Center for Global Nonkilling: http://nonkilling.org/node/18, asking the question: what kind of science and applications need to be engineered to work towards a killing-free world? all fields of knowledge need to be thoughtfully applied.

Wall of Hope: History of Nonviolence is available at: http://www.pjrcbooks.org/.

The Journal of Peacebuilding and Development (JPD) is a tri-annual refereed journal providing a forum for the sharing of critical thinking and constructive action on issues at the intersections of conflict, development, and peace. JPD aims to develop theory-practice and South-North dialogues, foregrounding qualitative methodologies that highlight the micro, hidden impacts of dominant policies and practices. For information regarding subscriptions, please visit: www.journalpeacedev.org, or email: jpd@american.edu.

PEACE in Action issued its 20th and final issue, featuring various articles, including PEACE as an Organizing Principle/ by Louise Diamond, available via: http://www.promotingpeace.org/current_issue.html.


Waging Nonviolence Newsletter is available by e-mail from Waging Nonviolence, 500 Washington Ave. #52, Brooklyn, NY 11238, http://us2.forward-tofriend.com/forward?u=f279f100f8b39c61c33aef1&id=07364e8a03&e=9df0fcbf42.
Stephen Zunes highly recommends this short video to anyone interested in how the Egyptians pulled off their revolution, despite the lack of media coverage in the years and months leading up to it: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAYZ90XLjgE.

The film, *Four Days Inside Guantánamo*, was released in the UK October 7, 2011. According to a review in the *Guardian*, “a video of a Gitmo interrogation,” http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/05/guantanamo-film-rights-child-soldier?CMP=twt_gu, At the time of his interrogation in Guantánamo Bay, February 2003, Omar Khadr, a Canadian national, was barely 16, and had been in military custody for seven months. Now 25, he remains in the U.S. detention centre, though he will soon be transferred to a prison in Canada in a deal which led him to plead guilty to war crimes, in 2010. The film about his interrogation raises a series of deeply troubling questions. First, it asks, why did the US try a child, captured in Afghanistan aged 15, when UN treaties state that underage combatants are to be treated as victims? How reliable was a confession Khadr says was extracted under torture and, it emerged later, under tacit threats of gang rape? The film even casts doubt on the Pentagon’s claims that Khadr was responsible for killing a US soldier, the incident for which he was tried. John Glaser, comments, “Watching this, I couldn't help but be reminded of the fact that at least 92 Gitmo interrogation tapes were destroyed by the CIA, for the obvious reason of covering up the vastly more extreme torture and abuse that other detainees suffered (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/03/washington/03web-intel.html).

**USEFUL WEB SITES**

UN NGO Climate Change Caucus, with numerous task forces, is at: http://climatecaucus.net.


Earth Policy Institute, dedicated to building a sustainable future as well as providing a plan of how to get from here to there: www.earthpolicy.org.

Wiser Earth lists more than 10,700 environmental and environmental justice organizations at: http://www.wiserearth.org/organization/

Earthwatch, the world’s largest environmental volunteer organization, founded in 1971, works globally to help the people of the planet volunteer realize a sustainable environment: http://www.earthwatch.org/.


The Environmental Defense Fund works on environmental issues and policy, primarily in the U.S.: http://edf.org.


SaveOurEnvironemnt.org, a coalition of environmental organizations acting politically in the U.S.: http://ga3.org/campaign/0908_endangered_species/xuninw84p7m8mxxm.

The National Resources Defense Council works on a variety of environmental issues in the U.S.: http://www.nrdconline.org/

Care 2 is concerned about a variety of issues, including the environment: http://www.care2.com/.

Rainmakers Oceania studies possibilities for restoring the natural environment and humanity's rightful place in it, at: http://rainmakers-oceania.com/0annexanchorc/about-rainmakers.html.

Green Ships, in fall 2008, was is asking Congress to act to speed the development of new energy efficient ships that can take thousands of trucks off Atlantic and Pacific Coast highways, moving freight up and down the costs with far less carbon emissions and more cheaply: http://www.greenships.org.

Carbon Fund Blog carries climate change news, links to green blogs, and a green resource list, at:

**Grist carries environmental news and commentary**: http://www.grist.org/news/.


Placing Peace is, "A Resource Center for news and activities that seek to build a powerful coalition to bring about cooperation and synergy between the peace movement, the climate crisis movement, and the organic community." Their web site includes extensive links to organizations, articles, videos and books that make the connections, at: http://organicconsumers.org/plantingpeace/index.cfm, Planting Peace is sponsored by the **Organic Consumers Association**: http://organicconsumers.org/.

**The Global Climate Change Campaign**: http://www.globalclimatecampaign.org/.


Georgetown University’s Conflict Resolution Program and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) have created an online database of multimedia resources related to conflict management, as well as best practices for designing and using them at: Peace Media http://peacemedia.usip.org. For information, contact: Dr. Craig Zelizer, Associate Director, Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution, Department of Government, Georgetown University, 3240 Prospect Street, Washington, DC 20007, (202)687-0512, cz52@georgetown.edu, http://conflictresolution.georgetown.edu, http://internationalpeaceandconflict.org.

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

The **International Crisis Group (ICG)** carries regular reports and sets of recommendations about difficult developing situations around the globe, and has been an extremely helpful source of information and ideas for this journal: http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm. ICG also has a regular E-mail report circulation service that can be subscribed to on its web site. The International Crisis Group (ICG) has launched a frequently updated website on “the nexus of issues surrounding Cyprus, Turkey and the European Union,” at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/.

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

**IMRA – Middle East News and Analysis**: http://www.imra.org.il/.

**Transcend Africa**, provides reports from across Africa at: www.transcendafrica.net.

**Americas Program**: www.cipamerica.org

The **Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)**: http://www.unpo.org/.


**Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) http://wozazimbabwe.org/.

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

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

**Peace Voice**, a source for thoughtful articles on the world today by Peace Professionals including members of academia and the non-profit sector, Home page is: http://www.peacevoice.info. To view abstracts of unpublished current offerings, which are available at no charge, go to www.Abstracts.PeaceVoice.info. To view pieces that have been published and are also available for reprint at no charge: http://www.peacevoice.info.

**Peace Media** publishes a monthly web magazine at: http://peacejournalism.com/ReadArticle.asp?ArticleID=6086
The **Open society Institute and the Soros Foundation**: [http://www.soros.org/](http://www.soros.org/)

**Conciliation Resources (CR)** has re-launched its website [http://www.c-r.org](http://www.c-r.org).


**Peace and Collaborative Development Network** “is a free professional networking site to foster dialogue and sharing of resources in international development, conflict resolution, gender mainstreaming, human rights, social entrepreneurship and related fields. Feel free to explore the site content and features”, at: [http://www.internationalpeaceandconflict.org/](http://www.internationalpeaceandconflict.org/).


**The Universal Human Rights Index Website** is a database for finding information and documents produced by the various components of the UN human rights system. It can easily do searches, by keywords and other methods on inquiry, at: [http://www.universalhumanrightsindex.org/](http://www.universalhumanrightsindex.org/).


**The International Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) Program a American University web site**, including bi-monthly newsletters, is at: newsletter at [www.aupeace.org](http://www.aupeace.org).


**Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP)**: [www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org).

**Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue** (formerly the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century), is at: [http://www.ikedacenter.org/publications.htm](http://www.ikedacenter.org/publications.htm).


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

Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream runs on line discussions of “the most critical issue and greatest opportunity of our time and what you can do about it,” at: http://www.awakeningthedreamer.org/.


Peace and Collaborative Development Network is at: http://internationalpeaceandconflict.org/).


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

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


Jewish Voice for Peace and Jewish Peace News: www.jewishpeacenews.net.


The Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution (JLCR) is a multidisciplinary peer-reviewed journal published monthly by Academic Journals: http://www.academicjournals.org/JLCR.


Peace Action is at: www.Peace-Action.org

Caucasus Context is at: http://www.worldsecurityinstitute.org/showarticle.cfm?id=218.
The National Conference on Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD)'s Learning Exchange, as of August 2007 included over 2200 resources, is at: www.thataway.org/exchange/.

The Africa Peace and Conflict Network (APCN) offers open-access publications, including full research papers, Briefings, and a photo journal, at: www.africaworkinggroup.org/publications.

The Global Development Briefing, the largest circulation publication designed specifically for international development professionals, is at: www.DevelopmentEx.com.


UN Millennium Development Goals, indicators of levels of success on ending poverty: http://www.mdgmonitor.org/.

Peace and Collaborative Development Networking at: http://internationalpeaceandconflict.ning.com/, is a free professional networking site to encourage interaction between individuals and organizations worldwide involved in development, peace, conflict resolution and related fields.

The Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC) at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University blog, entitled "Conflict and Collaboration" is at: http://conflictandcollaboration.wordpress.com/about/.


Ideologies of War and Terrorism Web Site is at: http://www.ideologiesofwar.com/.

H-Net-Peace carries announcements, etc., relating to peace at: http://www.h-net.org/~peace/.

The Journal of Peacebuilding and Development (JPD) is at: www.journalpeacedev.org, or email: jpd@american.edu.

The M. K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, is at University of Rochester, Interfaith Chapel, Box 270501, Rochester, NY 14627 (585)276-3787, tgoodman@admin.rochester.edu, gandhiinstitute.org

The Peace Education Center, IIE, and Global Campaign for Peace Education invite have a global online initiative “the Peace Education Online Communities.” at: www.c-i-p-e.org/forum. The Peace Education Online Community is an interactive website that enables members of the global community to communicate and interact with eachother through a number of tools including: online discussions, collaborative working spaces, an updatable calendar of events, member profiles, reports of institutes, the sharing of files and papers including sample curricula and best practices from local communities, and much, much more. This web-based initiative was developed to support the members and participants of the International Institute on Peace Education, Community-based Institutes on Peace Education, and the Global Campaign for Peace Education, and other concerned educators. For more information contact: peace-ed@tc.edu. The Global Campaign for Peace Education Newsletter is usually published as a list serve monthly, with subscription and back issues at: www.tc.edu/PeaceEd/newsletter.

The Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE) e-newsletter provides a monthly bulletin of GCPE news, events, action alerts and reports of peace education activities and developments from around the world. Back issues of the newsletter are archived online at www.tc.edu/PeaceEd/newsletter. To subscribe via E-mail go to: http://c-i-p-e.org/elist/?p=subscribe&id=2.


The online Encyclopedia of Peace Education is at: http://www.tc.edu/centers/epe/.
The Plowshares site has on it a section for Syllabi from Courses Related to Peace Studies (from various sources) at: http://www.plowsharesproject.org/php/resources/index.php.


The Organization Development Institute is a nonprofit educational association organized in 1968 to promote a better understanding of and to disseminate information about organization development, at: http://www.odinstitute.org/.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Journal of Peacebuilding and Development Calling for Papers on Hybridity in Peacebuilding and Development

Visiting Editors: Dr. Roger MacGinty and Dr. Gurchathen Sanghera, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of St. Andrews

The Journal of Peacebuilding and Development is calling for papers for Volume 7 Number 2, which is to be published in August 2012. JPD is a tri-annual refereed journal providing a forum for the sharing of critical thinking and constructive action on issues at the intersections of conflict, development, and peace. JPD aims to develop theory-practice and South-North dialogues, foregrounding qualitative methodologies that highlight the micro, hidden impacts of dominant policies and practices. This special issue will endeavor to capture and examine critical topics and questions on the topic of Hybridity in Peacebuilding and Development.

Hybridity is the coming together of top-down and bottom-up (as well as indigenous and exogenous) social, economic and political forces to produce composite forms of politics, economics and social life. All societies are hybrids and experience constant processes of hybridisation. These processes are often accelerated and distorted in contexts experiencing development and peacebuilding interventions. Many existing works on hybridity tend to see it from a top-down perspective and examine how local actors react to top-down and exogenous inputs and dynamics. The special issue is especially interested in articles that seek to conceptualise and analyse hybridity from the local and bottom-up perspective. We welcome conceptual and empirical articles that explain the new forms of power, opportunities and challenges that emerge in hybrid peacebuilding and development contexts and sectors. The editors encourage authors to focus on particular sectors of hybridity (e.g., law, governance, economics, cultural experience) or particular aspects of the hybridisation process (negotiation, processes of norm formation etc.). Articles submitted to the Journal should be original contributions and are subject to peer review. With occasional exceptions, articles should be based on case studies. All submissions must link issues of peace and/or conflict with some aspect of development. Please indicate clearly if the article is under consideration by another publisher. Articles are read by the journal’s editors as well as by two to four outside reviewers (one or two for briefings). The following types of submissions will be considered: Full articles: critical case studies and/or thematic discussion and analysis of topical peacebuilding and development themes, 7,000 word maximum, including references and endnotes; Briefings: discussions of 1) training, peacebuilding and intervention strategies and impact, 2) policy review/analysis, or 3) country briefings, 2,000 word maximum; Book reviews: 900 word maximum; Resources: notices of new books, reports, upcoming conferences, videos, e-communications and websites, 150 word maximum; Documents: declarations, communiqués, and other relevant NGO or multilateral organization statements, 1,000 word maximum. Each manuscript must be submitted by e-mail, and if in MSWord format. Any diagrams and maps should be submitted in .JPEG, .EPS or .TIFF format. Tables may appear in the text, but do not apply frames or tints. Copyright of articles published in the Journal rests with the publisher.

For more information and Author Guidelines please visit our website: www.journalpeacedev.org Submission deadline: Abstracts should reach JPD by 20 August 2011. Full articles submitted by articles by 15 October 2011 will be considered pending space, and may be referred for future issues. Authors are advised to send abstracts for review first. Please send abstracts to: Anupah Makoond, Managing Editor of JPD, by e-mail to: jpd.production@gmail.com.

Assistant Professor – Peace and Justice Studies
Tenure-track position, beginning in the academic year 2012/2013

The program in Peace and Justice Studies at Wellesley College is seeking outstanding candidates for a tenure-track
position at the assistant professor level, with expertise in conflict resolution and in gender-based approaches to questions of peace and justice. Qualifications include: doctorate in hand; significant published work; significant teaching experience. The successful candidate’s annual four-course teaching program will include sections of our introductory course, a mid-level course in conflict resolution, and upper-level courses on specific topics related to the candidate’s research.

Applications should include a cover letter addressed to Professor Lawrence Rosenwald, a vita, a graduate school transcript, examples of research, a statement about the candidate’s teaching experience, teaching evaluations (if available), and names and email addresses of three references. Materials should be submitted through our online application system at https://career.wellesley.edu. (The online application will request names/email addresses so that recommenders or dossier services may submit the letters directly.) If circumstances make it impossible to submit any materials through our application site, please email us at working@wellesley.edu. The deadline for receipt of all application materials is October 31st, 2011.

Wellesley College is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer, and we are committed to increasing the diversity of the college community and the curriculum. Candidates who believe they can contribute to that goal are encouraged to apply.